

THE HOSPITAL **Guardian**

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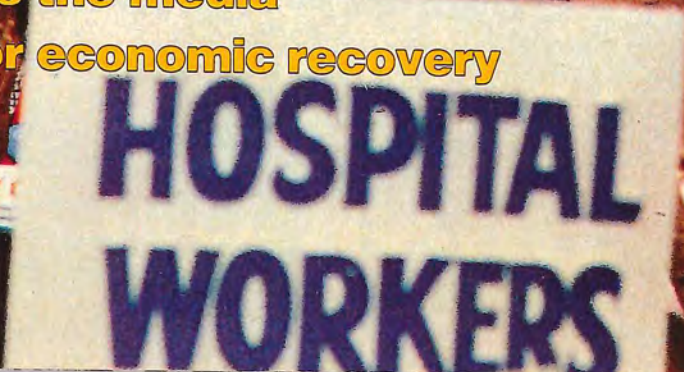


An inside look at Solidarity



Unions versus the media

A blueprint for economic recovery



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"In humble dedication to all those who toil to live."

THE HOSPITAL Guardian

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Restraint

by Jack Gerow

W.A.C. Bennett called it "austerity."

His son Bill calls it "restraint."

I call it "authoritarian capitalism."

When W.A.C. Bennett was the Premier of the Province of British Columbia, he desperately searched for a slick public relations slogan to launch an attack on public sector workers and the necessary social services they produced for their fellow British Columbians. At that time, public sector workers were beginning to receive, at long last, a measure of recognition for their dedication and effectiveness. In addition, these workers were beginning to demand wage and benefit treatment comparable to their counterparts in the private sector. The growing popularity of producing services through the public sector became a threat to the "furniture store" free enterprise mentality of the Social Credit government of the day. In response to this threat to unbridled private profit, W.A.C. Bennett came up with the "austerity" gimmick. Using that as an excuse, he held back wage and benefit increases for all public sector workers who long suffered as second class workers in B.C.'s work force.

Today, we have another Bennett.

This Bennett is looking for an excuse to blame public sector workers for the government-inflicted eco-

the Big Lie



nomics facing the province. Why? Because someone has to take the blame and someone has to subsidize the Bennetts' insatiable desire to build a society answerable only to a profit-motivated central authority. So why not make the public sector worker the scapegoat. And why not hide behind another slick slogan. Instead of using "austerity" as the jingle, this time, "restraint" will be used to justify the cold and calculated assault on public sector workers and services.

But who really believes Bennett's "big lie."

The government's attack on human rights and tenants rights has nothing to do with restraint. It has more to do with a new kind of society that Bennett would like to impose on British Columbians. A society devoid of many basic rights fundamental to a democratic system.

Such a radical shift comes as a shock to many British Columbians. Perhaps, this is why the Premier chose not to tell the people of British Columbia about it during the recent election campaign.

He also failed to tell the electorate that wage freezes and roll-backs will not assist in the recovery process. We all know that what the provincial economy really needs is stimulation, not restraint. Stimulation will provide the consumer with the confidence to spend instead of save. And stimulation in the public sector is, of course, the most direct road to recovery. It means the provision of necessary services and immediate jobs.

On the other hand, restraint means fewer workers gainfully employed with more workers on the unemployment insurance and welfare rolls.

This way nobody wins — or do they?

With the willing assistance of the provincial news media (and the obvious support of media manipulators imported from Ontario and Hollywood), the consolidation of power in the premier's office has begun, and, in turn, the inevitable distribution of income to the friends of that office will be assured — all under the packaged lie of restraint.

The result is profits before people.

The result is excessive central power.

The result is authoritarian capitalism.

UNIONS and the MEDIA

by Art Moses

Jack Munro was hopping mad at the way television news was treating his union.

"BCTV has jumped on the employers' and right-wing bandwagon to destroy the effectiveness of trade unions," the president of the International Woodworkers of America fumed on camera to BCTV's Jack Webster. "Look at the clips that were shown on this station versus the interviews that we did, and it is so obvious that they picked it out to effectively do a job on us . . . if I had more time I'd go to the CRTC about the despicable coverage that BCTV has given the labor movement and the IWA in the last 6 weeks."

Munro's outburst earlier this year was over the sympathetic treatment B.C.'s most popular television news program had given to an employer-inspired move by workers in Mission to leave the IWA, and to a labor contract in the United States that gutted IWA wages and benefits in favor of a piece-rate "productivity" system.

Munro's attack was dramatic, but it was an echo of the criticism that



IWA boss Munro — hopping mad at the media.

trade unionists have been levelling for years about the way the efforts of working people are portrayed by the media.

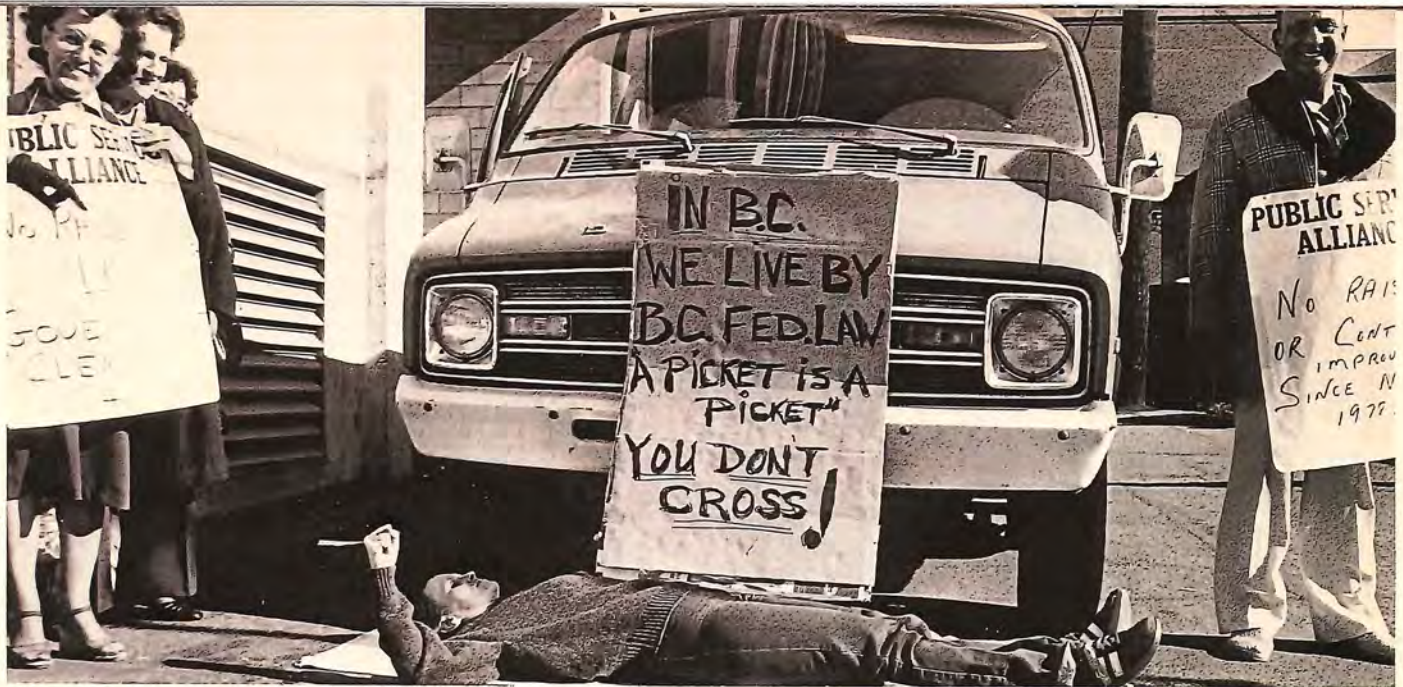
They complain that the media targets workers as being greedy, their leaders as irresponsible, and cover labor only at times of conflict and crisis. According to Robert Hackett, a University of Alberta political scientist who monitored the CBC and CTV national news over some time, 75 per cent of union stories involved disputes.

And the reason for those disputes was attributed to management only 11 per cent of the time. Hackett says, moreover, that 70 per cent of

the reported consequences were negative, such as public inconvenience and disruption of consumer services. Virtually never mentioned were such positive results for the community as the winning of greater purchasing power through strikes and increased pay for non-involved workers, or the strengthening of a sense of solidarity among working people.

"We have no trouble with the first-line reporter, but our trouble begins at the City Desk, at the assignment level and at the editorial and publishers level," says Robbie Robinson, information officer for the B.C. Government Employees' Union. "And this will remain so, while the ownership of the mainstream media remains in the hands of a small group of people who certainly are not in favor of any philosophy than the open private enterprise system."

"The media are partly responsible for disseminating the impression that all public sector workers are supernumeraries sucking the taxpayers like parasites, which is the stance of centre and right-wing poli-



Sun labor coverage: the more sensational the better.

ticians who favor scapegoating people for economic short-comings.”

Jess Succamore, secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Association of Mechanical and Allied Workers, says labor news is predominantly “shallow and sensational in any dispute to the detriment of the workers involved.”

As an example he cited the more than six-month-long lockout of 200 CAIMAW members at Western Canada Steel in Vancouver. “Here’s an example of a lockout by the company and there’s been nothing from the media about the ‘intransigence of business’. But we always hear about the ‘intransigence of labor’.”

Jim Sinclair, assistant editor of the *Fisherman*, the newspaper of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, says the media generally have little understanding of events in the fishing industry. “They cover us well when there is a crisis or strike or settlement, but in the long-run what the industry means to the province and people’s lives and to coastal communities is not reflected in the media, especially on television.”

Sinclair, formerly a reporter at the *Nelson Daily News*, says there are often opportunities at small town newspapers to cover labor and industry in depth “whereas in Vancouver it all gets gobbled up in all the flash and glitter in everything going on.”

However, Sinclair says a distinctly anti-labor tone swept through the small town press in B.C. owned by the Sterling Newspaper chain two years ago, thanks to directives from head office in Vancouver. Sinclair says he was ordered to stop covering meetings of the Nelson Labour Council and had his column taken away. Around the same time, the number of editorials penned in head office and sent out to papers increased. And columns written by Michael Walker of the right-wing Fraser Institute began appearing in small-town B.C., long before The Province began printing them.

Geoff Meggs, editor of the *Fisherman*, says he’s stopped trying to cultivate reporters with elaborate media kits on issues of concern to organized fishermen. “What we found over time was that reporters worth doing it for would keep in touch anyway. Eventually I realized that you need a gigantic crisis on your hands to get people to your news conferences.”

But according to Meggs “all the

hand-wringing and whining about the media on the part of trade unionists is like going into World War II and complaining that the other side is using real bullets.

“Our experience here underlines the necessity of labor maintaining its own press. Nobody will do the job for labor, and even well-meaning reporters on the job can’t deliver, and it’s wrong to expect it. It’s not up to them. Basically they’re employed by people who are on the other side, and you can’t expect fair reporting. You can work with them, but can’t expect them to reciprocate.”

That kind of blanket condemnation is unfair, says Jane Covernton, news producer at BCTV. Covernton concedes that television tends to dwell on conflict situations because “that’s the essence of a story. We do stories in a literal sense, we don’t try to document everything that’s happening. It’s impossible to cover every development in labor, the same as it’s impossible to cover everything in the courts or in world affairs.”

She says the main criteria for deciding whether to cover a story

are "do people care, do they want to hear about it, does it affect them."

Hence, a story on a prospective strike by government employees would discuss such questions as whether liquor stores would be shut, whether people would be able to obtain documents such as marriage licenses, she says.

She argues that BCTV has treated the labor movement fairly over the long-haul and the coverage that incensed Jack Munro last winter was just "one piece of our total coverage. We go all kinds of different ways depending on the reporter involved. There's certainly no anti-union bias here."

The veteran on B.C.'s labor beat these days agrees that trade unionists have some legitimate beefs. But Province labor reporter Rod Mickleburgh says newspapers in B.C. give more coverage to labor than do their counterparts elsewhere. For example, the Sun is likely the only newspaper in Canada with two full-time labor reporters.

Mickleburgh says the reduction of the Province to a tabloid has meant less room for detail and subtlety, but Province management has shown its "flexibility" by devoting an entire page to leaks about proposed changes in the B.C. Labour Code, and by giving labor stories prominent display.

"Newspapers are not designed to be fair, but to make money. They do try to be fair and often do a good job, but labor should never forget papers are there to make a profit."

That's the reason for all the space devoted to business, says Mickleburgh. The people who want to read business news and stock quotations also buy ads. "It's open to question whether a section devoted to labor would attract labor ads."

Mickleburgh argues that persistent complaints from labor activists have helped improve coverage during the past 25 years. "You don't see references to 'union bosses' and 'Reds' in the large metropolitan dailies anymore. There's more effort to give both sides." And he adds that businessmen often complain that the media is unfair to them as well. "So you have to see it in perspective. It depends whose ox is being gored."

BCTV's Covernton says television news would do more stories about the lives of working people if trade unionists came up with more individuals whose personal situations dramatized various labor issues.

But that kind of advice is unlikely to appease groups like the Manitoba Federation of Labour. In its brief to the Kent Royal Commission on Newspaper Concentration, the MFL called for the establishment of a publicly-owned national newspaper, a so-called "CBC of print", capable of providing in-depth information without one eye on the balance sheet and the other on the editorial pages.

'Newspapers are not designed to be fair, but to make money'

The BCGEU's Robinson supports the proposals of now-dumped federal cabinet minister James Fleming for a Canadian Newspaper Council, outside the hands of the publishers, to handle complaints and foster improvements in the press. He blasted B.C. press owners for establishing a B.C. Press Council with membership primarily appointed by the owners themselves.

Jim Sinclair of the Fisherman says improvements can only come when newsroom employees themselves demand a collective say in the kind of coverage given by the outlets they work for.

That's a pretty radical idea for journalists who are accustomed to seeing themselves as individual professionals, attempting to distinguish themselves from their colleagues with the latest "scoop".

It's even too radical for the journalists' union in English Canada, the Newspaper Guild. Rod Mickleburgh, who serves as vice-president of the Guild's Vancouver-New Westminster local, says the idea of pushing for reporter control of the newsroom has been discussed "but a meeting is as far as it gets."

"Some people argue that people should influence management on their own, not through the union. I'd like to see the employees more involved in management, having a say over who becomes editor, over story placement. That's not a complaint against the Province where I've had good success lobbying for stories. It's not specifically directed at the Province, but a conviction that the more employee involvement there is in management decisions, the better the workplace and the better the product. Whether it would result in any more labor coverage is an interesting question."

Mickleburgh said it's important for unions to keep pressing for improved coverage because the media is important in shaping public opinion, although labor cannot regard it as a friend.

"But look at Jack Gerow and the Hospital Employees' Union. What's their complaint? They get a lot of press, a lot better than the hospitals."

"My advice to labor is you've got to learn to live with the media as a necessary evil, and the more you learn that, the better you'll do."

(Art Moses is a Vancouver reporter and broadcaster who has specialized in labor news.)

OPERATION Solidarity



by John Doyle

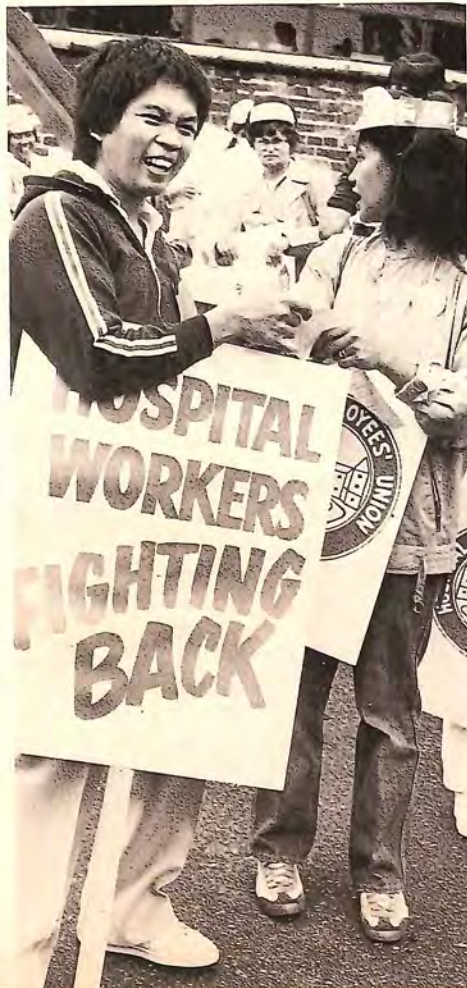
It has been called the single largest protest movement in the history of British Columbia.

It involves half-a-million workers, a broad array of community organizations and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

People from every corner of the province have marched under its banners.

It's Solidarity — B.C. style.

But what exactly is the B.C. Solidarity movement? Despite the onslaught of media coverage since Solidarity's formation four months ago, many basic questions have been



overlooked or ignored. How did Solidarity get its start? Who runs it? What is it trying to accomplish? And most importantly, is it having any effect?

One thing most observers agree on — Solidarity is unique. In a province known for its polarized politics and militant unionism, there's never been anything like Solidarity in size and scope. In the words of Vancouver mayor Mike Harcourt, a veteran of political wars, Solidarity is "a substantial phenomenon."

But prior to July 7, solidarity was simply a word meaning united action based on shared interests. On that

day, Bill Bennett's newly-elected Social Credit government brought down a budget that made many British Columbians acutely aware of the need for united action. The July 7 budget, and the 26 bills that went along with it, was the catalytic agent that produced Solidarity. The budget package struck indiscriminately at all segments of society. Workers and unions, tenants and consumers, ethnic and social minorities, women, the handicapped, the underprivileged and the poor, all came under attack from the government.

Opposition mounted swiftly. The Hospital Employees' Union was one of the first groups to take action. The day the budget was tabled, HEU leader Jack Gerow went to Victoria. He declared that the Socreds were endeavouring to turn B.C. into a giant used car lot, where everything, including health care, would be for sale to the highest bidder. Later, the B.C. Federation of Labour condemned the budget as a "vicious attack on social, economic, human and trade union rights." On July 15, realizing the need for united action, the Fed brought together delegates representing more than 500,000 B.C. workers to map out a strategy to counter the government's assault.

The mood of the meeting was determined. B.C. Fed president Art Kube described the budget as "draconian" and said it would result in "social chaos." IWA president Jack Munro predicted that the new legislation would have disastrous consequences. "It will cause the complete destruction of the social fiber of B.C.'s democratic system," Munro stated bluntly.

Out of the July 15 meeting emerged Operation Solidarity, a united front of all public and private sector unions in the province. Headed



HEU marchers pass Bennett's hardware store in Kelowna.

by Art Kube, Operation Solidarity's other major leaders included: HEU secretary-business manager Jack Gerow, B.C. Fed secretary-treasurer Mike Kramer, BCGEU president Norm Richards and BCGEU directors Jack Adams and Cliff Andstein, Building Trades Council president Roy Gauthier, B.C. Teachers' Federation president Larry Kuehn and IWA secretary-treasurer Gerry Stoney.

Operation Solidarity adopted a 10-point program designed to combat the 26 bills. The program's main thrust was to establish a broad-based coalition encompassing all afflicted parties supported by the province's trade unions. Operation Solidarity would set up regional Solidarity committees to organize opposition to the budget. Rallies, petitions, letter-writing and media advertising would be Operation Solidarity's weapons in the fight-back campaign.

A measure of the wide-spread support Operation Solidarity quickly

attracted was the attendance at its initial rallies. Between July 23 and August 10, more than 90,000 supporters marched in Operation Solidarity-sponsored rallies in Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Kelowna and Kamloops. The August 10 rally at Vancouver's Empire Stadium drew a cheering, foot-stomping crowd of at least 45,000 despite government threats to discipline public employees who attended. Newspaper accounts of these events attest to their mass appeal. One report of the Victoria rally described it as the "largest political demonstration in the city's history."

One of the earliest allies of Operation Solidarity was the 25,000-strong Hospital Employees' Union. HEU's Jack Gerow attended the July 15 meeting and vowed that HEU would throw its full support behind the fight-back campaign. "We have to stand up and fight to defeat callous, cynical and anti-people legislation," Gerow said.

HEU members were in the fore-





Hospital workers at August 10th Empire Stadium rally.



front of the rallies held in Vancouver and Victoria. Many HEU members left their jobs in Victoria-area hospitals to join in the massive rally on the lawn of the legislature. And at Empire Stadium, banner-waving hospital workers filled many sec-

tions of the aging facility. But HEU support involved more than just marching. Following the July 15 summit, the union's executive pledged financial aid to Operation Solidarity in the form of a per-capita contribution of \$5 for each HEU member. As well, all members of the HEU provincial executive gave up one day's pay to Operation Solidarity. This move was made in response to the sacrifice made by the many HEU members who lost pay in order to attend the rallies.

From its start, Gerow has played a key role in Operation Solidarity. As a member of Operation Solidarity's provincial steering committee, Gerow has campaigned aggressively against the government's legislative program. He sees Solidarity as the only way of convincing the government to alter its present course of action. From HEU's point of view, Gerow considers the proposed legislation as disastrous. "The Socreds have changed the rules," he says, "they have forced public sector

unions like HEU into a situation where the only alternative is direct confrontation with the provincial government."

Gerow says the government's budget package attacks the collective bargaining rights of public sector unions. "If HEU is ever to achieve fair and equitable settlements, it must defeat the wage control program and all the other legislation tabled in Victoria by the Social Credit government," he says.

While the primary focus of the July 15 meeting was the effect the government's budget program would have on the province's labor movement, its effect on all British Columbians was not ignored. "The labor movement is gearing up to lead a broad-based fight against the government," Kube asserted. "Trade unions are aware of their broader responsibilities and there is a deep commitment to people on public assistance, the aged, the infirm, the sick . . . We will make sure all interest groups will be heard," he stated.

As chief spokesman for Operation Solidarity, Kube identified its main objective as winning the hearts and minds of all British Columbians. To accomplish this he said opposition to the budget would have to expand beyond the labor movement and develop into a province-wide network; a voice the government could not afford to ignore.

In a sixth-floor office overlooking the Socred megaprojects on False Creek is the provincial headquarters of the Solidarity Coalition. Sparsely furnished and staffed mainly by volunteers, the coalition office is the nerve center for all community groups battling the government's budget program. The scope of the coalition is remarkable. Every facet of the community is represented: feminists, students, tenants, senior citizens, minorities, the disabled . . .





Jack Gerow addresses Victoria rally from steps of legislature.

Just as Operation Solidarity is the voice of labor opposition to the budget, the Solidarity Coalition speaks for all those individuals and groups around B.C. who see the budget, and its 26 bills, as an attack on their fundamental rights.

"This is probably the biggest coalition that has ever taken place in B.C. Nothing like this has ever happened before." The speaker is Jean Swanson. Usually employed by the Hospital Employees' Union as a research analyst, Swanson has been assigned to the Solidarity Coalition as a full-time organizer. She sees the coalition's task as a straight forward one. "Our first goal is to get rid of the budget and all the bills. It's that simple."

Working independently from Operation Solidarity, the coalition is composed of 49 community associations from across the province including: B.C. Civil Liberties Association, the Coalition for the Disabled, the B.C. Organization to Fight Racism, the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations, Women Against the Budget, the B.C. Tenants' Rights Associa-

tion and the Human Rights Coalition. The coalition is headed by an administrative committee consisting of Kube, former Human Rights commissioner Renate Shearer and Father Jim Roberts, a religious studies instructor at Vancouver Community College. A 30-member steering committee handles policy planning for the coalition.

The coalition planned a two-pronged attack on the budget. The first part involved a province-wide petition campaign designed to obtain massive numbers of signatures. "Our intention is to prove to the government that a vast number of British Columbians oppose its budget plans," Shearer explains.

The second part of the coalition strategy involved an intensive public awareness program. It focussed on seven 'theme' weeks, each concentrating on a particular segment of society under attack by the legislation. During the theme weeks, workshops, and seminars were held to explain the full impact of the legislation.

"We have to make people aware

of the Socred plans for B.C.," Swanson states emphatically. "They want to turn this province into the Philippines of North America." Charan Gill who represents racial minorities on the coalition steering committee, voices the same concern as Swanson. "If we don't tell people what is happening, the government is going to turn back the clock on human rights. We'll be back in feudal times," he says.

This point is reinforced by HEU's Gerow. The importance of making people aware of the government's real intentions is tantamount to the success of Solidarity, he says. "The Socred's big lie has to be exposed. This budget has nothing to do with restraint. It is an ideological attack on certain groups in society and that is what has to be made clear." Furthermore, Gerow says the centralization of power the government is conducting through the budget increases costs. "Power-grabbing costs money," he says, "the only thing the Socreds are trying to restrain are people's basic rights."

To Shearer, Gill and others, the coalition's importance to the overall success of the Solidarity movement can't be underestimated. A union-only opposition would not succeed they maintain.

Without a broad-base coalition, Solidarity runs the risk of weakening its impact, Gill says. The larger and more cohesive the opposition is then the more effective it is, he reasons.

And there is no doubt in the minds





The spirit of Solidarity — defiance in the face of adversity.

of Solidarity organizers that the coalition is having a real impact. George Hewison, secretary-treasurer of the Fishermen's Union and key Solidarity strategist, points to the initial lack of progress of the government's bills as tangible proof of Solidarity's effect.

"The first stage of the movement was to get the government to hold off on the legislation. The big rallies headed them off at the pass," Hewison says. He goes on to explain that this allowed Solidarity time to organize province wide and establish a structural framework to carry on the fight.

Hewison doesn't discount the yeoman-like efforts of the NDP opposi-



tion in the legislature in delaying passage of the 26 bills. But, he says, the one thing politicians respond to is mass public opinion. "That's what Solidarity is all about," he says with a grin.

A more significant, but less obvious impact of Solidarity is described by Art Kube. To Kube, Solidarity is the process of forging a powerful consensus that will eventually have a strong influence on B.C. politics. "It is crucial to establish a relationship between different groups if a consensus is to be reached," Kube states. "In the past, some groups have been isolated from each other or insensitive toward each other's needs." Kube sees Solidarity as the unifying force that has been missing.

But can Solidarity's summer successes withstand the indifference of winter? People like Hewison and Kube think so. All agree that apathy looms as a problem but they say that as long as Solidarity continues to come up with realistic plans and objectives, enthusiasm will grow.

One means of stimulating support

is by presenting an alternative to the government's economic message, Hewison says. As long as British Columbians continue to fall for the 'big lie' of restraint, he states, then Solidarity will not flourish on the scale it should. Hewison adds that an alternative economic strategy will attract people who otherwise would simply shrug their shoulders and accept what the government tells them.

"All working people need and deserve a sense of economic security and a feeling of equity in society," Kube says. If Solidarity can present a plan that will accomplish this, without service-slashing cuts or union-busting legislation, it stands a chance of winning the battle, he adds.

And along with organization and planning, there has to be an educational or cultural component to Solidarity to give it a degree of permanency, Kube asserts. He points to things like songs, paintings and films as the cultural symbols needed to help Solidarity to succeed.



"Those are the kinds of things that provide the glue that holds a movement together. People need to identify with more than just rallies and petitions," he says. To accomplish this, Operation Solidarity is spending \$2,000 to have popular singer-songwriter Leon Bibb compose a Solidarity theme song.

Another way of generating support for Solidarity is through the involvement of private-sector unions, Hewison says this is an area Solidarity organizers are targeting for extra effort.

"The policy of this government has been to drive a wedge between private and public sector workers. They have been telling private sector unions that they are paying the way for civil servants and this causes animosity," Hewison says.

Solidarity has to fight this tactic and recruit private sector workers into its ranks, he says.

The fragile bonds that have grown between labor and community groups since Solidarity's formation will also have to be strengthened according to Hewison. He stresses the importance of this if Solidarity is to survive and flourish.

"The tremendous thing about Solidarity is that for the first time unions and community groups have banded together on a fundamental issue. We can't let that kind of impetus slip away," Hewison states.



The one thing all observers of Solidarity agree on is that it has the potential to become more than just a fervent outcry against a specific legislative program. Those closely linked to both Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition believe there is a chance to translate the energy and enthusiasm of the movement into genuine political power.

Comparing Solidarity to the populist farmers' movements of the Depression, Kube says: "Solidarity has the chance to become a very therapeutic way of re-establishing political morality in our society." Kube goes on to say that popular movements such as Solidarity historically pioneer major political change. "This is a forum for all segments of

the population. It's not a short-term thing," he says.

Hewison is more specific. He believes Solidarity should be a four-year campaign leading to some form of success at the ballot-box. Hewison says there are similarities between Solidarity and the kind of coalition that came together to defeat the government of W.A.C. Bennett in 1972. The difference now is the greater degree of involvement, he says, "There's a lot more angry people out there now."

The jury is still out on the eventual results of the Solidarity movement. Whether it manages to halt the government's march to authoritarianism, or whether it evolves into a strong electoral force, are questions that remain to be answered.

Some say Solidarity will have a lasting impact on the social and political landscape of the province. Others are not so sure. But in its brief lifetime, Solidarity has accomplished one important feat; a feat unprecedented in this province. Solidarity has allowed thousands of usually indifferent British Columbians to stand up and loudly declare their opposition to a government they perceive as dictatorial and undemocratic.

And that's what B.C.-style Solidarity is all about.

(John Doyle is a Vancouver freelance writer and Solidarity supporter.)



LETTERS

Restraint doesn't have to hurt

In the past few weeks, there has been a lot of public debate over the Social Credit government's approach to restraint. Is it really necessary to attack human and civil rights in restraining government spending?

Vancouver's city government thinks not. Vancouver has proved that there is no built-in conflict between efficient, cost-conscious government and the protection of the rights and needs of our city's people.

The city's budget for 1983 has been trimmed and refined by your city council so that spending has increased by less than one per cent over the 1982 budget.

No essential services have been cut. There have been no mass firings of city staff and workers. We have not found it necessary to wipe out the city's commitment to equal opportunity employment, the special committees on race relations, or services to the disabled and senior citizens.

The efforts of the past several years, aimed at making Vancouver a democratic and humane place to live and work, are continuing even though our budget holds the line on spending increases. And we are succeeding through co-operation.

Provincial and federal politicians are always preaching co-operation among business, labor and government. In Vancouver, we practise what others preach. As your mayor, with the backing of city council, I have brought together representatives from business, trade unions, educators and government agencies; together, we have created a joint economic strategy for our city.

We have a plan to make the most of Vancouver's advantages as British Columbia's downtown and Canada's front door on the Pacific Rim. With Expo '86 and Vancouver's centennial birthday only three years away, we are gearing up for the time when

the world's attention will be focused on Vancouver.

And all of this has been done without damage to anyone's human, civil or economic rights.

When you compare Vancouver's accomplishments to what's been coming out of Victoria since July 7, it seems the Social Credit government's rhetoric on restraint is just a smokes-

creen to reward their friends and punish those whom the government sees as its enemies.

Restraint is not cancelling recreation programs for senior citizens or child abuse investigation teams and I believe it's not what the people of British Columbia voted for last May 5, 1983.

Mayor Michael Harcourt

HEU support praised

There is always a moment during the darkest hours when one wonders if a dramatic action like the occupation of the Premier's office will achieve its goals. At such moments support on the outside, like that so generously given by HEU members and staff, is crucial. Those who walked all night, provided us with food, and especially those who came to the rally and greeted us so warmly boosted our morale. I offer my heartfelt thanks.

I joined the sit-in to protest the actions of the provincial government which have made it infinitely har-

der for low income families to escape excessive rent increases by joining non-profit housing co-operatives. While inside the Premier's office, I learned about how the legislation is affecting hospital workers.

I can testify that we did our darndest to be worthy of your support by taking care to keep strictly to the idea of an orderly, peaceful, even Gandhian occupation. Inside or outside we were of one spirit — the spirit of co-operation and determination.

And we will win.

Mark Bostwick

MILESTONES

Ann Lindsay, a Licensed Practical Nurse at 100 Mile House District General Hospital, retired this summer after 15 years of service. HEU members at the hospital held a surprise retirement party for Sister Lindsay in honor of the work she has done over the years.


Gladys M. Edwards, a member of the housekeeping staff at Richmond General Hospital, retired this summer. Sister Edwards has been a member of HEU since 1973.

Three members from Willowhaven Hospital in Nelson retired August 31, 1983.

Fern Cochrane, who worked in the housekeeping and laundry departments, said that first on her list of retirement plans is some holidaying in Ontario.

Activity Aide Dorris Andersen plans to spend more time on her hobbies. One of her favorites is working with her knitting machine.

And housekeeping staff member Luise Ulrich has an ambition to write a book in her retirement. Sister Ulrich, who came to Canada in 1953 from Vienna, Austria, says she wants to write a novel for her children on the trials and tribulations of adjusting to Canadian life.



the economy in crisis

part 2

by John Calvert

We need new policies to revive the sick economy.

In the face of the growing economic crisis in our economy, and the increasingly ruthless policies advocated by business to resolve the crisis, we need a new economic strategy to address the real problems faced by ordinary Canadians.

We need an Alternate Economic Strategy.

The purpose of an Alternate Economic Strategy must be to satisfy the basic social and economic needs of ordinary Canadians, rather than maximizing the profits of wealthy investors.

It must create jobs, rather than use unemployment as a means of undermining the wages and job security of workers.

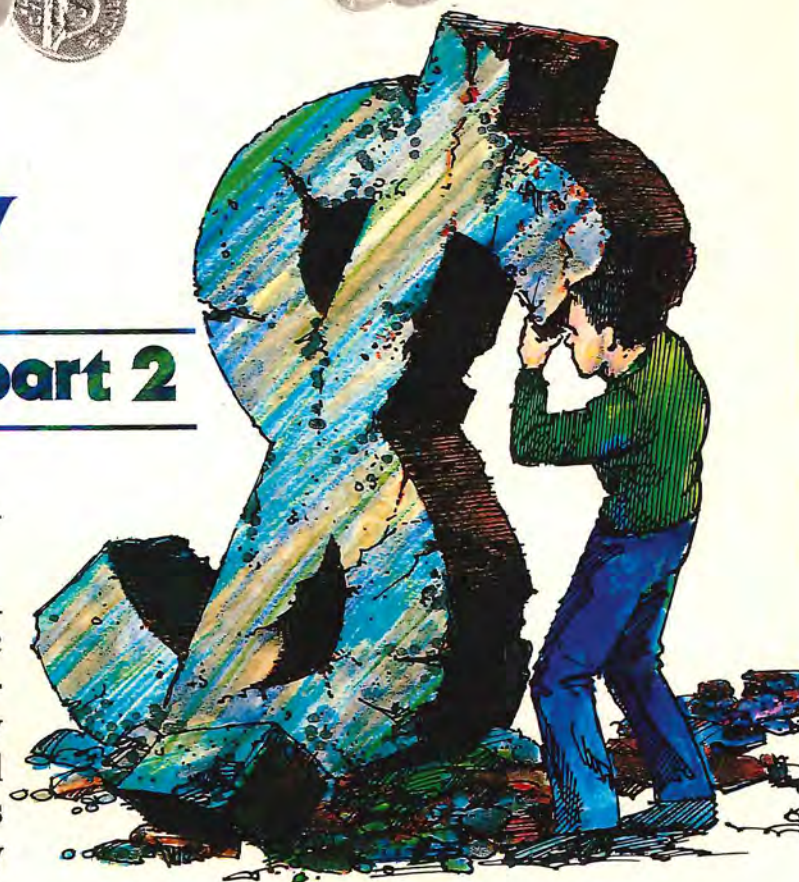
It must promote socially useful investments, rather than speculation in finance, banking, real estate and foreign currency, no matter how profitable the latter activities are.

It must focus on raising real wages and living standards, rather than sacrificing these to provide a more "favorable investment climate" for private capital.

And it must seek to improve the scope and quality of public services which are so essential to providing a decent standard of living for all Canadians, rather than attempting to dismantle the social progress which working people have fought so hard to achieve over the past 50 years.

Need for public control

The basic problem with government decision-making has been its subordination to the needs and priorities of



the private sector. The desire of investors to increase profits has taken precedence over the real needs of Canadians.

Therefore, fundamental to the implementation of an Alternate Economic Strategy is the recognition that it is a mistake to give more say over economic decision-making to private investors. What we need is to establish a genuine public control over economic policy. This will entail new forms of involvement by — and accountability to — ordinary citizens.

It will also involve a new vision of how the public sector can be managed. Business interests have waged a remarkably successful campaign to discredit all forms of public ownership and control. This campaign has been immeasurably assisted by the actions of business-oriented governments, who have made no attempt to explore the very real possibilities which public ownership provides for democratic control by citizens.

Public enterprises have been modelled on the same hierarchical, authoritarian pattern as in the private sector, with the understandable result that the rights of workers, consumers, community residents, and other groups of citizens have been largely ignored.

All too often, failing industries and bankrupt corporations have been "nationalized" in a last-ditch effort to save them. This nationalization has usually been nothing

more than bailing out private shareholders and transferring their debts to the public treasury.

When such enterprises fail to recover under public ownership, "government inefficiency and incompetence" are fingered as the culprits. At the same time, the former private investors who have been over-compensated for their property are free to place their capital into more promising areas of the economy.

Where public enterprises have been successful, they have frequently been sold to the private sector, or their profits have been channelled back to business via favorable pricing policies and similar arrangements.

With a few notable exceptions, governments in Canada have not wanted, nor attempted, to create model public enterprises. For such experiments, where successful, would pose a very real threat to their business supporters.

Which of these corporations pay less than you?

If your taxable income is	Your tax rate is	These pay less	1980 Profit	Tax Rate Paid*
\$ 2,300	9.1%	Canadian Imperial		
		Bank of Commerce	\$ 210,756,363	8.9%
2,800	11.8%	Toronto Dominion Bank	200,769,571	9.0%
3,800	15.2%	Royal Trust	53,372,000	11.5%
		Royal Bank	385,129,814	15.0%
5,000	17.8%	Bank of Montreal	319,273,814	17.6%
		Imperial Oil	1,093,000,000	32.6%
38,000	34.5%	Gulf Canada	670,000,000	34.3%

* Includes only corporate income tax actually paid in 1980

— Compiled by UE Research Dept.

A Recovery Program

Stop Cuts in Public Spending

I There is little doubt that the continuation of current government cutback policies will result in the destruction of many of our basic public services.

Public sector cutbacks are also reducing the real living standards of the majority of Canadians. They are generating more and more hardship and insecurity, especially among the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed, women, and many other disadvantaged groups.

They are also leading to a basic redistribution of resources and income in favor of the affluent. They are resulting in the channelling of our resources away from providing education, medical care, and other basic services, and toward providing more luxury goods for the wealthy investors whose interests now occupy the focus of government decision-makers.

No jobs available

At a time when over two million Canadians are out of work, it is clear that there will be no jobs in the private sector which can be filled by unemployed public sector workers. Unemployed teachers, social workers, librarians, garbage collectors and hydro workers are simply going to swell the ranks of the unemployed. Instead of providing a service to the community, they will become recipients of U.I.C. and welfare. And citizens will be deprived of the important services they provide.



It makes absolutely no sense to turn socially productive workers into welfare recipients simply to fulfill an ideological commitment to cut public spending. Nor does it make any sense to deny those who use and need public services the benefits they are now receiving.

Such policies only make sense in the twisted logic of a corporate sector intent upon reducing living standards and labor costs, regardless of the hardship this creates.

2 Introduce Price Controls

High inflation is *not* our No. 1 economic problem, runaway prices are. As we have seen, the solutions advocated by business, and implemented by governments, have failed to control rising prices. This is because wage controls, unemployment, deflationary economic policies, and cuts in government spending approach the problem *indirectly*. Yet the most obvious — and *direct* — method of dealing with inflation has been ignored: price controls.

There are many advantages to imposing controls on prices. First, unlike the indirect methods now being used, price controls actually have a good prospect of success because they tackle the problem directly.

Price controls have a number of other advantages. Unlike wage controls, they do not involve taking away the basic democratic rights of workers. Prices and money are objects, not persons. In contrast, wage controls deny fundamental human rights by destroying collective bargaining. In a society which claims to adhere to democratic principles, the choice between restricting human rights and restricting the prices of commodities ought to be very clear.

Wage controls limit the incomes of those who work, but not those who receive unearned income from dividends, interest payments and property. Thus they shift the entire burden of the fight against inflation to the shoulders of those least able to bear the costs.

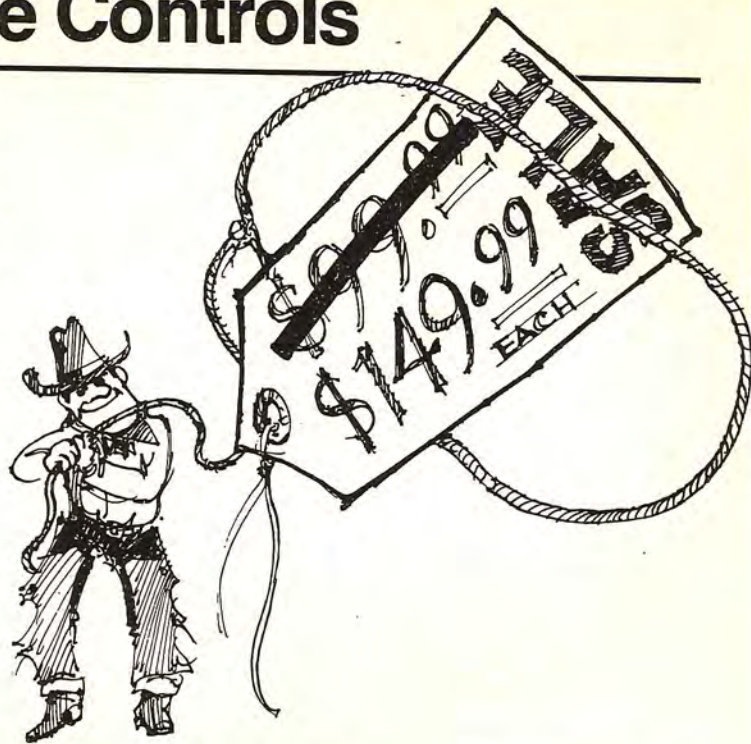
At the same time, they leave the large corporations and the well-to-do completely untouched. Thus wage controls redistribute income from workers to corporate shareholders. Yet they do not provide any guarantee that prices will stop increasing.

Wages would moderate

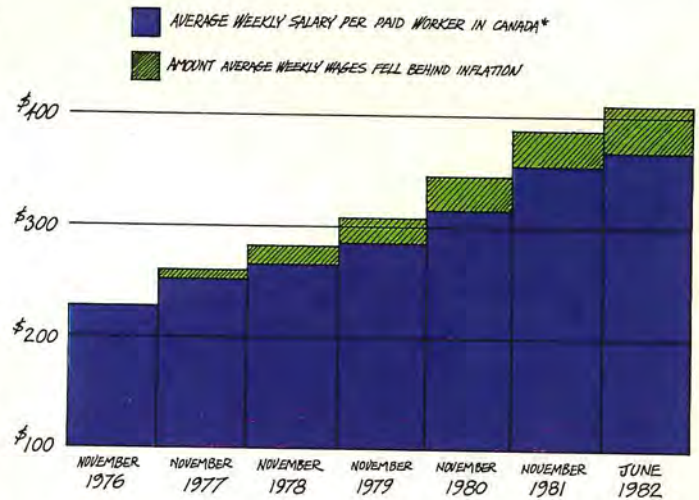
However, if prices are brought down through a program of direct price control, there is every reason to believe that workers will adjust their wage demands to the new economic circumstances. A lower inflation rate, along with reasonable guarantees that the prices of basic commodities would not increase dramatically, would provide an economic climate in which moderate wage increases become the rule.

Controls on prices also do not have the many adverse and regressive costs associated with indirect measures such as deflating the economy, cutting public spending, and raising unemployment. Rather than throttling the economy with high interest rates and throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of work, a policy of price controls would not undermine production and employment.

The logic of price controls gains further support when we look at where the highest price increases are occurring in the economy. According to Statistics Canada, energy and mortgage interest rates have shown



Wages and Inflation Since November 1976



Source: Statistics Canada.

* Includes all wages and salaried employees except military personnel.

the most dramatic price increases in recent years. Since 1971, the energy component of the C.P.I. has risen by an astounding 333.3 per cent! In contrast, the composite C.P.I. rose by 167.5 per cent, or approximately half as quickly during the same period. Wages are only a tiny proportion of the cost of energy production. Thus these price increases were not caused by rising wages.

The skyrocketing costs of oil and gas are in turn pushing up the prices of many other items. Energy is a basic component of manufacturing, mining, transporta-

tion and other industries. Thus an increase in energy prices leads to an increase in the prices of a wide range of other goods and services.

The reason energy cost increases have been so dramatic is because the Federal and Alberta governments have conceded to the demands of the oil companies for higher profits.

High mortgage costs

The second major area where prices have risen excessively is mortgage interest costs. According to Statistics Canada, the increase in mortgage interest costs has been 279.6 per cent between 1971 and September 1982. In contrast, rented accommodation, which in many provinces has been subjected to rent controls (a form of price controls), showed an increase of only 76.3 per cent. Property taxes, about which we hear so many complaints, rose by only 90.2 per cent in the same 10-year period.

The high cost of interest also effects the price of many other goods and services. This is because interest becomes another cost of production which must be added to the selling price.

Interest rates have skyrocketed in recent years as a direct result of the Bank of Canada's monetarist economic policies. As is the case with oil prices, the federal government's subordination to the banking

industry has resulted in a deliberate policy of pushing up interest rates.

These figures demonstrate that wage increases are not the prime factor causing inflation. For wages are not a major factor in either energy costs or mortgage interest costs. Wage controls, therefore, will not reduce the rate of inflation significantly. This is confirmed by the fact that since 1977 real incomes have lagged *behind* the rate of inflation by over 10 per cent.

Price controls would provide a real guarantee that inflation *will* come down. In contrast, indirect methods such as wage controls and monetarist economic policies provide no similar guarantee. Many companies will take advantage of controls on workers' wages by raising profit margins, rather than passing on the wage savings to consumers in the form of lower prices.

Price controls would also have a positive effect in reducing income inequality. They benefit ordinary consumers. They limit the ability of monopolistic corporations (such as the oil companies) to exploit their control of the market to gouge working people. They place the burden of fighting inflation on those most able to bear it: the largest corporations.

Indeed, it is the very corporations who are most strident in their demand for effective anti-inflation measures, who would be required to take the initiative under price controls.

3 Extend Public Service

Extension of public ownership in the banking, resource, transport, manufacturing and microelectronic sectors of the economy is an essential component of an Alternate Economic Strategy. It provides the only effective means of rectifying our distorted pattern of investment, and using the capital generated in the resource sector to rebuild our manufacturing industries.

Yet it is a mistake to assume that future growth in these sectors of the economy, even with significant public ownership, will generate the jobs Canadians so urgently require. If anything, the opposite is true. The number of people employed in industries such as manufacturing will fall because high technology equipment is replacing workers at an accelerating pace.

Fewer industrial jobs

An improved manufacturing base is a vital component of an Alternate Economic Strategy. But it cannot, by itself, provide the key to full employment. To expand employment, we must expand the service sector.

Service industries are not capital-intensive. They are people-intensive. The cost of creating jobs in the service sector is far less than in manufacturing, and only a tiny fraction of the cost in mining, forestry or oil extraction. Historically, this has been where jobs have been created



during the 1960s and 1970s. It must be the central focus of any long-term strategy to create jobs.

Services are vital

But it is not any type of service employment that should be expanded. It is public, rather than private services which should be the cornerstone of this expansion.

Many of the services provided by the public sector are

absolutely vital to a decent, civilized existence. They are of far more value in improving the lives of ordinary working people than any alternate private sector spending would be.

For example, the provision of free, universal public education has been of incalculable benefit to millions of Canadians.

Similarly, hospital insurance and Medicare have also had an enormous impact on the lives of most Canadians. Public hospital and medical coverage is cheaper, more comprehensive, and of higher quality than that formerly provided by private enterprise.

In a wide range of other areas of the economy, there can be little doubt that what is produced in the public sector is more socially valuable than the private sector. In terms of allocation of resources, the problem is not that we have too much public spending, but rather that we do not have enough.

Far from necessitating a reduction in the public sector, the present crisis underlines the need to begin a basic restructuring of economic priorities. If we cannot have more of everything, then we must at least ensure that what we do have is likely to satisfy our basic needs. At a time when the economic pie has stopped expanding, it is more — not less — important to see that our resources are allocated in the most socially desirable manner.

Indeed, one of the basic objectives of the Alternate Economic Strategy should be to supplant the values and objectives of the corporate sector with ones which are responsive to the needs of ordinary Canadians. This means challenging the priorities of the market, with its undue emphasis on private consumption at the expense of social needs.

It means establishing new, socially useful ways of utilizing our resources. It means giving priority to public and social services, rather than allowing corporations to dismantle these services to provide more room for private consumerism. Ultimately, it means being prepared to expand public services to the point that they actually *do* meet the real needs of Canadians.

More social spending

Thus, in addition to expanding public ownership in finance, manufacturing, resources and transport, we also need a major increase in public spending on social programs. This should include a major upgrading of our hospital and medical services. It should include the construction of new hospital facilities and the establishment of community health clinics, as well as more nursing homes to overcome the deplorable lack of these

services currently available to the elderly.

We also need to restore funding to our educational system and provide new programs to satisfy the demand for adult education, special education for disadvantaged children, language education and similar concerns.

In addition, we need to establish an adequate, universal program of publicly-administered day care which will address the real needs of working parents and their children.

We also should be expanding facilities for music, arts, dance, and many other areas of popular culture.

Municipal services are also in need of major improvements across the country. These, too, should be upgraded and major capital works initiated.

Our system of public transit also desperately needs a massive infusion of capital.

The preceding list of new public services takes into account the one unused resource which we now have in great surplus — our two million unemployed. If we do not create public sector service jobs, those presently unemployed will have no jobs at all.

There is no point in asking whether it would be better if they were to work in the private sector; the private sector has no jobs to offer them.

The expansion of the public sector has other advantages. Since it changes the pattern of consumption from private sector consumer goods, many of which are imported, to public sector services, it reduces imports and therefore assists the balance of payments and the value of the dollar. It also makes the economy less vulnerable to fluctuations in world markets.

The kind of public expansion outlined above does not involve "make work projects". It is not designed merely to conceal the number of unemployed. Rather, it fulfills pressing social needs — needs which our economy has failed to meet. The establishment of these programs will do far more to improve the real standard of living than any comparable expansion of private consumption.

As Canadians we must begin to make a choice about the kind of society we want to live in and the way in which the resources generated within our economy are allocated. We must be prepared to assert that, in the future, social needs will take priority over the demands of business. We must be prepared to use public planning, public ownership and the expansion of the public sector as a means for resolving our present economic crisis. And we must be prepared to take on the corporate interests in our determination to make our Alternate Economic Strategy a reality.

(John Calvert is a senior research officer who works with the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Ottawa. This article is based on a book he has written.)



Anti-union clauses planned for Code

Sweeping changes to the B.C. Labour Code which give broad new powers to employers are just around the corner, according to Jack Gerow, HEU secretary-business manager.

Details of the changes were made public in a government document leaked to the press in August. And, although the government has not yet moved to implement these new policies in the legislature, Gerow said it's obvious the Socreds will push them through if they can get away with it.

Gerow suggested the government would likely wait to introduce the Labour Code amendments until its 26 pieces of legislation tabled July 7 are proclaimed as law.

"I'm convinced that if the Social Credit government is

successful in ramrodding that legislation through the house, then the changes to the Labour Code will be next."

However, the HEU secretary-business manager said increased public outrage over the controversial budget and legislation could cause the Socreds to take a second look at their policies and plans.

Some of the changes to the code proposed by the government would:

- Change the Essential Services Disputes Act to allow the employer in health care, police and firefighting services to opt unilaterally for arbitration. This would eliminate these unions' right to strike!
- Subject every union in

B.C. to "essential service" legislation. This would allow the government to declare any industry, including the tourist industry, for example, an essential service with no right to strike action.

- Reconstitute the Labour Relations Board as a "government agency" hand picked by the Socred Cabinet rather than an independent tribunal with equal labor and management representation.
- Eliminate automatic certification even if a clear majority of the employees want a union and, in addition, make it almost impossible for a union to win unfair labor practice complaints against employers.

Table officers meet

HEU held another in its ongoing series of conferences for union officers September 28 in Victoria.

The conference was attended by table officers from the Vancouver Island units of Aberdeen, Capital Region, Glengarry, Gorge, Greenwoods, Luther Court and VS/Luther Court, Mount St. Mary, Mount Tolmie, Priory, Queen Alexandra, Rose Manor, Royal Jubilee, Saanich, Sunset Lodge, and Victoria General.

Delegates heard a comprehensive report from HEU secretary-business manager Jack Gerow on the status of the HEU master agreement, the Compensation Stabilization Program, the union's involvement in Operation Solidarity, classification, the Larson award on casuals, education and communications.

Executive members in attendance included Phyllis Shiplack, Clarke Gardner, Nancy Macdonald, Carole Campbell and Bill Macdonald.

The idea of holding table officer conferences in all regions of the province grew out of the need to fully develop the line of communications between unit officers and the provincial executive. The conferences are informal, unlike the biennial conventions, and give people a chance to freely express themselves.

Hospital workers stage Solidarity sit-in



Several hundred HEU members at Prince George Regional Hospital walked off the job September 21 to protest the Bennett government's attack on human and democratic rights in British Columbia.

The members attended

a one-hour study session in the hospital cafeteria to hear first-hand reports on the effects of the provincial government's highly controversial legislative package. Speakers included Charles Paris, the former chairman of the now-defunct human rights commission, Prince George

Reverend Larry Turgeon, and Jack Gerow, HEU secretary-business manager.

Buses then took many of those who attended the sit-in to an Operation Solidarity-sponsored exhibition. Many groups including HEU, set up information booths at the exhibition in order to highlight those social services particularly hard hit by the cutbacks.

It is estimated that at least 3,000 people took job action in Prince George on September 21 and that up to 7,000 people attended the Solidarity Day exhibition.

FRONTLINES

Clerical classification completed

With clerical classification now complete, the HEU classification team has shifted its efforts to completing non-clerical. The first priority will be to negotiate settlement on jobs which have been overrated or red-circled.

According to Hans Brown, HEU director of classification, maintenance and nursing specialty positions appear to be the areas where HEU and HLRA are farthest apart.

Brown also said that based on past experience, it will likely take approximately one year to finish non-clerical classification.

Government offers medicare subsidy

A relatively unknown provincial government scheme to subsidize medical insurance premiums could provide much needed assistance to thousands of British Columbians experiencing financial hardship.

Known as the Temporary Premium Assistance program, the plan provides for a 90 per cent subsidy of premiums for groups such as the unemployed, sick, and disabled who are unable to pay. In order to qualify, you must fill out a special Temporary Premium Assistance application form. These forms are available by contacting the Registration and Premium Billing Division, Medical Services Plan, P.O. Box 1600, Victoria, B.C. V8V 2X9.

Arbitration to decide fate of PNs

A major arbitration is underway in Victoria which could set an important precedent in the battle to save the jobs of practical nurses in B.C. hospitals.

The case, which involves a number of grievances filed against Victoria General Hospital, had its first hearing September 6 in front of arbitrator David Vickers. The grievances were filed after the administration at Victoria General decided to staff nursing floors with registered nurses only, and that practical nurses should be employed in extended care nursing units but not in acute care general wards. As a result, all practical

nurses have remained at the old Fairfield site of the hospital instead of being transferred over to the new facility on Helmcken Road in Victoria.

In a recent letter to the Ministry of Health, HEU Director of Technical Services, Bill Rolfe said that the union fails to see how the replacement of practical nurses by registered nurses will provide a more efficient and less costly way of providing health care.

Rolfe also said the trend in B.C. to eliminate PN positions is contrary to long-established practice and to public policy.

The arbitration is sched-

uled to reconvene October 26 and the union is hopeful an award on this matter can be handed down before the end of 1983.

In the meantime, other grievances involving the lay off of PNs or the failure of hospitals to pay the PN rate have been commenced at the Nanaimo Regional General, Vancouver General, St. Mary's (New Westminster), Surrey Memorial, Royal Columbian, Vernon Jubilee and Cranbrook and District Hospitals. Other hospitals are expected to have similar grievances proceed to arbitration in the near future.

Guardian launches new format

Welcome to the new-look Hospital Guardian! As you can see, we've changed the format of our quarterly publication to a magazine.

We've done this for several reasons. Primarily, we want to make sure that you, the members of the Hospital Employees' Union, have a publication that you can be proud of. One that you will take home, leave out on your coffee table, and perhaps even pass on to a friend. Readership surveys indicate that people are much more likely to read a magazine than a tabloid newspaper. For one thing, the size is easier to handle and the ink won't come off on your hands. The introduction of color also contributes to readership appeal.

Cost is another factor which led to the decision to publish a magazine. New developments in the printing industry now make it possible to print a magazine for about the same cost as a newspaper.

You may also notice that the content of the magazine is somewhat different from our previous publications. Of course, we'll still be carrying news about our members and units but, in addition, we've set out to bring to you some thought-provoking and timely analysis of current events — events that will undoubtedly have an effect on all our members' lives.

We hope you find your new Guardian both informative and enjoyable.

Cabinet office sit-in hailed as success

On September 16, 1983, 87 people walked into the Premier's office in Vancouver and refused to leave until some 27 hours later.

Their goal was simple enough. They wanted the Premier and his cabinet to listen.

But why were such bold actions necessary?

Well, according to Bill Macdonald, HEU first vice-president and one of the 87 who spent the night inside, desperate times sometimes call for desperate actions.

"We tried to talk to the Premier through the rally we had in Victoria July 27, and again on August 10 in Vancouver. British Columbians across this province have tried to talk to the Premier through all kinds of traditional rallies and protests. And still he doesn't listen.

"We hoped that by occupying his offices he might be persuaded to listen."

Since the budget was tabled July 7, Macdonald does not believe that Bennett has responded to the protests or consulted with any group in a meaningful way.

"He has remained hide-bound in his office.

"By occupying his office, you focus attention on that person and the entire political process."

No one will ever know whether the Premier listened to what the people inside were trying to tell him, but his reaction was nonetheless swift.

Less than one hour after news of the occupation became public, Bennett condemned the action as "reprehensible."

Newspaper editorialists were predictably "outraged."

And well known right-wingers branded the whole exercise as "criminal."

But all of that outrage doesn't bother Macdonald one little bit.

"You have to look at where it's coming from," says the 52-year-old orderly

from Chilliwack Hospital. "All of those people have a vested interest in seeing those 26 pieces of legisla-



Bill Macdonald

tion passed. We'd expect them to react that way."

Macdonald feels confident that the occupation of the cabinet offices accomplished what it set out to do.

"We wanted to raise the urgent concerns that we have about the effects of this government's plans. I think we did that."

For Bill Macdonald, and 9 other members of the Hospital Employees' Union, the dramatic occupation of the Premier's office was their way of speaking out against the Social Credit government.

VDT operator resists personal health gamble

There are certain things in life you can afford to take a chance with.

But to Pam Eyre, a 30-year-old VDT operator at Surrey Memorial Hospital, the health and safety of her children is not one of them.

And so when Eyre learned last month that she was pregnant with her second child, like most women, she went directly to her doctor.

His advice to her was simple. Don't work on the VDTs.

In spite of continuing controversy about the effects of radiation on a developing fetus, many people in the medical and scientific professions feel enough evidence exists to warrant taking some basic precautions.

Giving pregnant operators the right to transfer to

other work is one such precaution.

And so, the day after her visit to the doctor, Pam Eyre turned up for work with her doctor's letter in hand to announce she would not be willing to work on the VDTs during the balance of her pregnancy.

"The way I see it, you're only given one chance. If there was anything wrong with my baby at birth, and I hadn't done everything possible to ensure its safety, well, I'd have to live with that for the rest of my life," says Eyre.

"I feel I'm protecting my baby by refusing to work on the machines."

Eyre was not so determined with her first pregnancy. She continued to work on the terminals for the full-term. Her child was

born almost a month premature.

"That really scared me. I thought that somehow it was all my fault because I had worked on the VDTs."

Eyre knows that there is no firm medical evidence which can tell her that the VDTs did, or did not, have something to do with the premature birth.

But that nagging doubt has made her determined not to put herself in the same position again.

Since her doctor ordered her off the machines, Eyre has continued to work in the hospital's accounting department but has not operated a VDT. Instead, she prepares much of the work which someone else then inputs into the terminals.

HEU's position on the matter is that pregnant women should be given the right to be reassigned to other positions without loss of pay, seniority or benefits.

the **FRA\$ER** Institute

The power behind

Kaiser Bill's throne



by Ben Swankey

Following its electoral victory on May 5, the Social Credit cabinet held its first meeting at the posh Okanagan Lake Resort, Premier Bennett's home turf. Because of a growing affinity between the policies of the Bennett government and the Fraser Institute, the cabinet asked Michael Walker, head of the Institute, to attend the meeting and advise the government on post-election economic policy. The cabinet listened and accepted the advice given — the result was the July 7 budget and the 26 bills introduced into the legislature the same day — most of them directed against human rights, public employees and social services.

Just what is the Fraser Institute? Who is behind it? Where does it get its funds? What does it advocate?

What is the Fraser Institute?

The Fraser Institute describes itself as an "independent, Canadian economic and social research and education organization." (As will be pointed out later it is not independent and it is much more than a research and educational organization.) It was established in 1974 and has its head office at 626 Bute

Street in Vancouver with branch offices in Toronto and Seattle.

Its director is Michael Walker and its senior economist is Walter Block. It has a 37-member board of trustees, drawn it says, from "a broad cross-section of the Canadian business community," and claims "financial support from 457 individuals, enterprises and foundations." It claims to have 142 economists in Western Europe, the United States and Canada who contribute to its research.

The Institute has published a total of 28 books. Its officers have addressed many meetings of business organizations and government bodies. Its economists have regular columns in many daily and weekly papers in B.C. and across Canada,

and have appeared often on radio and TV.

Who supports the Institute?

The institute describes its objectives in these words: "The redirection of public attention to the role of competitive markets in providing for the well-being of Canadians" and "documenting objectively the deterioration resulting from government intervention."

The main targets it has selected for its attacks (and they are anything but objective) are the trade union movement, and especially the public sector unions, labor legislation which permits collective bargaining and strikes, the minimum wage, and public funding of social services such as health and education.

Its board of directors is made up of the representatives of big corporations. Among them are developers like Cadillac Fairview, Daon and Genstar; banks like the Royal, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and Toronto Dominion; Pocklington Financial Corporation (its owner Peter Pocklington is on the board — he is so far to the right in his economic thinking that even the Progressive Conservatives rejected him at their recent leadership convention); and other big multi-

nationals like Abitibi-Price, MacMillan Bloedel, Noranda Mines, Imperial Oil, Canadian Pacific and IBM.

William Buhelzer writing in the Vancouver Sun, March 10, 1980, described the Fraser Institute this way:

"Its board of trustees and financial backers include the biggest corporations in Canada, including the major land development firms. Its editorial board is a who's who of right wing economists."

That's an understatement. The Institute is a collection of probably the most right wing and most reactionary economists to be found under any one roof anywhere in North America. It is a highly paid and well-funded group of propagandists for big business.

What Does the Institute Advocate?

The best way to judge its policies are by its publications and the speeches of its officers. Three of its publications will be of particular interest to public employees.

The Fraser Institute book Unions and the Public Interest is essentially an attack on public sector unions. The theme is set out in the introduction by Michael Walker when he declares that "unions are essentially self-serving institutions, the ability of public sector unions to withdraw their services and prevent others from replacing them represents an on-going threat to the public interest."

Walker and his fellow economists recommend:

- "... strikes to win increased compensation ... be prohibited."
- "... limiting union security clauses to the Rand formula," which means employees would not join the union as a condition of employment.
- "... public employers must have the right to ... contract out (public services) to the private sector."
- "... public employers should have the right to hire replacements for striking employees and lay off non-striking employees idled by

the strike."

- "... in the event of illegal work stoppages, amnesty should not be available through the bargaining process. Major sanctions must be imposed on striking employees ... these sanctions may include dismissal of the striking employees, heavy fines or imprisonment of employees or their union officials, and decertification of the union representing the employees."

The Institute's publication *The Health Care Business* is an attack on medicare and all government-funded health care systems. The authors propose the replacement by private health schemes operating on a user-pay basis. Here are some quotes which illustrate the views and policies of the Institute:

- "There should be no direct government subsidy for health insurance or health services."
- Hospital services should be provided "on the basis of stated fees for individual services" paid by the user.
- "Hospitals should be entirely dependent for their revenue on fees-for-service to be paid by individuals or by public and private insurance companies."
- We should have a "market-oriented health system."

In their book *Discrimination, Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity*, Michael Walker and Walter Block, plus a number of other academics express their opposition to any and all human rights and equal opportunity legislation. Their reasons? They blandly assert that such legislation harms rather than helps women, minorities and ethnic groups. They would leave the whole problem of discrimination to the market place and the tender mercies of the employers.

Human Rights hinder profits

First of all they challenge the very existence of discrimination.

"In practice," they assert, "it has proved difficult to measure the extent of discrimination. Most attempts at estimation have proved inadequate or erroneous. Research

has been based on anecdotal evidence and emotional reference to earlier periods when discriminatory practices were enshrined in law.

"The market test of profit and loss tends to eliminate from the private sector (through bankruptcy) those who indulge in discriminatory practices."

And further: "Laws which control rents, set minimum wage floors, compel equal pay for equal work, enforce union wage levels, all retard market forces which tend to reduce discrimination."

And then finally they come out with their real views.

"Discrimination is nothing more than an expression of a preference. The right to discriminate is a desirable feature of free societies."

When Premier Bennett and his government introduced the budget and 26 different bills attacking human rights and labor in the legislature on July 7, they began the process of putting the Fraser Institute's views into practice. Michael Walker responded with a lengthy article in the Province, July 12, commending the government.

Walker thrilled by budget

He said he was "exhilarated" by the budget and the accompanying legislation, calling it "epoch-making" and "a new vision of the future."

He praised the "admirable objective of reducing the number of civil servants employed," welcomed the abolition of rent controls, and called "termination without cause" a "giant step forward." His only criticism of the budget was that it didn't impose higher health user-fees on the public.

What the Bennett government has done so far is only the beginning. More and worse legislation will follow if it gets away with it now. That is why the Bennett government, the Fraser Institute and the big multi-national corporations which advise and direct them must be stopped in their tracks right now.

Labor needs its own research and educational organization to expose and refute the false and dangerous policies advocated by the Fraser Institute.

SPEAKING OUT



a time to RISE

by Raj Chouhan, President
Canadian Farmworkers Union

Beautiful British Columbia, eh!
No — Super Natural British Columbia!

But for whom? It is neither beautiful nor super natural for most British Columbians. People are worried about maintaining their basic life needs. Unemployment is rising and job security is going the way of the dinosaur. Hard won rights are being taken away with the stroke of a pen. Minorities, who were already under attack, will be suffering more because the government of "Beautiful Super Natural" B.C. has abolished the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Branch.

The Canadian Farmworkers Union asked this government several times during the past 3 years for equality, to be treated like all other workers. Now, with the July 7 budget and 26 pieces of legislation, it looks like standards are being lowered to meet farmworkers' poor conditions. That is what this government calls equality.

Before the May election, people were not told that the government would abolish the most needed agencies such as the Human Rights Branch and Rentalsman's offices. The legislative package introduced on July 7 can not be justified as a "restraint package." It is a revenge package. In reality the government is not going to save much money but it is the philosophy which they are trying to impose on this province which is frightening.

This so-called restraint package has been condemned by people from all walks of life. Along with the trade unions, a vast number of community organizations have joined the Solidarity Coalition. The opposition is building up gradually. But in order to stop this anti-people legislative package, something more is needed. Obviously the government is not impressed by big demonstrations and rallies.

If the government fires any member of the BCGEU on October 31, then every other union has to come out to support our brothers and sisters in the BCGEU. But public sector unions alone would not be able to pressure the government. The private sector unions such as the IWA, TWU, Building Trades, Steelworkers, etc., have to play a major role of support. We will be heading into a general strike.

It is important that unions do not get smashed in the process. Look at what happened to the unions in Quebec and to the air-traffic controllers in the U.S.

Along with picket lines we should seriously consider other kinds of tactics such as revenue boycotts. For example, we could keep the buses and ferries running but not charge commuters. We could take over public services, but not handle any revenue, etc.

I hope Mr. Bennett will soon get over the intoxication of power and realize that he has the mandate to run this province democratically, not as a dictator. He will not succeed, because peoples' power is greater.

**WORKERS STRUGGLE
ZINDABAD!**