THE HOSPITAL Guardian

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THE HOSPITAL
Guardian

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

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INSIDE

DEPARTMENTS

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION LOCAL 180

COMMENT

HEU 1, Socreds 0

By Jack Gerow

It was hailed as a wonderful day for democracy.

That day was June 10, 1987 — the day the British Columbia Supreme Court threw out two provincial government writs that charged union leaders with sedition and conspiracy.

It all started on April 2, 1987, when Premier Bill Vander Zalm's Social Credit government introduced amendments to the province's labor code. The amendments gutted what was considered the best labor code in Canada when it was first introduced in 1973 by the NDP.

The new legislation, known as Bill 19, shocked the province. Most labor leaders were quick to conclude that the amendments were an unprecedented and vicious attack on the fundamental democratic rights of freedom of associaton and freedom of speech — it was a right-wing assault on the right to have a union.

And on June 1, 1987, the B.C. Federation of Labor called a province-wide shutdown for the first time in provincial history.

More than 300,000 people responded to the call. The general strike was an overwhelming success for the workers of British Columbia.

But instead of listening to the growing concern of its citizens, the Social Credit government used the June 1 protest as an excuse to try to permanently muzzle opposition.

On the day of the general strike, the government stepped in and issued a summons charging a number of trade union leaders across the province with conspiring to overthrow the provincial government by force. In one case, an agent for the attorney-general used false pretenses to gain access to the apartment building of one trade union leader and, in the middle of the night, was heard banging on the door shouting: "come out . . . we know you're in there . . . I'm from the Attorney General's department . . . I've got the summons . . . you've been charged with sedition."

The government's writ of summons sought permanent injunctions restraining anyone having notice of the injunction (this could mean anyone who had seen any media coverage on the writ) from advocating the use of "force", including slow downs and study sessions, as a means of accomplishing a governmental change in the province. Amongst those acts the government sought to prohibit were such things as "resisting legislative change and pointing out errors in the government of the province."

The Hospital Employees' Union, one of the defendants, immediately challenged the government by asking the B.C. Supreme Court to throw out the charges on the grounds that the actions of the attorney general disclosed no reasonable claim; were unnecessary, scandalous, frivolous, and vexatious, and were an abuse of the process of the court.

In support of its motion, HEU argued that the provincial government was seeking to restrain lawful political dissent and was engaged in an assault on fundamental freedoms that ought not to be countenanced in a free and democratic society.

The decision this time would go to the unions, with the courts dismissing the action and ordering the government to pay the defendants' costs.

But from this victory there are some lessons to be learned.

Governments must know that working people in all parts of Canada have a right to oppose unjust and undemocratic laws. They have a right to take action to try and stop right-wing assaults on their democratic rights to bargain collective agreements, strike, and stop scabs from taking their jobs.

Resistance to being stripped of democratic rights is not peculiar to British Columbians. Provincial government workers in Newfoundland who have defied government orders have shown this. Packinghouse workers in Alberta who fought against Gainers and its accomplices in the provincial government have shown this. And at the very time this is being written, postal workers are proving it by waging a courageous fight against Brian Mulroney and his crown corporation, Canada Post.

The government of British Columbia may need to learn its lesson in the same hard way. Working people are intent on continuing the fight against Bill 19 until it is repealed or the provincial government is thrown out of office.

And that's not sedition . . . that's democracy!

A radical turn to the right

Labor fights the government's apparent hunger for control of all B.C. workers

It should not have been a surprise. After all, in February, Premier Bill Vander Zalm had promised "contentious and controversial" changes to the B.C. Labor Code. And the earliest warning had sounded last fall, when HEU's provincial executive predicted "draconian" government action against workers.

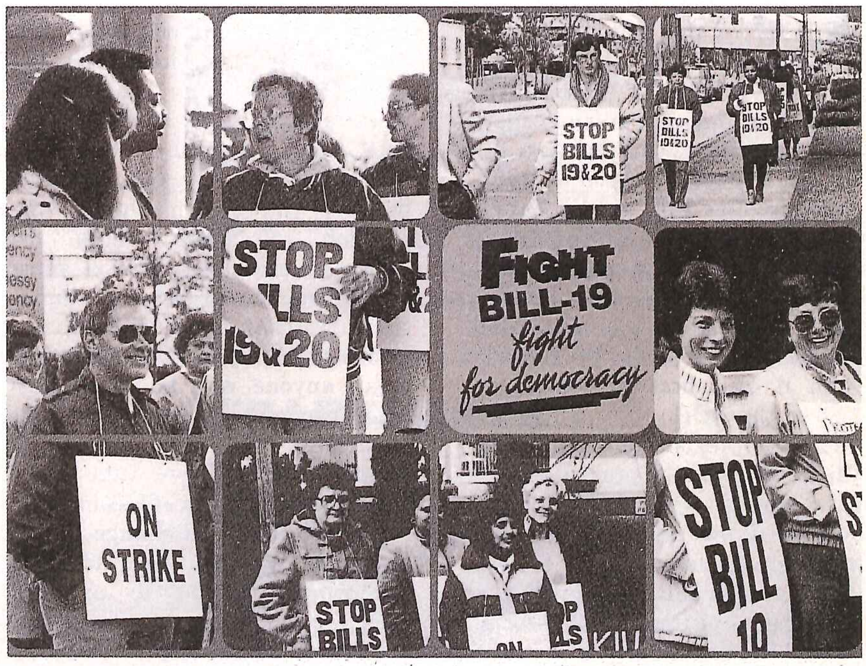
Still, when it finally arrived in April, the Socreds' latest version of their "new reality" was a shocker.

Introduced as Bill 19, the Industrial Relations Reform Act literally wiped out the 14-year-old labor code. The bill diluted or eliminated longstanding workers' rights, gave new powers to employers, and authorized the government to intervene directly in virtually all phases of private and public sector labor relations (story on Page 8).

The radical legislation veered farther to the political right than any other in Canada and provoked months of public opposition. HEU members figured prominently in the broad-based protest movement. They packed local demonstrations and rallies, and they gave all-out support to a province-wide general strike on June 1.

In fact, the union spread the alarm within days of the bill's introduction, sponsoring province-wide radio ads that echoed the immediate public statements made earlier by HEU leaders.

Secretary-Business Manager Jack Gerow called Bill 19 "the worst package of labor legislation tabled anywhere in Canada. With one stroke of the pen, Premier Vander Zalm has stripped away



democratic rights from working people in every corner of this province."

And HEU's provincial executive acted immediately to involve union members in future responses to the new law.

First, it ordered a membership vote on a B.C. Federation of Labor proposal for a boycott of Bill 19. To assure an informed ballot, HEU published a comprehensive review of the legislation modelled on the government's "Provincial Report". When the voting ended in early May, the boycott had received a 97-per-cent endorsement.

The executive also called an unprecedented emergency provincial conference later that month.

By the end of the two-day meeting, the union had established a clear consensus for an action plan developed by the B.C. Fed. It included: a media campaign, the possibility of job action to oppose the legislation, various forms of non-compliance with the new law and establishment of a Bill 19 Defense Fund.

The provincial executive responded to the conference delegates and to Vander Zalm's non-stop insistence on preserving the "principles" of Bill 19 by allocating $300,000 for an HEU fightback campaign.

A few days later, the B.C. Fed called the June 1 general strike, and HEU immediately scheduled unit-by-unit strike votes. Confirming the mood at the emergency conference, the balloting produced an 85-per-cent "yes" vote on the eve of the walkout.

The one-day action was intended to convince the government that the widespread and unwavering opposition to the legislation left no reasonable alternative to withdrawing the bill. The premier had ignored a Vancouver Sun poll showing half of all British Columbians against Bill 19. Maybe he would pay attention to a public opinion survey in which the respondents voted with their feet.

The general strike was a triumph, as more than 300,000 workers voluntarily gave up a day's pay to oppose Bill 19. Most important, the action was a peaceful demonstration that a broad segment of society truly rejected the government's union-busting tactics.

For HEU, the strike was especially significant because it marked the union's first attempt at coordinating a provincial walkout that involved the full membership. It went like clockwork. Even the employers estimated that 95 per cent of HEU's 26,000 members were off the job. The remaining five per cent stayed on duty to provide essential services in accordance with the union's own policies.

On the day of the general strike, Attorney-General Brian Smith went to the B.C. Supreme Court for an order that would block any similar action. But that was just for openers. He also wanted to prohibit other forms of free speech, including simply picketing as a way of "pointing out errors in the government of the Province".

The attorney-general declared that subversion and other criminal acts had occurred, although that language had been toned down by the time he filed supplementary court papers.

Among those named by the government as defendants were HEU and Jack Gerow.

Rather than adopt a passive defense, the union retained former Supreme Court Justice Thomas Berger to challenge the validity of Smith's action. Now a practising lawyer in Vancouver, Berger argued that the government move was an attempt to restrain "lawful political dissent" and "an assault on fundamental freedoms so complete that it ought not to be countenanced in a free and democratic society."

Mr. Justice Kenneth Meredith heard the case and on June 12 ruled that the circumstances "must serve to exonerate the defendants of the acts with which they have been charged." He dismissed the attorney-general's action and ordered the government to pay the defendants' costs.

Vander Zalm said the government would abide by the decision, but still insisted that Bill 19 would become law as quickly as possible.

The premier also said he would not be swayed by media commentators or union critics, although they merely reflected what had by then become prevailing public sentiment.

One survey sponsored by BCTV News reported a 73-per-cent majority opposed to passage of Bill 19. A province-wide poll commissioned by the B.C. Fed showed 69 per cent in favor of a cooling-off period, with withdrawal of the legislation and joint development of an alternative by government, business and labor.

The labor movement worked to consolidate that public support at the end of June, as Vander Zalm and company pushed Bill 19 through the legislature. As the final clause-by-clause reading passed the 100-hour mark, union leaders met with community and other groups, and the federation and its affiliates mounted advertising campaigns. The message was consistent: only withdrawal of the bad law could end the growing confrontation.

HEU's independent efforts complemented those coordinated by the B.C. Fed, province-wide radio and newspaper advertising, mainstreet leafleting by health care workers, a campaign to get members of the public to sign letters to the premier. And planning was underway for more actions as the summer wore on.

It was obvious that passage of the legislation would not end the bitter dispute, but merely deepen it.

Ultimately, the labor movement could not comply with the new law, as had been made clear repeatedly to Vander Zalm. And now the province teetered on the edge of chaos, facing the prospect of major labor disruptions like those that had rocked B.C. in the late 1960s.

Enacting Bill 19 would guarantee its regular and unrelenting defiance by trade unions. To prevent the extinction of major rights achieved by workers over the past half century, they would have no choice but to make industrial instability the order of the day.

No trade unionist wanted that to happen; but if it did, the responsibility would be the premier's. The cause would be his hardline approach and apparent hunger for government control of the workers of B.C. The labor movement meant to see that neither was satisfied.

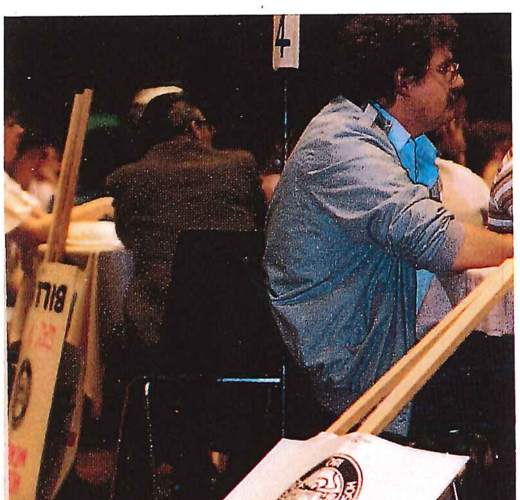
Together in struggle

HEU's Provincial Executive extends a special note of thanks to those members of the staff who donated a day's pay in solidarity with the June 1 general strike. Although all your staff was busy on the job helping to co-ordinate the one day protest, the majority gave up their pay and donated it to HEU's Bill 19 fightback fund. All members of your Provincial Executive went without pay on June 1.

BILL-19

Delegates get the facts

Making informed judgments



GLYNN TREADWELL — ROYAL COLUMBIAN

It was an unprecedented event, and those attending called it an unprecedented success: the HEU emergency conference on Bill 19, conducted May 21-22 at UBC.

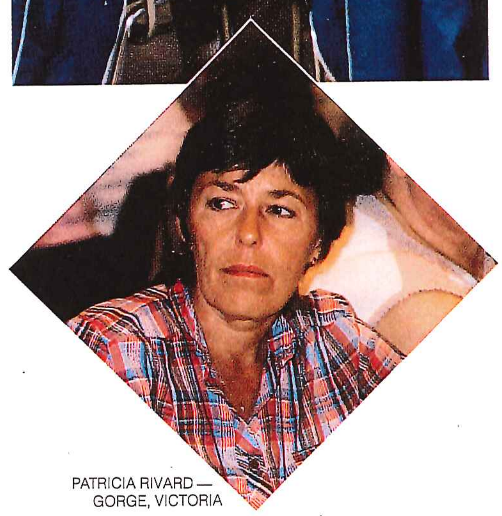
The first such provincial meeting in the union's history, the conference brought together 430 elected delegates from units across B.C. They reviewed details of the anti-labor legislation, gave feedback to the union's executive, and went home to warn their co-workers of the provincial government's latest legislative attack.

As these photos show, the conference meant a full two days for the delegates. It combined general sessions involving all participants and a series of 20 concurrent workshops. The small working groups focused on specifics of Bill 19 and how to fight it.

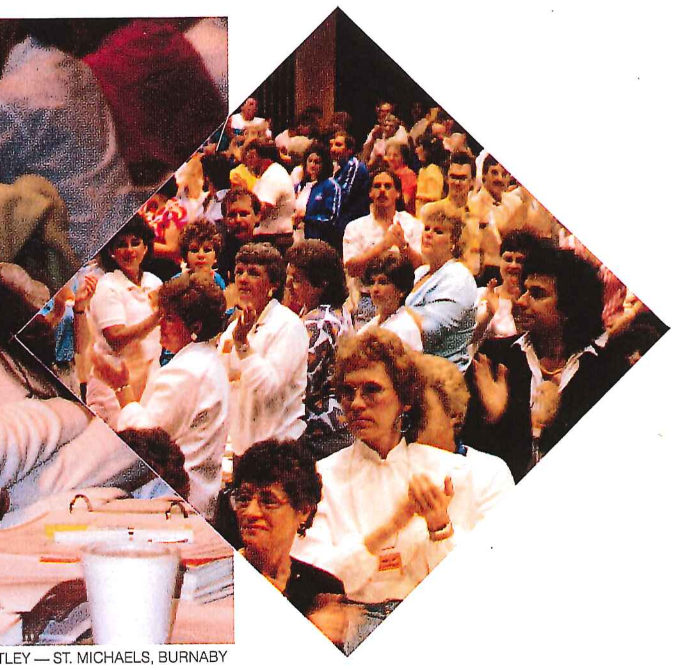
"This meeting shows that union members will see through government propaganda, make informed judgments, and act decisively to defend themselves against bad laws," said HEU President Bill Macdonald.

"The delegates heard the facts and left as committed activists, prepared to speak out and organize local fightback projects. I'm proud of the work done here."

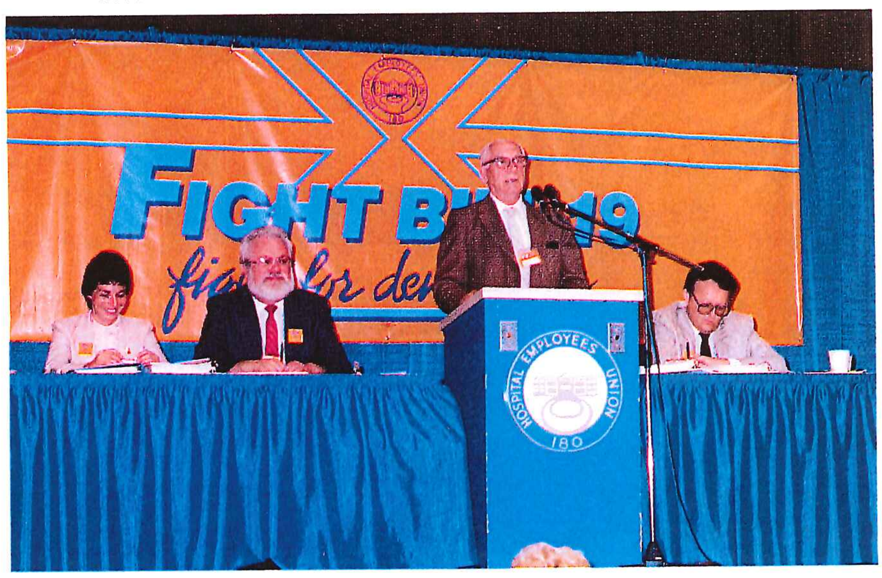
Other featured speakers at the general sessions included: Mike Dumler, a vice president of the B.C. Federation of Labor and B.C. president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees; Dave Werlin, president of the Alberta Federation of Labor; Frank Kennedy, secretary-treasurer of the Vancouver and District Labor Council, and Alan Crawford, first vice president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation.



PATRICIA RIVARD — GORGE, VICTORIA



CHARLENE HARTLEY — ST. MICHAELS, BURNABY



Why this legislation is so offensive

That sermon on Bill 19 isn't by an ardent trade unionist, but from Graham Leslie, the deputy minister of labor who resigned this spring. It's an excerpt from an open letter to Premier Bill Vander Zalm written by the one-time employers' spokesperson just before the June 1 general strike.

Here is a small sampling of how Bill 19 offends Leslie and so many others, even after minor amendments by the government.

ALL POWER TO WHOM? Eliminating the B.C. Labor Relations Board, the legislation gives the authority to intervene in any negotiations to the government and the new Industrial Relations Council (IRC) headed by Commissioner Ed Peck.

At any time, they could step in to oversee collective bargaining, investigate disputes and in many cases impose agreements. This affects both private and public sector workers. No one escapes.

STRIKING OUT. The workers' traditional strength, the right to withhold labor, seems to survive in Bill 19; but that's an illusion. Not only could compulsory arbitration be imposed before or during a strike, but any job action could be ended arbitrarily with a 40-day cooling-off period.

Those strikes allowed to continue would have limited impact because the legislation restricts picketing, promotes the use of strikebreakers, and makes boycotts and hot declarations illegal outside the construction industry.

"By assaulting so many long-standing rights of unionized working men and women, and in particular seeking to deprive them of those rights so arbitrarily and with so little input from their representatives until after the bill was shaped, you have perhaps unwittingly committed an act of legislative violence . . ."

INJURY AND INSULT. The work of virtually any public or private sector employee could be designated an "essential service" under Bill 19. Adding insult to injury, it doesn't even require the IRC to conduct a hearing before making a designation.

UNHAPPY COURTSHIP. One way the legislation involves the courts in labor relations is to allow them to be used to enforce IRC decisions. But Bill 19 does not permit unions to go to court to challenge decisions of the council.

CONTROLS FOREVER. A modified version of the Compensation Stabilization Program remains a permanent fixture under Bill 19. It keeps the employers' so-called "ability-to-pay" as the "paramount" factor in the commissioner's continuing review of arbitrated public sector wages, benefits and other public sector compensation.

UNEQUAL PAY OKAY. Bill 19 orders arbitrators to consider "the need to maintain an appropriate relationship between occupations or classifications" at a workplace. This means things stay as they are, despite any need to implement equal-pay-for-work-of-equal-value.

NON-UNIONIZING. Getting rid of unions and keeping them from organizing workers becomes easier for employers under Bill 19.

The legislation makes it harder for workers to retain their union representation if an employer's operation changes hands; new certification procedures work against the unorganized, and the employer is invited to campaign more aggressively against the union.

Bad news in the budget

While the news media focused on this spring's fight against Bills 19 and 20, the provincial government's 1987-88 budget received relatively little coverage. But no news was definitely not good news — especially for those concerned about health care in B.C.

Introducing the budget this spring, Finance Minister Mel Couvelier said that it "sets the priorities of our government and takes a major step towards meeting them. It represents a fresh start."

This point-by-point analysis by *The Guardian* gives an indication of what he meant.

Smaller share

Health care's slice of the funding pie is getting thinner. Couvelier has given the health ministry 28.6 per cent of total government expenditures this year, down from 28.9 in 1986-87. In 1982-83, the proportion given health was 30.2 per cent.

The differences may seem slight, but they are not. If the provincial government put the same priority on health care today as it did five years ago, another $168 million would be available now for badly needed services.

Numbers Game

The health ministry's 1987-88 budget allocation is only 3.4 per cent higher than the previous year's — and well below the inflation rate predicted by the Conference Board of Canada.

Couvelier's version is that the increase amounts to 8.1 per cent, but that's wrong because he bases it on outdated spending estimates released more than a year ago.

The 3.4-per-cent figure reflects the more accurate "revised forecasts" for 1986-87 provincial government spending that were made public this spring.

Status quo

Playing the same numbers game, Couvelier claimed that operating grants to hospitals will rise this year by 14 per cent, or $200 million. But apparently, this figure is also based on outdated spending estimates for 1986-87.

After discussions with health ministry officials, the B.C. Health Association concluded that the so-called 1987-88 increase represents a status quo situation. There is some real increase for non-wage items, but this will be slightly under the inflation rate.

Up your tax

The eight-per-cent Health Care Maintenance Surtax, introduced as a temporary measure in 1984, has been eliminated — and replaced with an increase in the general income tax rate.

Fees rise

Health care funding may not be rising, but the costs to patients certainly are. This is a sampling.

— The Pharmacare deductible rises $75 so the first $275 of drug costs are not covered. This will cost those who need prescription drugs $15 million a year.

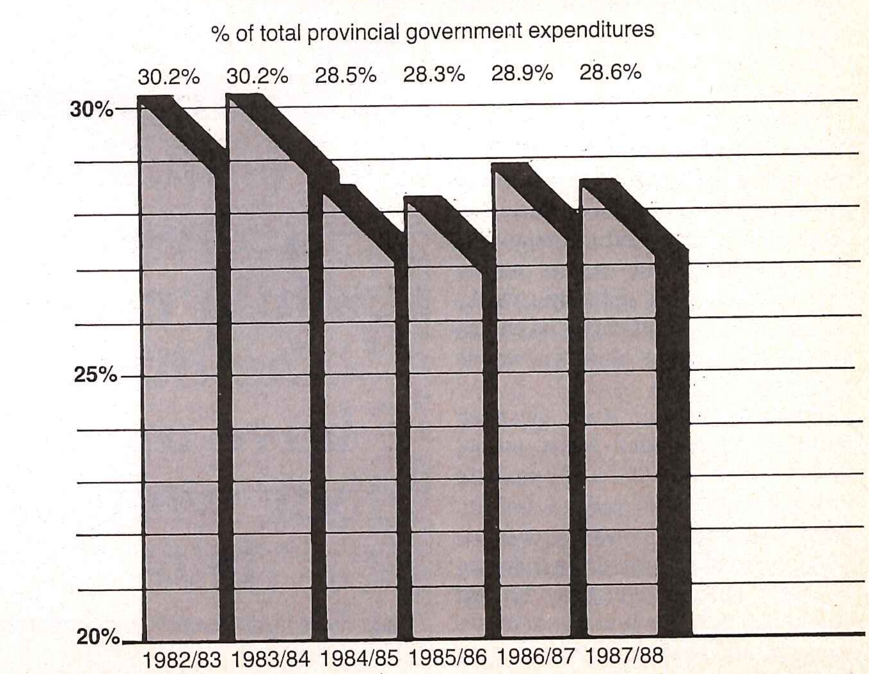
— Senior citizens must now pay $5 per prescription to an annual maximum of $125. This will cost them an additional $22 million annually. To partially compensate, the GAIN for seniors' supplement will be increased by $125 a year.

— New fees of $5 per visit apply to supplementary Medical Services Plan benefits such as physiotherapy, podiatry and chiropractic services.

Premiums, too

With the 10-per-cent jump in Medical Services Plan premiums, the provincial government's direct contribution to MSP falls to 57 per cent this year from the pre-restraint level of 65 per cent.

Health care receives lower priority



Pressures hit all working parents

Crisis is a badly overused word, but it fits Canada's failure to foster a child care system for the children of working parents.

No other word describes the pressures on mothers who have roughly one chance in 16 of finding licensed care for their pre-teen children. In practical terms, this means child care that is informal, unsupervised, unregulated and too often unreliable.

If you're a working parent, you probably know more than enough about the crisis. But are you aware of how widespread it is, of how many others it affects?

First are the children, more than 1.5 million of them under age 13. A generation of young Canadians is growing up today in unlicensed settings or simply left alone, either full-time or outside school hours. The reason: most of today's working parents have literally no choice but to leave their children where they can.

The dilemma is that licensed child care facilities have mileslong waiting lists, and parents must go out and earn a living. Sixty per cent of two-parent families in Canada require the incomes of both spouses or face falling below the poverty line. And single parents, about 85 per cent of whom are women, obviously must enter the job market to provide for their children.

The dilemma is that licensed child care facilities have miles long waiting lists

Single or not, more mothers of young children work than stay home full-time. Last year, this was true of 56 per cent of mothers with children under three, and Statistics Canada says that's increasing by two percentage points annually. Similar figures apply to women with older children.

The fact is that the traditional two-parent, one-income family is the exception now. Only 16 per cent of Canada's families still conform to that outmoded standard. It no longer applies.

What remains is a critical, unfilled need for child care. Meeting it is the responsibility of provincial and federal governments, as senior spokespersons at both levels have made clear. But they have yet to tell Canadians how — and when — the long overdue obligation will be met.

In this issue, The Guardian reviews the bidding at the national level, gauges Victoria's contributions, and looks at how some HEU members try to cope while government makes up its collective mind on dealing with the crisis.

PROMISES, PROMISES

Does government care?

After years of struggling for basic support and getting little but high-flown election promises, Canada's working parents and their children savoured the possibility this summer that help might be at hand.

The federal and provincial governments had set themselves a late July deadline to finalize the details of a national system of child care. And if they delivered, it would be not a moment too soon. That the need had reached crisis proportions was all-too-clear, as *The Guardian* went to press in late spring.

More than two million children across Canada required child care, while only 280,000 spaces were available nationally. In British Columbia alone, an estimated 280,000 children under 13 competed for a total of 17,000 spaces. Especially critical here was the lack of licensed care for infants; for example, only 75 such spaces existed in all Vancouver.

The problem had been building for years, and people seemed ready for someone to intervene. Early this year, a Southam News poll found nearly two-thirds of Canadians agreeing that "governments should provide funding to ensure that everyone who wished to use quality day care can do so."

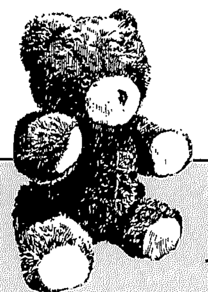
That message was clear enough, but what should be done about it wasn't. Seemingly endless heated discussion had failed to achieve a consensus on addressing the crisis. The latest hope was that the governments' self-imposed deadline might bring order and a useful end to the controversy.

Since early this year, debate had focused on a parliamentary committee that finished its $1 million investigation in March. But the Special Committee on Child Care split along party lines on how, not if, government should deal with the crisis.

On one side, the committee's Progressive Conservative majority stressed direct assistance to parents who would be left essentially on their own to find suitable child care. The dissenting opposition parties wanted more emphasis on the creation and regulation of badly needed child care facilities.

The committee's Tory majority recommended a mix of: tax credits for parents, longer maternity leave, some grants to child care facilities, and business incentives for workplace child care. In the first year, this would mean federal expenditures of $700 million. About 60 per cent would be parents' tax credits that would replace existing child care expense deductions. Grants to non-profit facilities would account for 12 per cent, although only 46,000 new child care spaces would be created nationally.

That would be a terrible waste of money, declared NDP committee member Margaret Mitchell, who said it should be spent on creating 420,000 new spaces over five years. Her minority report outlined a phased-in national program lead-



A deepening need

Trying to start a workplace child care centre, union members at Vancouver General Hospital decided to test the market with a local survey.

What they found by way of need is probably typical of many B.C. health agencies.

The proposed VGH centre would serve 40 children age five or younger, including eight infants. But 172 union and management parents were ready to enroll, nearly a third seeking care for two or more children.

The greatest need, at 41 per cent, was for infant care, with toddlers at 30 per cent and preschoolers at 28 per cent.

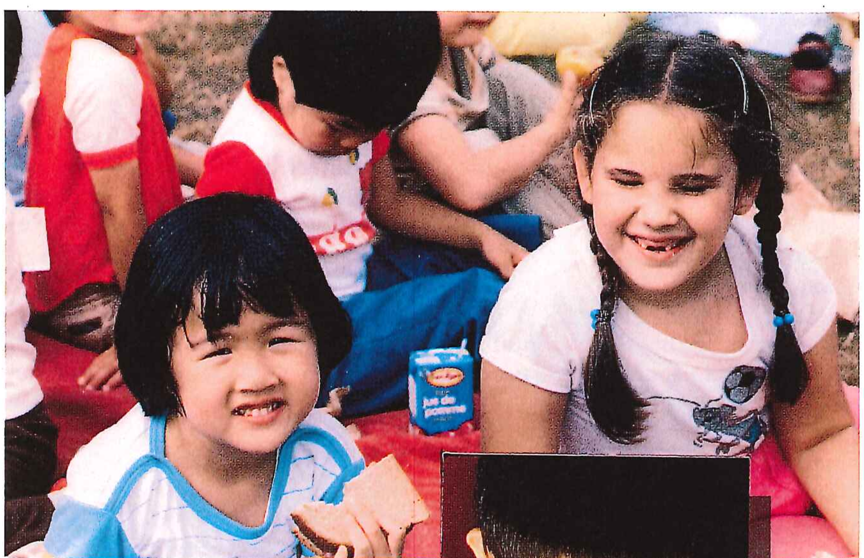
Only 21 per cent of the parents already had licensed care facilities for their children; 66 per cent relied on babysitters, the rest on other unregulated care. No matter what the arrangement, only 30 per cent reported that their children received meals while in non-parental care. Only 12 per cent had some sort of development program — that is, an activity more meaningful than watching television.

Problems with their existing child care services caused 26 per cent of the parents to be absent from work. Specified reasons included: unreliability of care provider, 33 per cent; limitations of short term care, 35 per cent, and parent's changing work schedule, 22 per cent.

Survey respondents indicated they would "definitely" transfer from their existing child care for: a convenient VGH location, the provision of meals, an educational development program, and flexible hours of operation.

ing to universal child care and better maternity leave and benefits.

Without endorsing Mitchell's program or proposing a specific alternative, Liberal committee member Lucie Pepin warned that the Tory proposals would "perpetuate the use of unlicensed, often inadequate child care. I don't think



Child care is imperative in Canada today because most mothers of youngsters like these are required to work.

there's any point in putting money in the hands of parents when there are no spaces to buy."

Child care activists also voiced strong criticism of "the amount of dollars going to parents through the tax system. There is no accountability to ensure the children are provided with quality care," said Penny Coates, president of the Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association and a spokesperson for the B.C. Daycare Action Coalition.

And underlying all the debate was another longstanding, contentious and fundamental issue: whether profit-making child care facilities should receive tax dollars in any form, directly or indirectly.

"If government meets demands for a social service by expanding it into the private sector, this is the equivalent of privatizing it. There is no avoiding the fact — quality care and profits are at opposite poles, you cannot have both," declared Barbara Cameron of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

An internal committee study, leaked in January, apparently supported that contention. Reviewing the study data, University of Toronto researcher Martha Friendly said it "found commercial child care was of poorer quality than non-profit child care".

But Committee Chairperson Shirley Martin said that's not a federal concern. She would encourage non-profit licensed care, but leave "the decision on profit to the province under whose jurisdiction the matter rightly belongs." Said Leo Duguay, another Tory committee member: "If you put the money in the hands of parents, then they can decide what's appropriate."

That fit the thinking of federal Health and Welfare Minister Jake Epp. Supporting the majority report, he said, "Many parents prefer the informal system (such as relatives or babysitters looking after children). And that's why I believe the committee came forward with the type of recommendation they did." Earlier this year, he called it "poppycock" to suggest that child care facilities offer more stimulation than homes.

The Tory philosophy might have worked 20 years ago — when the norm was a two-parent, one-income family — but no longer. By the middle of this decade, 84 per cent of Canadian families had broken out of the old mold. Two decades of irreversible social change had produced a new norm of single-parent families, and an ailing economy had for years made going to work a necessity for both partners in most two-parent families.

To live with that reality, Canadians in all parts of the country

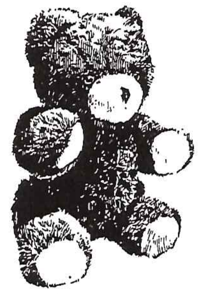
required accessible, affordable new child care facilities. Building them would not be cheap, but it was necessary.

When the summer began, the federal opposition parties and some provinces seemed to understand that. They acknowledged to varying degrees that addressing the crisis means ending the national shortage of quality child care spaces. But the federal government would be the deciding factor in any meaningful developments.

This spring, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had promised to find significant funding for a comprehensive child care system. This was good news to those still waiting for action on his 1984 election promise of "rapid, realistic and efficient solutions" to the child care crisis. They also hoped he remembered to tell Jake Epp, who was to work with the provinces on finalizing the national system this summer.

For many working parents, it was the only hope they had.

B.C. holds to status quo



Early this spring, B.C. Finance Minister Mel Couvelier sounded as if his 1987-88 budget had good news for working parents, the promise of a 30-per-cent jump in expenditures for child care.

But his budget speech could have been printed on rose-colored paper. One analysis put the real increase at only seven per cent, for a new total of $26.7 million; and that rise apparently depended on a provincial windfall from anticipated federal tax changes.

The truth seems to be that British Columbia seems unwilling to do much more than maintain the status quo.

Most working parents receive no direct provincial child care aid because families must be "in need" to qualify for assistance — and that phrase is taken very seriously. The government won't help unless their earnings fall a third or more below the poverty line. This

How the provinces help — or don't

This table is based on information as of December 1986 provided by the B.C. Daycare Action Coalition. Limited space prevents showing other provincial grants such as those for rent support, fund-raising, resource centres and enhancing child care workers' salaries. These are available in Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba, respectively. British Columbia offers no ongoing grants to facilities, only those for emergencies indicated below.

Province	Start-Up Grants	Operating Grants	Equipment Grants
British Columbia	None	None	None (but up to $5,000 for emergency repair/relocation)
Alberta	None	$257 monthly for infants, $131 for toddlers, and $78 for preschoolers	None
Saskatchewan	$600 per space	Only to northern communities	Annual $100 per space
Manitoba	$450 per space	$6.70 daily per infant and less for older children	None (but a yearly $968 per space for maintenance)
Ontario	Half of start-up expenses	$3 to $4 daily per licensed space	Yes
Quebec	$1,200 per space and up to $5,000 for project manager (also applies to expansions)	$4 daily per licensed space	Yes
Newfoundland	$1,000 per centre	None	20¢ daily per space
New Brunswick	$100 per space	$78 annually per space	$100 annually per occupied space
Nova Scotia	$100 per space	None	$100 annually per occupied space
Prince Edward Island	None	None	None

leaves middle-class families, and many with low incomes, out in the cold.

The prospect is even bleaker for direct funding of child care facilities. Unlike most other provinces, B.C. offers neither regular operating grants, nor start-up assistance despite the critical shortage of these facilities for children of all ages (See table on Page 13.)

What's curious is that money for this is available to the province. Under the Canada Assistance Plan, the federal government would reimburse B.C. for 50 per cent of its direct maintenance grants (DMG) to approved child care facilities. Other provinces — notably Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick — already tap this funding source. But the B.C. government won't use it to give facilities here the same badly-needed support.

By itself, the DMG system cannot end the child care crisis. But as the B.C. Daycare Action Coalition says, "it is an important step on the road to universally accessible and affordable daycare."

The problem may be that the provincial government has no desire to take that road.

Real KIDS

Politicians may see the child care crisis in abstract terms, but it's a rock-hard reality for HEU members with children. Women — many of parenting age — make up 85 per cent of the union's membership. And as shift workers, their needs are greater and go unmet more often than those of parents in 9-to-5 jobs.

Tired of political rhetoric, some are taking action by themselves.

In New Westminster, members of health care unions at Royal Columbian Hospital are in the second year of their own partial response to the crisis. Called Kolumbia Inn Daycare Society, it is probably the first workplace child care centre at a B.C. general hospital.

KIDS was born December 1985 in an old, 3,000-square-foot psychiatric day care unit made available by the hospital and upgraded by the society for $15,000.

The centre serves about two dozen children, including infants, and offers emergency care on a space-available basis. Most of the parents are hospital workers, although KIDS is open to the community because it initially took over some commitments of the now-defunct New Westminster Y Daycare.

The quality of care and the activities for the children are excellent, according to Joyce Fletcher, HEU member on the KIDS board. She also stressed that child care for infants is a relative rarity, although it ranks among the greatest needs of working parents.

The RCH centre does work well, but it remains at least partially a band-aid solution because some needs can't be met. Sixty children were on the waiting list early this year; and although the 13-hour days are longer than typical, they don't accommodate many shift workers. Finally, KIDS' rates went up in March. At $475 a month for infants, the cost is below the national average of $525 — but not necessarily affordable for all HEU parents.

Still, Fletcher and her colleagues are very pleased with how far the centre has come; and other workers with little or no child care see it as a model for similar developments. Requests for start-up information and help have come from a half dozen major hospitals across the province.

But other units wanting KIDS of their own will need the same support: funding for start-up and ongoing expenses.

When it began, the New Westminster group had readily adaptable space from the hospital, a $75,000 federal employment development grant, $3,000 from the Health Sciences Association, $1,800 from HEU, and $1,000 from the New Westminster Chapter of the Registered Nurses' Association of B.C. Not all units will be as fortunate.

And even KIDS may be in a precarious situation if the gap grows between its operating costs and contributions from parents.

Ultimately, government help is imperative at RCH and other units where working parents struggle to raise children. They must have a lasting solution to the child care crisis, and that means adequate funding to assure decent, qualified non-parental care for all who need it.

Bad bills circulating

Contrary to what the premier would have British Columbians believe, his bills will only create more confrontation, fewer jobs and an economic nose-dive.

Bill 20 demolishes education; Bill 19 will bust the unions and ruin the economy. And now there's Bill 28 (Elections Act) to ensure the Socreds remain perpetually in power.

When bad bills show up in our currency, they are removed from circulation. That would be the logical answer to Vander Zalm's bad bills.

Trish Beaugrand, Langley Unit

Gainers workers thank HEU

Our membership would like to thank you for the support you gave us in our strike against Peter Pocklington and Gainers Inc.

The strike began June 1, 1986. We soon learned the true intentions of Gainers. On June 5, Mr. Pocklington was quoted (in the news media) as saying, "I am not going to have another collective agreement with anyone".

In mid-June, we learned that our pension plan was being *terminated* effective May 31, and Gainers was going to pocket the surplus.

A quirk of Alberta's labor law, which the labor movement is attempting to change, allows employers to use a 24-hour lockout to unilaterally change the collective agreement. We prevented this by being on strike.

Gainers had always insisted that scabs would remain in the plant, and earlier attempts to negotiate always broke off over this issue.

This was one of the most bitter strikes in Alberta's history. We found ourselves fighting the police, the courts and Peter Pocklington.

The final settlement on December 14, 1986, fell short of what we wanted on the wage issue; but we won on the main union issues. A collective agreement has been negotiated. The scabs are all gone. The pension plan has been renegotiated. Gainers was not able to unilaterally change the collective agreement.

There is no doubt in our minds that Peter Pocklington's intention was to destroy the union. His hiring of Leo Bolanes, a known union buster from the United States, was to enable him to achieve this goal.

We are proud of the fact that out of 1,080 members on strike, only about 10 crossed the picket lines in six months. We believe that Pocklington would have beaten us if a sizeable number of members had crossed the lines.

The support of unions and people across Canada prevented Peter Pocklington from destroying our union. The membership thanks you for your support from the bottom of our hearts. We would never have survived without this support.

Gordon Steele, Secretary-Treasurer, United Food & Commercial Workers, Local 280P

Proud of Burnaby pickets

The HEU table officers at Burnaby Hospital would like to commend our members for the respect they showed to the Health Sciences Association picket line last fall.

We are very proud of the way our membership conducted themselves. Their support made us proud. To all of them we would like to say, "Walk tall, and be proud of the way you conducted yourselves."

Chairperson Bill O'Brien, Vice Chairperson Frank Gentile, and Secretary-Treasurer Robbin McCurrach

Vandalism hits sacred trust

During our first HEU emergency conference in May, it became very evident that it will take a united effort by the labor movement in B.C. to not only keep our democratic rights, which have been fought for with workers' lives, but the democratic rights of working people and their families across Canada for generations to come.

This was the underlying theme of all the conference speakers. Their message was plain and simple. We have been given a sacred trust by those who have given us the rights we now enjoy, some given to us with the lives of working people.

Our strength is in our unity. Bill Vandalism and the Social Credit government will get away with anything we let them. If Bills 19 and 20 are not defeated, it will be because we, the working people of B.C., have become our own worst enemy.

Everyone should realize that as

LETTERS

B.C. goes in its labor fight, so goes the rest of Canada in the not-so-distant future. The HEU provincial and regional offices have done an excellent job of informing us of the contents of Bill 19.

No one, I repeat, no one can escape the effects. If unionized workers' wages, benefits and working conditions go down, so too will the non-unionized workers'. People from all walks of life depend on unions for better and safer working conditions, higher standards of living and a better way of life for all our children in the future.

It is up to each of us to say, "Enough is enough!" People are born free, as God intended. We are not born to be anyone's slave, and we will keep our freedom, no matter what.

Gerald Hernesmaa,
St. Paul's Hospital Unit

MILESTONES

Ron Ackles, a nursing orderly at Summerland General Hospital, has retired after more than 14 years at the hospital.

An HEU member since 1973, Brother Ackles has held all unit executive positions up to vice-chairperson.

His retirement plans were to "catch a million tons of fish, get rich and chase women."

Frances McPherson has retired as an attendant at Yucalta Lodge, a Campbell River long term care facility. After eight years in that position, she plans some gardening, travel and hiking.

Stan Feren, a porter at Prince George Regional Hospital, has ended a 34-year career as a hospital employee.

Brother Feren had mixed feelings about leaving the large staff, which had become like his family, and he expected to keep busy at the Elks Lodge and Order of the Moose and with occasional trips to visit relatives.

Elton Short has retired from Peace Arch District Hospital after 25 years with the hospital. An engineer, he was active in HEU activities and served several times as chairperson.

Over the years, Brother Short kept local HEU members well supplied with vegetables from his farm; and he planned to "run the homestead" after retiring.

Betty Laing, a senior admitting clerk at Richmond General Hospital, has retired after 22 years with the hospital.

A shop steward since 1981, Sister Laing had also been unit vice-chairperson and secretary and intended to become active in a local seniors' group. She also planned to spend time travelling, writing and reading and pursuing photography and music.

Ted Meysen has retired from the maintenance department of South Okanagan General Hospital in Oliver. During his 23 years with the hospital, he held numerous HEU unit positions: unit chairperson, secretary-treasurer and trustee. He is also a past exalted ruler of B.P.O.E.

Travel was high on Brother Meysen's retirement agenda.

Marie Ibbitson has retired from her position as a casual kitchen worker at Swan Valley Lodge, a long term care facility in Creston. She planned to take things easy, catch up on gardening and go on a few trips.

Dorothy Swidzinsky has retired after 16 years as a laundry worker at West Coast General Hospital in Port Alberni. She planned to concentrate on relaxing and on enjoying her patio and garden.

Mission to Moscow

One of a contingent of 90 Canadian delegates, HEU Financial Secretary Mary LaPlante travelled to Russia in late June for the World Congress of Women.

More than 5,000 delegates from all parts of the world were expected to attend the Moscow meeting. Its goals were to promote better mutual understanding and cooperation of women on questions of peace and disarmament, national independence and democracy and women's and children's rights.

No sale at Eaton's

Workers at five Eaton's stores in southern Ontario have voted by a two-to-one margin to decertify the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

The February vote was the aftermath to a bitter six-month strike two years ago that drew support from church, labor and women's groups across Canada. Most workers who cast ballots in the decertification vote had either crossed picket lines during the strike or were hired after it had ended.

With a third of the members still behind it, the union promised to return. "We're not going to walk away from them," said Representative Donna Johansen. And union lawyer Stewart Saxe warned against interpreting one group's setback as a defeat for the entire labor movement.

One positive outcome of the Eaton's struggle was an Ontario law that now allows new bargaining units to have first collective agreements imposed if employers bargain in bad faith.

Unity is news

HEU members at Burnaby Hospital have a new way of spreading the news about union affairs and issues affecting working people. It's UNITY, a newsletter whose name is an acronym for Union News & Information to You.

Activity worker Maureen Foss won $50 in a unit contest to name the quarterly publication.

The first eight-page issue of UNITY appeared in February.

HEU supports petition

About two dozen units across B.C. responded to a Provincial Office request this spring for petitions opposing cuts and layoffs at the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

They were: Beacon Hill Lodge, Burnaby Hospital, Burns Lake District Hospital, Dr. Helmcken Memorial Hospital (Clearwater Unit), Fort St. John General Hospital, Glacier View Lodge, Glengarry Hospital, Kelowna General Hospital, Kiwanis Village Care Home (Gibsons Unit), Louis Brier Hospital, Mount St. Mary Hospital, Mountain View Lodge, Port McNeill & District Hospital, Royal Jubilee Hospital, South Okanagan General Hospital, Summerland General Hospital, Sunset Lodge, Swan Valley Lodge, Trillium Lodge (Parksville Unit), VS/Vancouver Lodge, Willowhaven Private Hospital, Windermere District Hospital (Invermere Unit) and Wrinch Memorial Hospital (Hazelton Unit).

How more is less

Despite a slight increase in total membership, Canada's trade unions represent less and less of the country's work force.

Labor Canada reported recently that total union membership rose by 64,000 last year, while the proportion of Canadians in unions continued a decline that began in 1982-83. Only 29.7 per cent of Canada's 12.7 million workers were union members in 1986, the lowest level in a decade.

The reason is a concerted effort by employers to block union growth, said Ed Johnston, organizing director of the 2.2-million-member Canadian Labor Congress. "The spillover from the United States in the drive for union-free management is pretty intense," he said. "It's a heavy arm that's on us now right across the country."

The labor movement hasn't kept pace with the major growth sectors of the economy, according to University of Toronto labor expert Noah Metz. He said unions sign up relatively few new members in high-technology industries and in service sectors such as banking and retail sales.

Singing for labor on the line

British Columbia singers and musicians have donated their talents to make an audio cassette intended to raise funds for workers on strike.

"Hold the Fort — Songs for Labor on the Line" features internationally known artists such as Bim, Connie Kaldor, Stringband, D.O.A., and Bruce "Utah" Phillips. The music ranges from folk to labor standards to reggae/ska to agitrock.

Several Lower Mainland book and record stores offer the $10 cassette. It is also available from: Festival Records, c/o Vancouver Folk Music Festival, 3271 Main St., Vancouver, B.C. V5V 3M6; phone 879-2931.

The recording is a production of the Vancouver and District Labor Council. More information can be obtained there or from Julius Fisher, c/o 2149 Parker St., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2L6; phone 253-6222.

Ways of winning

A half-dozen HEU delegates were among 540 trade unionists to attend "Ways of Winning", a Toronto conference on ways to fight contracting out and privatization.

Sponsored by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the two-day meeting attracted 150 more participants than expected. They came to share experiences with the problem and to learn hands-on skills to try to address it.

"If we take some of this basic knowledge and start implementing it in our units, we'll be able to nip the problem in the bud," said Stan Reese, HEU regional vice president for the Kootenays. With him at the conference were Carmela Allevato, Alberta Dorval, Rhon L'Heureux, Nancy Macdonald and Lecia Stewart.

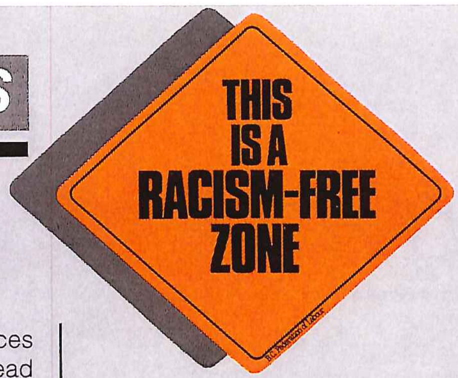
Representing HEU at the national contracting-out conference in Toronto were: Rhon L'Heureux, Carmela Allevato, Lecia Stewart, Alberta Dorval, Stan Reese and Nancy Macdonald.

They reviewed successful fightback strategies, including information gathering and mobilizing the membership.

Conference participants agreed that the most difficult kind of contracting-out to oppose is the reduction of members' work and elimination of unionized jobs through attrition.

Hundreds of HEU members joined peace marches and rallies across B.C. in late April. Shown here is the Vancouver march, which attracted some 80,000 participants demonstrating for an end to the arms race and a start toward world peace.

A job for us



Trade unions should join forces with community groups to lead the fight against racism, declared HEU Representative Raj Chouhan, who was invited to address a Winnipeg May Day Rally organized by the Workers of Color Support Network.

"It is true that only 30 per cent of workers are organized," he said. "But when the society at large has a serious problem like racism, and the majority of those affected are working people, then organized labor is in a more important position to lead the fight."

He said that the strength of unions should be combined with the "far richer" experience that community organizations have in fighting racism. "If such forces can be united, it can become a very strong force to weed out racism from society."

Taking on this battle would benefit individual union members and their families both inside and outside the workplace, according to Chouhan. And a positive by-product would be to help labor generally.

"A broader public support is needed for the labor movement's efforts to protect and advance workers' rights. The negative public image of unions as self-protective and elitist institutions can only be corrected if unions start playing a prominent role in areas like human rights."

BOYCOTTS BOYCOTTS

Union members around the province are being asked by the B.C. Federation of Labor to boycott the following products and companies.

In all cases, the federation has acted at the request of the unions representing workers at these workplaces who hope that boycotting will force the resolution of longstanding disputes.

The boycotts remain in force until the disputes are settled.

- *Consumer Reports* (Union Label & Service Trades Dept., AFL-CIO, and New York Newspaper Guild): all Consumer Union publications.
- Hyundai (Building Trades Council): all Hyundai products.
- Chilean goods (B.C. Federation of Labor): check labels on grapes, peaches, plums, raisins, nectarines, lobster, onions and wine.
- Lettuce (Canadian Labor Congress): Donny, Red Coach, Big Fred, SAS, Big A, Bobby & Andrews brands.
- Louisiana Pacific Corporation (Carpenters/IWA): forest products including construction material, Waferwood construction panels, Pabco Xonolite insulation, Weatherseal windows and doors.
- Victoria Plywood: any items identified by the logo "Vicply".
- California table grapes (United Farmworkers of America).
- South Africa: any products originating there.

HOT EDICTS

- Calwood Industries (Carpenters Union Local 1928): millwork and interior fixtures manufactured by this Surrey company, mainly for large projects on the Lower Mainland.
- Hyundai-Kerkhoff (B.C. and Yukon Building Trades Council).
- Royal Canadian Legion in the Fraser Valley (Hotel, Restaurant, Culinary & Bartenders' Union, Local 40): branches #4 in Chilliwack, #15 in Abbotsford and #265 in Aldergrove.
- Slade & Stewart Ltd. (Retail Wholesale Union, Local 580): located in Vancouver, Kamloops, Terrace.
- Okanagan H-R-I Supply Ltd. (Retail Wholesale Union, Local 580): all products and services.
- Purolator Courier (Retail Wholesale Union, Local 580): all B.C. operations.
- Stevenson Construction (B.C. & Yukon Building Trades Council): Pennyfarthing site.
- Entex Doors Systems Ltd. (Carpenters' Shop Local 1928): all products of this Port Coquitlam company.

No to profit

Business has no business running hospitals and nursing homes, according to a national public opinion survey.

Most Canadians believe government does a better job: 74 per cent for hospitals and 61 per cent for nursing homes in a recent poll conducted by Vector Public Education Inc., a union-sponsored polling consortium.

And British Columbians led the nation in opposing profit-centred health care. Survey results for this province showed 89 per cent saying that hospitals are best run by government.

"Wrath of Grapes"

That's the title of a video produced by the United Farmworkers of America to support its current boycott of California table grapes. The 14-minute production describes the need for free and fair certification votes, the bad-faith bargaining of growers, and the dangers posed by pesticides to workers and others.

HEU supports the boycott and encourages showings of the video at unit meetings. A copy in VHS format is available from the Provincial Office.

Poster for UFW video emphasizes potential effects of harmful pesticides.

Waging war on a fair wage policy

Taking a sharp turn to the right, Vancouver City Council decided early this year to kill a fair wage policy that had required major contractors to match the established pay levels of city employees.

The council glossed over statistical data on bidding results, over surveys showing community support for the policy, and over a majority of public delegations — including HEU's — that urged saving the policy.

Mayor Gordon Campbell said the move would force union contractors to "sharpen their pencils" when bidding on city projects. But many observers predicted that workers would be the only ones to pay. Employees of union shops stood to lose increasingly scarce work; those in non-union operations faced cuts in already-low wages.

"It is surely unacceptable for a rich, enlightened city to allow some small extra profit to be squeezed from the economically vulnerable," HEU President Bill Macdonald told the council in a marathon session that saw 22 delegations speak on the policy change.

Not only would the city's savings be marginal and simply line the pockets of contractors, he warned, but the general economy would also suffer because their employees would have less money to spend on food, shelter and other necessities.

"If this money is not available, the small businesses are the first to suffer. After all, how many suits does the big contractor buy? He can only wear one at a time, whereas his workers may buy hundreds. This applies to other commodities as well."

Macdonald and others speaking to save the policy pointed out that more than 80 per cent of Lower Mainland residents had supported the fair wage bidding concept when Vancouver introduced it in 1985.

Defenders of the policy also stressed to the council that non-union contractors had not suffered but, in fact, had taken half the city's major contracts in the previous 18 months. And they still held a rough $4-an-hour advantage by avoiding non-wage contract obligations honored by union companies.

But reasoned argument made no difference. That had been anticipated accurately by the city hall staff who recommended elimination of the fair wage policy, saying that it just didn't fit the biases of the newly-elected council.

With others, Macdonald asked the council to "see beyond your predictable political viewpoint and keep Vancouver a fair and decent city for all." But the 9-2 vote followed party lines, the only nays coming from aldermen of the Committee of Progressive Electors.

Vancouver City Council had followed its ideological heart.

Canada's shrinking circle of wealth

By Ben Swankey

Prices and taxes go up almost every day. Working people find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Living standards for the majority of Canadians are on a downhill slide, and real poverty grows in our country.

But it isn't that way for all Canadians. At the top of the totem pole is a small group of wealthy corporations, conglomerates and families that get richer every day. Furthermore, the wealth of our country is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. All of this results directly from the splurge of mergers and takeovers occurring at an unprecedented rate.

Many of the biggest corporations in Canada are foreign-owned. They control decisive sectors of our economy such as resources and manufacturing. But a big section of our economy is also Canadian-owned, and this is where the growth of wealth and its concentration in a few hands has reached major proportions in the past few years.

Canada's wealthiest families — the Reichmans, the Bronfmans, Paul Desmarais, the Irvings, the Thomsons and the Eatons — have assets with a combined value of more than $100 billion. At least 10 other Canadian families have assets exceeding $1 billion each.

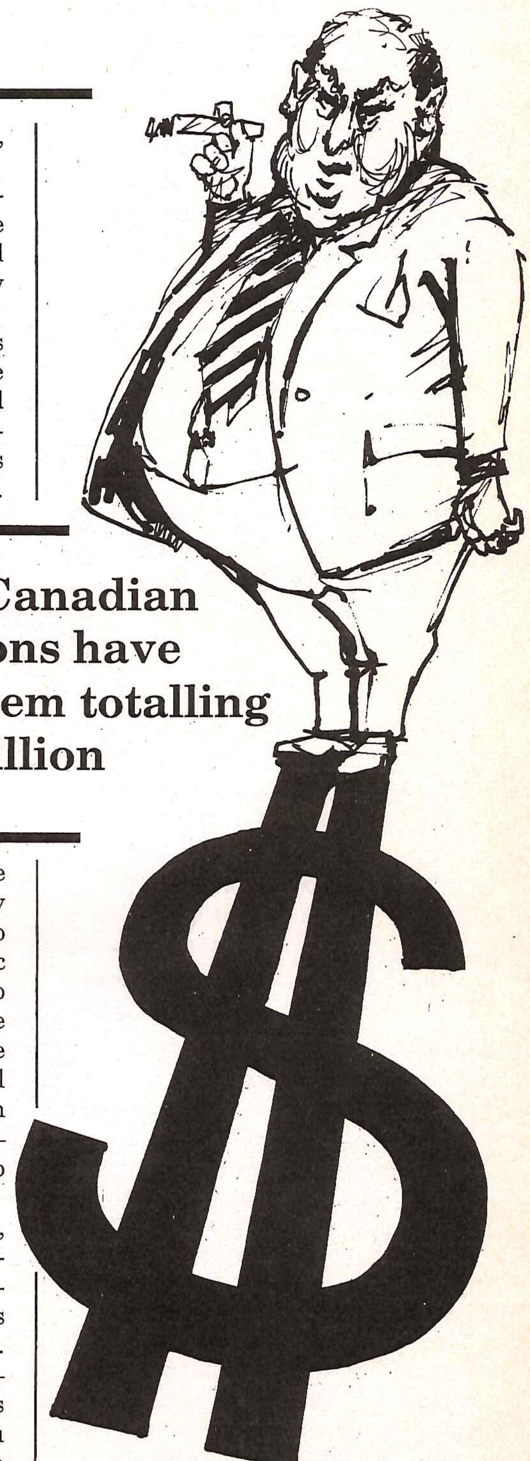
The two biggest Canadian-owned corporations — Bell Canada Enterprises and Canadian Pacific — have assets between them totalling more than $100 billion. Bell Enterprises, with telephone monopolies in Ontario and Quebec, makes a profit of close to $1 billion a year.

Five big retailers control 70 per cent of the food market (Steinbergs, Oshawa Group or IGA, Safeway, Provigo and Loblaws).

The five biggest banks in Canada, all Canadian-owned, have been growing at a phenomenal rate, their combined assets now totalling $382.6 billion.

Three groups control Canada's media: the Thomson family, the Southam Torstar partnership and the MacLean-Hunter Group. Ownership of Baton Broadcasting gives the Eaton family control of CTV.

The two biggest Canadian owned corporations have assets between them totalling more than $100 billion



This corporate control of the media, besides being a money machine, enables a few groups to exert a decisive influence on public opinion. Big business won two recent B.C. elections by having the corporate-controlled media make stars out of a discredited Bill Vander Zalm and an unknown Gordon Campbell in Vancouver — while vilifying reform leaders Bob Skelly and Harry Rankin.

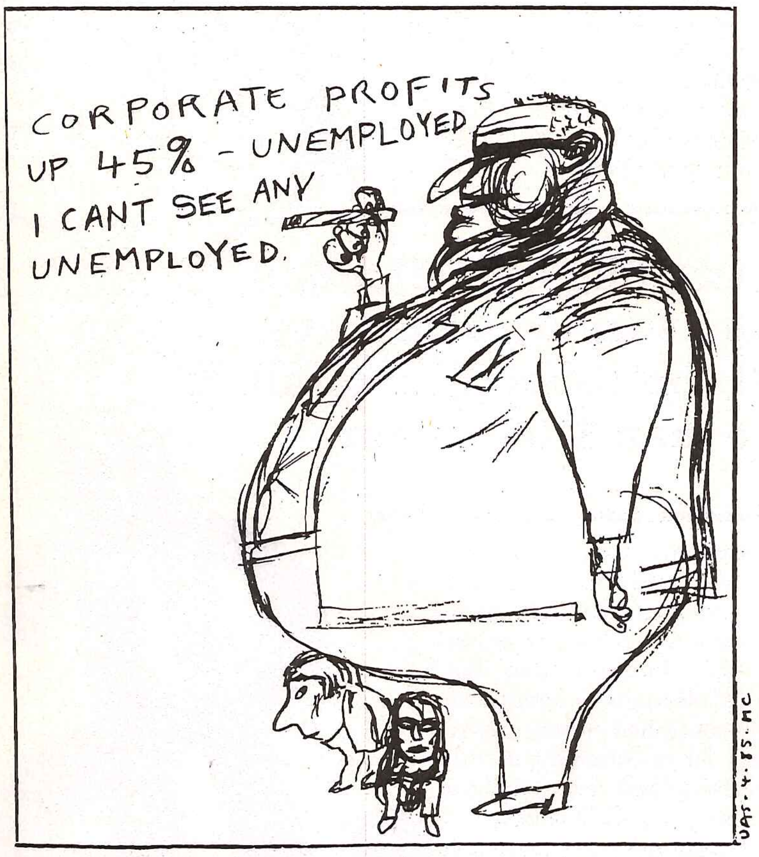
Canada's wealthiest families, corporations and banks own literally thousands of companies ranging from billion-dollar enterprises to some worth "only" a few million. Whenever you buy anything — gasoline or beauty aids, groceries or a home, clothes or beer — you pay a surcharge that goes into the coffers of this small economic elite.

The concentration of wealth in the hands of a small minority of the population is speeding up, as shown by the acceleration of mergers and takeovers. In the 1960s, the rate was about 250 a year. It doubled between 1971 and 1984, and last year passed the 800 mark. Recent takeovers include: the Bank of B.C., by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank; 23 Woodward's food floors, by Safeway; B.C. Forest Products, by Fletcher Challenge of New Zealand; Cominco, by an international zinc cartel, and CP Air, by Pacific Western Airlines.

What have been the results for the average Canadian and for Canada of this rapid concentration of wealth in a few hands?

First, takeovers and mergers do not create any new industries or new jobs. They simply distribute the existing wealth of the country.

Second, when a corporation takes over another company by paying a higher-than-market price for its shares, somebody has to foot the bill. It's always the consumer and the workers.



Concentration of wealth enables a few people to manipulate not only the economy but also all levels of government to suit their own narrow profit-motivated purposes. It leads to monopolies and cartels where price-fixing becomes the accepted practice. Competition is bought out or squeezed out, and the consumer is over-charged.

The oil cartel is a good example. Recently, it increased the price of gasoline by three cents a litre, while the federal government added another two cents. Every one-cent increase costs consumers as a group $450 million.

When a company is taken over, it is usually subjected to what is called restructuring. Branches which are not profitable enough, or are in competition with the acquisitor, are closed and their employees laid off. Restraint policies are introduced to make the company lean, mean and efficient — always at the expense of its employees and the consuming public.

This corporate concentration of wealth is the main driving force behind the push for deregulation, privatization, free trade and the arms race, all of which benefit the corporate sector. It is also the source of the vicious campaign against trade unions, the demands for concessions, and the pressure on governments to reduce deficits by cutting social programs.

How is it that takeovers and mergers are proceeding at such a rapid pace in Canada? One factor is that Canada has no legislation at all to control takeovers. Our anti-combines law is so weak and ineffective that corporations simply thumb their noses at it.

What can be done about the growing concentration of wealth by a small economic elite? Obviously, there are no quick or easy solutions.

The big conglomerates, both Canadian and foreign, must be either broken up or nationalized and placed under public control. A mixed economy, with both private and public ownership and the elimination of monopolies and cartels, would seem to be the only way to restore genuine free enterprise and competition in the market place.

Our anti-combines law is so weak and ineffective that corporations simply thumb their noses at it.

Labor, the source of all wealth, must have a say in the management of the economy and the workplace. Human rights in the Canadian constitution should include the rights to: a job, education, a home, health care — and the absolute right, free of court interference, to organize unions, to strike and to picket.

The creation of full employment requires a bigger and stronger manufacturing industry and the expansion of our social programs, including health care.

The $10 billion a year Canada now spends in the arms race should be diverted to socially useful peacetime production. It is time, too, that Canada spoke out independently for peace, instead of just being an echo of President Ronald Reagan's insane and dangerous foreign policy.

To achieve such major reforms is a formidable task. The domestic and foreign corporations we are up against are very powerful. But we have the numbers if we can agree on policy and unite our ranks. An urgent requirement is a coalition of all groups and classes victimized by the corporate sector.

The whole issue deserves widespread debate and discussion in the ranks of labor, among the parties of the political left and by citizens' groups. At stake are our jobs, our living standard, the welfare of our children and, in the nuclear age, the very existence of our planet.

We have to take our future into our own hands. No one else will do it for us.

(Ben Swankey is a labor historian and this spring was a featured speaker at HEU's emergency conference on Bill 19.)

Alarms ring in business community

The rapidly growing concentration of economic power in so few hands has alarmed even some in the business community. A sampling:

"Without new rules, we hurtle towards financial feudalism, with our children as economic serfs," warned Diane Francis, Toronto Star business writer, in her highly-informative new book *Controlling Interest.*

"We must grapple with the problem of concentration of substantial economic power in Canada in the hands of a new aristocracy consisting of twenty or thirty powerful families and the Canadian banks," cautioned Henry Knowles, formerly Canada's top security watchdog.

"In a number of years, there will be six groups running this country," predicted Bernie Ghert, president of Cadillac Fairview.

Massive funding supports takeovers

Where does the money come from for the growing concentration of wealth in Canada? The takeover artists have huge funds at their disposal, including:

- Canada's private and public pension funds, which amounted to $238 billion in 1985 and have been growing at $19 billion a year.
- Deferred corporate taxes, now worth about $50 billion. Governments allow corporations to delay paying their taxes until some indefinite time in the future.
- Other tax breaks and tax concessions to corporations worth about $20 billion a year.
- Grants and subsidies of another $20 billion a year to the corporate sector.
- Exempting dividends to corporations from income tax.
- Allowing interest on loans for takeover purposes to be deducted from income tax.
- Permitting big corporations to reduce their overall tax liability by deducting losses by one of their companies from the profits of other, unrealted companies.
- The seizure of funds from employee pension plans, which in 1985 amounted to $290 million.
- Excess profits from price-fixing.
- Huge profits made by big developers and real estate speculators at public expense.

By Tom Berger

A court battle for free speech

The writ which Attorney-General Brian Smith issued on June 2 against the labor movement, including HEU and Secretary-Business Manager Jack Gerow, was unprecedented.

The attorney-general charged the unions and union leaders with treason, sedition and intimidating the legislature. These are grave charges. But they were not brought under the Criminal Code; instead, they proceeded in the civil courts.

On the basis that there had been a one-day general strike on June 1 to protest Bill 19, the attorney-general asked the Supreme Court of B.C. to grant an injunction restraining acts of sedition, treason and intimidation by labor. But he did not stop there.

Sedition is defined by law as advocating the use of force to bring about a change in government. The attorney-general asked the supreme court to adopt a definition of force never heard before. He contended that force included strikes, picketing, study sessions and slowdowns. If the injunction were granted, all such activities would be prohibited by court order, punishable by contempt proceedings.

In addition, the attorney-general asked the court to prohibit the labor movement from advocating "governmental change". The attorney-general defined that to include such things as "showing that Her Majesty has been misled" and "pointing out errors in the government of the province."

It was an attempt to stifle, by court order, criticism of the provincial government.

HEU asked the court to dismiss the attorney-general's law suit on the ground that it disclosed no reasonable claim, that it was scandalous and unnecessary, frivolous and vexatious, and an abuse of the process of the court. The union said it was not a case where the court should even hear the attorney-general's application for an injunction; instead, the court should simply throw the case out.

The attorney-general insisted he had not really meant to say that labor sought to overthrow the government. Yet he would not withdraw the writ; he still wanted his injunction.

The B.C. Federation of Labor and the other unions and representatives of the labor movement that had been named in the attorney-general's writ supported HEU's application when it came for hearing in the supreme court on June 8.

By this time, the attorney-general had filed a statement of claim. This document, however, made no allegations of treason, sedition and intimidating the legislature. At the hearing, counsel for the attorney-general still insisted the case should go ahead.

Mr. Justice Kenneth Meredith granted HEU's application and dismissed the attorney-general's lawsuit, including his claim for an injunction. The judge was critical of the attorney-general's law suit on a number of grounds. But in the end, the judge pointed out that the attorney-general, having made allegations of sedition, treason and intimidation, had abandoned them. So the case could not proceed.

I think this judgment is important, not only to working people in B.C., but to all of us.

An attempt to choke off free speech has been frustrated. The courts have held that the attorney-general cannot make up his own laws and ask the courts to enforce them. The rule of law has been vindicated.

(A former B.C. Supreme Court justice, Tom Berger now practises law in Vancouver. He represented HEU in its challenge of the attorney-general's law suit.)