

# THE HOSPITAL Guardian

Volume 8, Number 1

October 1988



## CONTRACTING OUT ACROSS B.C.

See Page 5 to Pin Down Your Unit

# THE HOSPITAL Guardian

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

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The Hospital Guardian is published by the Provincial Executive of the Hospital Employees' Union, Local 180, under the direction of an Editorial Committee whose members are: **BILL MACDONALD**, **MARY LaPLANTE**, **ALBERTA DORVAL**, **MIKE BARKER**, **FRED MUZIN**, **JULIA AMENDT**.

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**HOSPITAL  
EMPLOYEES'  
UNION LOCAL  
180**

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# Choosing a leader carefully

By Bill Macdonald  
HEU President

It was a democratic wedding that took place October 3, 1944, a marriage ratified by a vote of 228 to 33.

The ballots were cast by workers at Vancouver General Hospital who decided to form a new union. It would be created by joining a local of the Civic Employees' Union whose membership was all male and a local of the Hospital Employees' Union, the "women's union" at VGH.

Solemnizing the event, the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada quickly granted the new organization a charter as the Hospital Employees' Union, Local 180. And so it began.

The new organization's executive appointed the late Brother Bill (W.M.) Black to be our first secretary-business manager. Under his leadership, the fledgling union soon expanded to the Fraser Valley and into the province's interior. Even then, the goal — the vision — was to organize British Columbia's health care workers under a single master collective agreement.

Equally important, that first appointment began a structure which another Bill Black (W.D., HEU's president for 12 years beginning in 1968) would describe this way:

"The founding members of this union recognized their lack of knowledge in labor matters and chose a structure that would allow them to hire the expertise and experience needed to build a successful union."

Their foresight has been proven. Unquestionably, HEU owes a debt of gratitude to that first provincial executive, and to the three secretary-business managers who built an incredibly successful union over



HEU President Bill Macdonald

the past 44 years — W.M. Black, 1944-68; Ray McCready, 1968-74; Jack Gerow, 1974-1988.

As people, they were as different in personality as any three individuals could be. Yet there was a close similarity in their visions of what the union could and should be. None of them ever flinched from discussing and debating with anyone his ideas of what the future held for HEU and how its objectives could be realized.

At this point in our great union's history, it is important to keep in mind HEU's past successes and the cohesiveness and strength fostered by the continuity and stability of the chief administrative function since 1944.

The importance of the secretary-business manager's job is not necessarily one of setting priorities for the union. Our direction has always been, and will continue to be, prescribed by the elected members of the provincial executive.

But that prescription is filled by our chief administrator — who

oversees HEU's day-to-day operations and directs the staff in meeting policy goals established by the executive.

With Jack Gerow's departure, the time has come to place a new incumbent in that vital role.

The process began this summer with newspaper advertising that appeared across Canada. It invited experienced, knowledgeable labor leaders to try for the top job at one of B.C.'s largest unions. Just going through the dozens of responses has been time-consuming. And because so much depends on the person whose application ultimately succeeds, weighing those who survive the initial review will be very difficult.

Today's provincial executive bears a great responsibility in the selection of HEU's fourth secretary-business manager. Mindful of this, we have decided to take whatever time is necessary to make a reasoned, unhurried decision.

We are constantly aware of two requirements for this job. First is the ability to meet the traditional trade union challenge of satisfying the members' continuing needs for decent wages and working conditions. Second is a clear commitment to sustain HEU ideals about broader issues, including: universally accessible health care; a single standard of wages and benefits; quality social services; the advancement of women's rights.

Besides meeting these qualifications, your next secretary-business manager will continue — in his or her own, unique way — the traditions of the office. The provincial executive makes this pledge as our part in maintaining the solid foundation on which our union stands.

TWO MEETINGS  
FOR THE FUTURE

# KEEPING OUR



**PAST TIMES AND CONVENTION HIGHS** — Pictures of the 1986 biennial convention show some things that may be the same at this year's meeting, and some that won't. HEU President Bill Macdonald takes the chair (below), and delegates give a standing ovation (above) to comments by Jack Gerow, then the union's secretary-business manager.



# UNION STRONG

In a matter of days this fall, HEU's basic direction for the next two years will be charted by nearly 500 elected delegates representing more than 27,000 health care workers across British Columbia.

The delegates meet in Richmond for the union's 16th biennial convention, a five-day event starting October 28. About two-thirds of them stay another two days for the 11th Wage-Policy Conference beginning November 2.

"Keeping Our Union Strong" is the umbrella theme for the two consecutive meetings.

Both of them deal mainly with discussion and voting on hundreds of proposed resolutions submitted during the summer by HEU units. They reflect membership concerns about the union's political posture, constitutional structure and collective bargaining goals.

Given the fundamental issues at stake, the delegates' debate sometimes grows heated. But between them, the two meetings assure democratic membership input to significant decision-making on HEU's future.

Altogether, it should be a busy week for the delegates, with the volume of resolutions this fall expected to be comparable to the 1986 meetings. Two years ago, the biennial convention considered 99 general resolutions and 115 proposed amendments to the union's constitution; the wage-policy con-

ference dealt with 635 motions for HEU collective bargaining proposals.

Voting of a different sort is also high on both agendas this year.

First, convention delegates elect 21 members to two-year terms on the union's governing body, the provincial executive. Under the constitution, it exercises all of HEU's "sovereign powers" between biennial conventions.

Second, elections at the wage-policy conference choose a provincial bargaining committee for a new master hospital agreement. Acting on the negotiating priorities established at the conference, the committee should begin meetings early in 1989 with employer representatives of the Health Labor Relations Association.

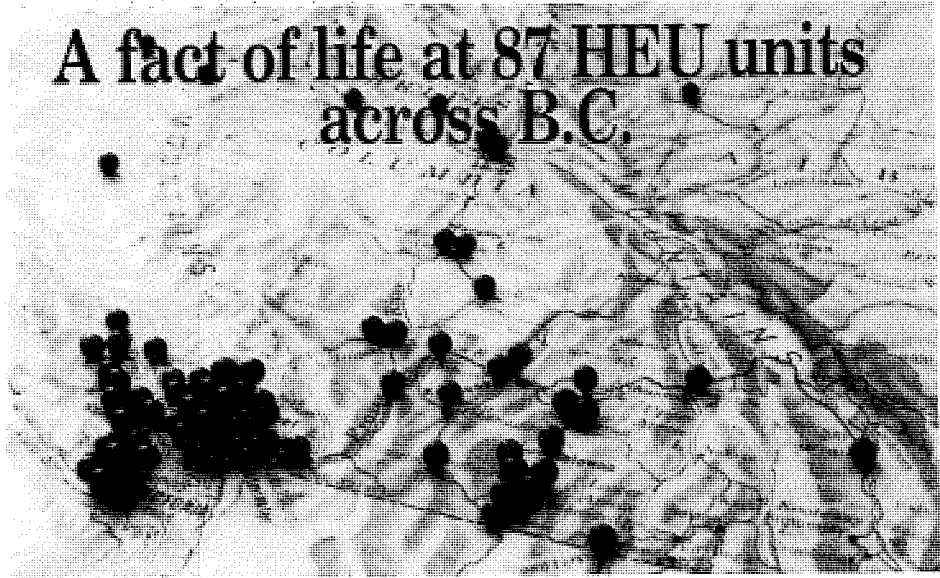
Candidates for both elections are nominated from the floor.

As background for all of this decision-making, delegates receive a variety of reports on recent union activities and developments. At convention, elected union officers and senior staff detail major events since the last biennial meeting. The wage-policy conference receives a collective bargaining report that sets the stage for discussion of negotiating proposals.

Detailed programs — including guest speakers and other events rounding out the daily sessions — will be provided to delegates as they register for the meetings.

# CONTRACTING OUT

A fact of life at 87 HEU units  
across B.C.



Contracting out — a major form of privatization — is alive and well and an inescapable fact of life throughout much of British Columbia's health care system.

That's the conclusion of a survey of HEU representatives conducted earlier this year and collated during the summer.

From the province's largest hospitals to small long term care facilities, the union identified contracting-out activities at 40 per cent of its units.

A unit-by-unit summary appears below.

The survey pinpointed 87 health care agencies where outsiders have been given work ordinarily done by union members or assigned management functions for which internal administrative personnel have traditionally been responsible. Contracts go to private businesses or individuals whose primary goal is to turn a

profit on public services.

The most common targets seemed to be maintenance and dietary services which were contracted out by 33 and 30 facilities, respectively. Of these, management contracts accounted for 26 of the dietary and nine of the maintenance situations.

The survey also found: 14 facilities using contractors for laundry services, eight for housekeeping, and 31 for a variety of miscellaneous functions.

(The total for the five contract categories exceeds the number of facilities in the survey because some of them farmed out functions in more than one category.)

Because information is often difficult to obtain, the survey could not pinpoint all contracting-out situations. HEU members aware of any that are not reported below should notify the union's provincial office.

HEU UNIT	CONTRACTED-OUT EMPLOYEE OR MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS				
	Dietary	Laundry	Housekeeping	Maintenance	Miscellaneous
Aberdeen		X			
Arbutus Unit				X	
Arthritis Unit		X	X		
Arranglen	X				Physiotherapy
Arrowsmith	X				
Ashcroft Unit	X			X	
Beacon Hill Lodge Unit				X	Grounds
Bella Bella Unit				X	
Burnaby Unit				X	Security/Window Washing

HEU UNIT	CONTRACTED-OUT EMPLOYEE OR MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS				
	Dietary	Laundry	Housekeeping	Maintenance	Miscellaneous
Burns Lake Unit					Pharmacist
Campbell River Unit	x				
Cariboo Park Lodge Unit	x				
Chilliwack Unit				x	Security
Comox Unit	x				
Cowichan Lodge Unit	x				
Cumberland Unit	x				
Deer Lake Unit				x	Grounds
Delta Unit	x				
Fellburn Unit		x			
Fort St. James Unit					Pharmacist
Gibsons Unit				x	
Glengarry Unit		x			
Gorge Unit				x	Security
Grace Unit					Security
Grand Forks Unit	x				
Haney Unit				x	
Invermere Unit				x	
Jackman Manor Unit				x	
Kamloops Unit					Security
Kelowna Unit	x				Security
Kitimat Unit	x				
Ladner Unit					Grounds
Lillooet Unit	x			x	
Lions Gate Unit					Security/Gardening
Louis Brier Unit					Aide Replacements
Lytton Unit				x	
Merritt Unit				x	
Moberly Park Unit				x	
Mount Paul Unit					Gardening
Mount St. Joseph Unit	x	x	x		Supply Processing/ Security
Mount Tolmie Unit		x			
Mountain View Unit				x	
Nanaimo Unit					Security
Noric House Unit					Grounds
Olive Devaud Unit				x	
100 Mile Unit	x				
Parksville Unit		x			
Parkwood Unit				x	
Penticton Unit		x	x		Morgue
Penticton Ret. Unit				x	
Pouce Coupe					Van Driver
Powell River Unit				x	
Prince George Unit	x				

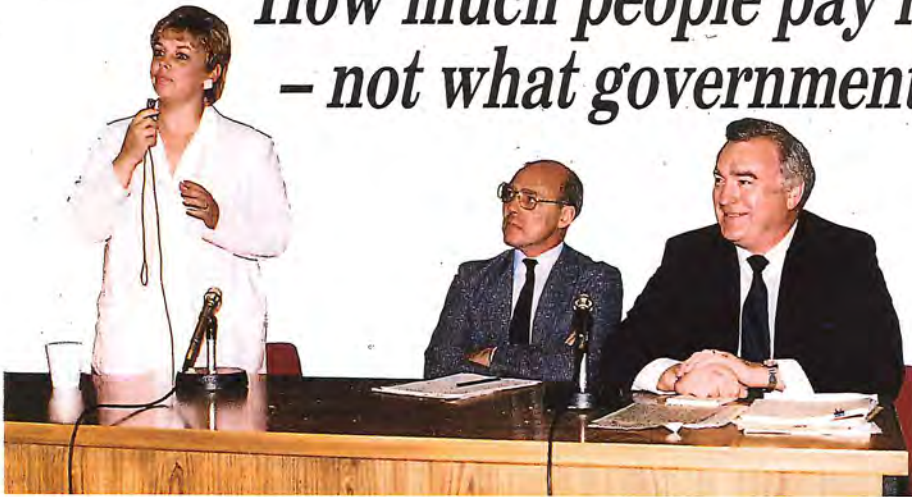
## HEU UNIT

**CONTRACTED-OUT EMPLOYEE OR MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS**  
**Dietary Laundry Housekeeping Maintenance Miscellaneous**

Prince Rupert Unit	x				
Princeton Unit	x			x	
Priory Unit		x			
Queen's Park Unit	x	x			
Royal Arch Unit	x				
Royal Columbian Unit	x		x		Material Management Activities Van
Royal Jubilee Unit					
Saanich Unit	x				
Sagebrush Unit				x	
St. Mary's Unit	x				
St. Michael's Unit	x				
St. Paul's Unit			x		Elevator Maintenance
St. Vincent's Unit				x	Security
Salmon Arm Unit				x	Laundry Van
Sechelt Unit				x	
Shaughnessy					Security/Parking Attendant/Bus Driver to George Derby/ Pharmacy, Lab Tests at George Derby
Simon Fraser Unit	x			x	
Squamish Unit					Grounds
Summerland Unit				x	
Sunnybank Unit				x	
Sunset Lodge Unit	x		x		
Surrey Unit		x	x		Clerical/Medical tapes/inter facility patient transport
Tilbury Unit		x			
Travelers Lodge Unit	x				
Trinity Unit				x	
UBC Unit	x	x			
VGH Unit		x	x		Renovations/ Security
VS/Vancouver Unit	x				
Vernon Unit				x	
Victoria Unit					Renovations/ Window Washing
White Rock Unit					Lab Tests
Williams Lake Unit	x				
Willingdon Unit				x	
Willowhaven Unit				x	

# Privatizing Health Care

*How much people pay is important  
— not what government may 'save'*



HEU summer school panelists discussing privatization with union members are (from left): NDP health critic Lois Boone, British trade union leader Peter Jacques and Ontario public employee representative Sean Usher.

What people pay for health care — not just how much government may save — must be considered in assessing the real costs of privatizing medical services.

This assertion was stressed by all three speakers during a panel discussion on "Health Care: for People or for Profit?" that climaxed HEU's two-week summer labor school at UBC. (See Page 12.)

"When we look at health care costs, we have to look at the total picture," emphasized Lois Boone, Prince George MLA and provincial NDP health critic. "We must take into consideration not just the budget of the Ministry of Health, but all the fees that each of us pays — medical services premiums, user fees, medication costs.

"We do not reduce costs when we reduce provincial funding and increase the charges paid by individual taxpayers. That's just shifting responsibility for payment from one pocket to another."

Sean Usher, of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU), agreed that the effects of privatization on health care must be analyzed "globally, not just one little corner of it."

He added: "Health care operated

## Who are these guys?



Former Premier Dave Barrett as panel moderator

Introducing and moderating HEU's summer school panel — "Health Care: for People or for Profit?" — was a man who needs virtually no introduction himself.

**Dave Barrett** was premier of B.C. for three years beginning in 1972 and leader of the NDP opposition until 1984. He planned to seek a seat in parliament.

**Peter Jacques** has been head of social insurance and social welfare for the Trades Union Congress in England since 1972. He is responsible for negotiating social security, occupational pensions, health policies and other benefits and is a member of the Royal Commission on the National Health Service.

**Sean Usher** is coordinator of education and campaigns for the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union. An OPSEU member since 1968, he has served on its staff for the past 11 years.

**Lois Boone** is opposition health critic and represents Prince George North in the B.C. Legislative Assembly. Elected in 1986, the NDP member previously served four terms as a school trustee, two as vice-chairperson of the board.

by the private sector costs more to the economy as a whole than health care operated by the public sector. Workers often earn less under outside contractors and therefore have less money to put back into the community's economy."

Peter Jacques, of the Trades Union Congress in England, drew on the British experience to illustrate the ill effects of privatizing health care.

"The government program of so-called efficiency measures has meant hospital closures, job losses, patient waiting lists and increased prescription charges (user fees). And none of these measures has meant savings on the scale required to compensate for the lack of National Health Service funding," he told HEU summer school students.

Jacques said that the NHS, established after World War II, had greatly improved the length and quality of life in Great Britain. But the picture changed drastically after 1979 and the first election of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Her Conservative government has cut NHS funding and introduced privatization.

"Every year, the Thatcher government has expected (regional health authorities) to make further cuts to their budgets — irrespective of their health care needs. This has necessitated restrictions in services," said Jacques.

"In addition, 'efficiency' measures introduced in 1983 required all health authorities to contract out ancillary domestic services — cleaning, catering and laundry. Health authorities also were required to sell off all of their lands and buildings that were not currently being used.

"The result has been a gap between patient needs and resources provided by government," he said.

"Operations have had to be cancelled due to lack of proper support services. "Attention of nursing staff has been diverted to non-

nursing duties due to disappearance of domestics because of contracting out. There's also been a growing concern about the lack of cleanliness in some hospitals and its effect on the health of patients.

Jacques said that individuals actually pay more for reduced services because of higher user fees.

"The Trades Union Congress is firmly committed to full public funding without any restriction on access or quality of service," he declared. Adding that full funding of NHS would cost only about \$658 per person annually, he noted the "internationally acknowledged" cost effectiveness of the system. On average, Great Britain spends just over six per cent of its national income on health care, compared with 10.8 in the United States and 9.3 per cent in France.



Panelist Peter Jacques, senior official of Trades Union Congress in Great Britain

Canada's public health care system is also very cost effective, said Lois Boone, quoting Dr. Robert Evans, a UBC health economist: "The Canadian system of universal comprehensive coverage for hospital and medical care has maintained control over costs."

So why have Premier Bill Vander Zalm and Finance Minister Mel Couvelier suggested that costs are out of control — despite assurances to the contrary by Health Minister Peter Dueck?

"I think they're doing it to pre-

pare us to accept less, to prepare us for privatization, and to prepare us to accept more user fees," declared Boone.



Panelist Lois Boone, NDP health critic and Prince George North MLA

"The minister of health recently stated that he would like to see the reintroduction of user fees for emergency health services because people are abusing the system. He claims that user fees introduced for physiotherapy and chiropractic services are deterrents to such abuse," she said.

"But a \$5 user fee is a deterrent only to somebody who's making \$4.50 or \$6.50 an hour. So user fees are not deterring all the people who might overuse or misuse these services. They deter only those people who can least afford these services."

Boone also cited other Socred government rhetoric which could indicate more bad news for health care.

"Last year, the premier suggested that the province might adopt a two-tier system, with private hospitals being built for use by those people who could afford to pay for their services — in effect, one system for the wealthy and a different one for the poor.

"I would like to remind you that, at one time, private schools in this province received no public funding. But over the past few years, the government has given increasing funds to private schools at the expense of public schools," she said.

"I believe that private hospitals

also would eventually want some of the taxpayers' money. Then you would have public and private funds being used to develop private hospitals — while public hospitals struggled along on what was left in the public coffers."

Boone also addressed the question of contracting out, declaring that there is no proof that this form of privatization is cost effective or efficient. She called the assumption that the private sector can do things better than the public sector a matter of ideology.

"In fact, the auditor-general, in reviewing contracting out of food services by the attorney-general's office, found no proof that it was more efficient or that it saved money," said Boone.

"Public services that are con-



Panelist Sean Usher, spokesperson for the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union

tracted out are taken on by businesses wanting to make a profit. Now how can they keep costs down to the same levels as the public sector and still make a profit? I know only two ways: reduce wages or reduce services.

"It's common knowledge that any business is in business to make money, and there's nothing wrong with that. But they shouldn't be doing it on the backs of sick people. All health care ought to be and ought to remain on a not-for-profit basis," said Boone.

Equally adamant on that point, Sean Usher declared: "Health care and social services are not for profit. Period."

He also had a privatization hor-

ror story about an Ontario government decision "based on economic and political expediency — not on concern for the well-being of the people involved". It dealt with the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the resulting growth of "ghettoes where deinstitutionalized patients settled, unable to care for themselves properly and living on limited incomes".

The government rejected OPSEU's calls for public inquiries into the closures, "so we commissioned our own." The result was a book called *Madness*, and 40 universities have asked permission to use it as course material.

"The book is an indictment of mental health care in the province of Ontario," said Usher. "Through it, we propose a continuum of care that would utilize public services to implement humanitarian deinstitutionalization."

"In forming our proposal, we studied the Rhode Island model, where they programmed for individuals and not for the institution. The health care union involved was consulted throughout the process, and they ended up with a very human system. An unexpected benefit was that the health care workers' measurable stress levels were actually lowered."

OPSEU intended the book to "demonstrate to the Ontario government that we are not against deinstitutionalization of patients, but that we are against decisions made on political and economic bases rather than on a humanitarian basis."

Usher also detailed costs of privatization as it affected acute care, using the case of Hawkesbury General Hospital, located near Ottawa, as an example. The government contracted with American Medical International, a U.S. conglomerate, to manage the hospital.

"When AMI went in, there was a deficit of \$350,000. The following year, the hospital showed an apparent \$400,000 surplus. However, the deficit was almost entirely eliminated by a grant of

\$345,000 from the ministry of health in Ontario specified for that purpose.

"Of the \$400,000 surplus: approximately \$78,000 came from not having to pay interest on the deficit; \$7,000 came from interest earned on positive cash flow; approximately \$200,000 came from recruiting patients on the Quebec side of the border and sending the bills to the government of Quebec, and an estimated \$140,000 arose from staff reductions and closing part of one floor of the hospital during the summer."

Usher emphasized that facts like those — available by law in Ontario — are necessary to combat privatization effectively.

"Freedom-of-information legislation is the best weapon we have," he said. "It enables us to get information that we can use in court. We're using it to get information about contracts: who the bid went to, how much it cost, who's working for the new contractor."

Usher noted that Canada's advantage is "being able to study what happened when health care services in the U.K. were privatized, to learn from what has happened there."

"As individual unions, we have to learn to recognize the warning signs of privatization, and we need to work together to help other unions combat the problem. We also have to help people all across the country understand what privatization means."

Jacques agreed, pointing out that British health care unions have opposed privatization since it began in 1979. "And at the beginning of this year, we had an upsurge of activity — strikes, marches, industrial action, reactions that were happening for the first time in a long time."

Boone's conclusion emphasized how much is at stake: "The system that we have is good, but it is in danger. And it is something that all of us have got to protect, to maintain, to save for our future and for our children's future."

# An immersion program



Climaxing HEU's first summer school was a panel discussion on "Health Care: for Profit or for People?" Featured speakers gave HEU members perspectives on the effects and threats of privatization in Great Britain, Ontario and British Columbia. (See Pages 9-11 for details.)



Nancy Macdonald of Royal Jubilee Unit, Terry Kristmanson of Prince Rupert Unit, Irma Mohammed of Shaughnessy Unit and Lila Murao of VGH Unit.

# for HEU members

It was a non-stop learning experience. For two weeks, some 200 HEU members from all parts of the province gathered in Vancouver to eat, breathe and live trade union education.

They were students at a special college of labor knowledge — the union's first annual summer school, conducted in June at the University of B.C.

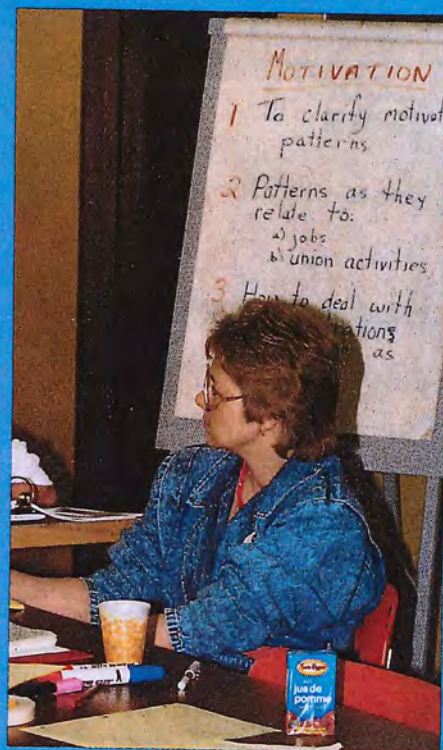
The pictures on these pages show some of the HEU scholars at work. Like everyone there, they underwent a true immersion program, with events scheduled into the evening and on the weekend. Activities ranged from classroom situations to mock arbitrations to presentations by guest speakers.

But a common thread tied all of that together. Everything was intended to help HEU activists do a better job for their fellow workers and for the union.

Each student began by taking part in a week-long program exploring different aspects of union leadership.

Most of the second week consisted of two-day courses on: political action, occupational health and safety, negotiations, labor history, human rights, contract interpretation, communication, classification. Each student chose two of these options.

Finally, on the last day, the entire student body attended a panel presentation on privatization called "Health Care: for Profit or for People?" (See Page 9.)



Instructor Bonnie Youngman of HEU's Vancouver Island Office



Mavis Bell of Saanich Unit and Vibeke Sandberg of Malaspina Unit



Cliff Metcalfe of Cedarview Unit and Janet Fairbanks of Courtenay Unit.

## Survey finds striking data

Nearly half of Canada's unionized workers would walk a picket line to protect their purchasing power.

Those findings come from a national poll conducted for *The Globe and Mail* this summer. It reported 44 per cent of workers agreeing that better wages are a good reason to go on strike.

But the hot spot for Canada seemed to be Toronto, where the pro-strike proportion was 69 per cent. B.C. ranked second highest with 59 per cent.

Three factors linked to the "unrest" were: growing dissatisfaction with wages, a "negative view of wage gains in relation to the cost of living"; and expectations of insignificant increases over the next year.

## A pay equity win in Newfoundland

Hospital workers represented by five unions will receive as much as \$20 million in pay equity payments over the next four years under the terms of an agreement negotiated with Newfoundland's provincial government.

The money — about one per cent of total hospital payroll — will bring wages of employees in predominantly female hospital jobs up to those of workers in male-dominated classifications.

## Job action threat saves job security

The probability of renewed job action led the federal government's "hand-picked arbitrator" to preserve job security for postal workers despite management's objections, according to CUPW President Jean-Claude Parrot.

Handed down in July, the arbitration award recorded some gains, including: a guarantee of no layoffs for the term of the contract, improved protection from harassment over work absences, and better provisions for vacations, recovery

leave and rest periods for certain workers.

While forestalling layoffs, the award had a gift for the employer, according to Parrot: "a major rollback with respect to the hours of part-time employees."

But Parrot emphasized, "The fact that (arbitrator Laurent Cossette) understood that any rollback of our job security would definitely create a strike in 1989 was no doubt an important factor in his decision."

## Non-nurse work falls to RNs

Confirming what many see as a disturbing national trend, a provincial survey by the Ontario Nurses' Association reports that

registered nurses spend up to 30 per cent of their working time on non-nursing duties.

The 47,000-member union calls that a direct result of health care employers reducing clerical and housecleaning staffs, "preferring instead to impose many of these tasks on nurses."

The survey of ONA members tried to identify problems driving nurses from the profession and contributing to the nursing shortage. One finding: "Nursing support staff must be increased to allow nurses to do what they do best — care for their patients."

"Better-paid nurses combined with adequate support staff might yield better patient care without substantial increases in operation costs."

# Checking the national pulse

## Teachers not retiring over pension changes

The Ontario Teachers' Federation was campaigning hard this summer against major amendments to the superannuation plan proposed by the provincial government.

OTF President John Fauteux warned Ontario Treasurer Robert Nixon that making the changes unilaterally could bring 100,000 protesting teachers onto the provincial parliament's lawns.

Opposition centered on the proposed merger of two pension funds and a 2.34-per-cent rate hike.

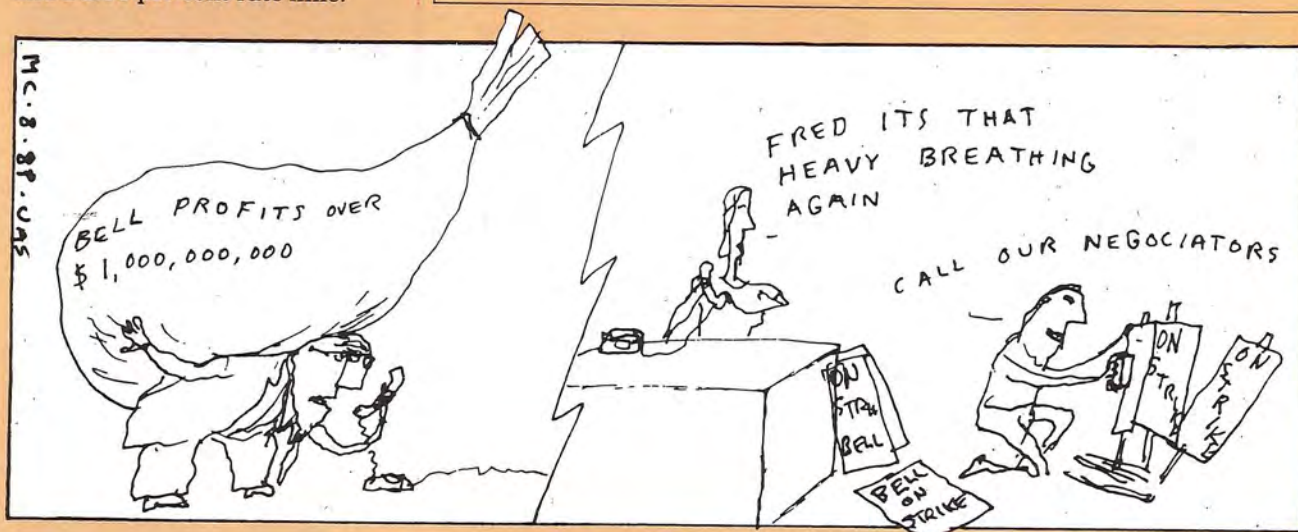
## Businesses lose charter argument

A Charter of Rights challenge of progressive labor legislation has been rejected by Manitoba's Court of Queen's Bench.

At issue was a law that empowers the Manitoba Labor Relations Board to impose a first collective agreement at the request of either side in negotiations if one of them has bargained in bad faith.

A group of businesses wanted to overturn that as a violation of their charter rights: Metropolitan Stores, the T. Eaton Company and the Winnipeg and Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

But Manitoba's labor movement launched a successful defense of the law, which had been introduced by the former New Democratic Party government.



## Some wrong numbers from Bell Canada

While 19,000 employees of Bell Canada walked picket lines this summer in Ontario, Quebec and the North West Territories, they heard a few interesting numbers about the other side of the bargaining table.

The company's chief executive officer, Raymond Cyr, earned \$973,200 last year, the result of a 21-per-cent wage increase. Based on a 40-hour week, that comes \$467.88 per hour, according to the Communications and Electrical

Workers of Canada which represents the 19,000 striking employees.

It wasn't known whether Cyr was among 6,000 Bell Canada managers who struggled to keep phone lines open during the job action.

# Going on-camera with HEU's story

They ought to be in pictures — and so they were. HEU members at two Lower Mainland facilities were featured in a short television report in early September.

They helped make a profile of the union that was broadcast on the first show of "BC at Work", a new series produced by the B.C. Federation of Labor. It presents public affairs issues from the perspective of working people. (Each show airs twice: Sundays at 4 p.m. on BCTV, and again Wednesdays at 7 p.m. on CHEK-TV).

The three-minute profile described HEU's 27,000 members as "working together for better health care ... and for fairness to health care workers in B.C."

It showed members in a variety of hospital settings (including those pictured here), and it featured individual licensed practical nurses and activity aides describing their work and the satisfaction of being a care-giver.

Because of limited time, not everyone who helped the camera crew actually appeared in the profile, but their help is appreciated. Here, then, is a complete list of members who helped send out the message that HEU stands for "the people who care for the people of B.C."

- Judy Aldred, secretary-receptionist
- Barbara Charlton, activity worker
- Corina Choy, licensed practical nurse

- Narinder Darred, licensed practical nurse
- Hope Edwards, licensed practical nurse
- Glenda Erickson, licensed practical nurse
- Tracey Heyworth, respiratory therapist
- Tim Knodel, licensed practical nurse
- Lois McCann, cleaner
- Ron Moughtin, maintenance carpenter
- Gurbinder Mutti, cleaner
- Lavina Ramsay, admitting clerk
- Terry Ross, admitting clerk
- Cindy Taylor, activity worker
- Tom Wakely, transport aide
- Cathy Webster, unit clerk



Respiratory Therapist Tracey Heyworth



Unit Clerk Cathy Webster

# ARE WE AMUSED?

## What they say in Victoria . . .

“Probably in the last 10 years we have fallen back considerably. We haven’t been able to keep up with programs or facilities as much as we should have and we’re much more behind than most people realize.”

*Premier Bill Vander Zalm, describing the B.C. government’s performance in meeting the needs of the elderly for long term care*

“ . . . increasing the capability of our residential care clients to contribute to the system by evaluating their ability to pay.”

*Health Minister Peter Dueck, explaining what most observers call a means test for seniors facing increases in daily long term care rates*

“There was certainly no coverup, and if he thinks I’m guilty of negligence, well then, he and I must have a different dictionary.”

*Labor and Consumer Services Minister Lyall Hanson, reacting to opposition leader Mike Harcourt’s description of the minister’s failure to act on an early report from one of his senior officials about inappropriate political interference by Premier Bill Vander Zalm’s office in the licensing of a neighborhood pub*



“I have no comment on that at all. I’m not going to talk to you about that anymore.”

*Premier Bill Vander Zalm, responding to questions about the fact that his labor minister did nothing about political interference in the pub licensing case*

## . . . and at the Richmond palace

“I am happy to see that the Hospital Workers’ Union is deeply interested in the subject, and am hopeful that with our combined efforts we can reduce the suffering caused by back injuries.”

*Workers’ Compensation Board Chairman Jim Nielsen, whose office is in Richmond, responding to an HEU position paper calling for fairer approaches to assessing pensions for back disabilities*

## Major fee increase hits seniors

Asked to take a stand, some 5,287 HEU members have put pen to petition and demonstrated their strong opposition to increases in provincial government fees paid by seniors who live in long term care facilities.

Introduced in the spring, the 15-per-cent increase pushes the resident's fee from \$16.70 to \$19.20 a day.

The measure affects nearly 24,000 elderly across B.C. By one estimate, they will pay an additional \$35 million annually to the provincial treasury, with none of the money going to improve long term care.

The HEU signatures were among more than 43,000 on petitions tabled in the provincial legislative assembly. But they did not persuade the government to reverse the fee increase, and neither could reports of seniors having to move out of facilities because of the higher rate.

The minister's public reaction to the petitions? That he could collect as many names on a petition calling for better service from the dogcatcher.

While a bit more polite, Dueck was no more giving on the basic fee issue when he actually met for two hours with representatives of the B.C. Old Age Pensioners Association.

"He's just not listening," Association President Jo Arland told *The Guardian* in late summer.

As this went to press a month later, Arland's group and others were still pushing to roll back the increase, and the government's position on the new fees remained rock hard.



**DEMONSTRATING DETERMINATION** — Health care workers conduct a rally and march around Malaspina Lodge in Nanaimo. HEU members from other units joined them in this early summer show of solidarity, one of many this year in the struggle for a new contract at the long term care facility. The dispute reached the point of a 93-per-cent strike vote before being referred to binding arbitration hearings scheduled in late October. The arbitration is expected to bring the Malaspina workers up to the prevailing HEU standard for long term care wages and working conditions. They have lagged primarily because of provincial government wage controls introduced in 1982 before settlement of a first collective agreement.

## A \$99.3 million gift to employers

How much money is too much to help injured workers and make job sites safe? Some people know there's never too much, but they don't run the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.

Last year, the WCB gave employers in 25 industries a \$99.3 million holiday from their

quarterly assessments. It justified the action by noting that assessments collected in earlier periods hadn't been spent.

The B.C. Federation of Labor sued the Board to stop the payoff — declaring that the money must be used for compensation benefits to injured workers, and

asking that it be held in trust for that purpose.  
be held in trust for that purpose.

But none of that convinced Mr. Justice Hugh Legg of the B.C. Supreme Court. Ruling against the Federation, he also noted that provincial law "grants final jurisdiction on assessments to the WCB".

The law he cited is not carved in stone. But until it is rewritten, the moral of the story is this: What the Board hath given unto employers, the court shall not take away.

## Compensation fight nears 10-year mark

The latest in the nine-year Judy Kereszti case is that the Workers' Compensation Board has loosened the purse strings — but not enough to give the former hospital cleaner a decent living.

This summer, the Board decided Kereszti's permanently, totally disabled back deserves only a half pension of \$684.03 a month.

That's more than the \$104.76 she began with, but well below last spring's official poverty line of \$858.67 for a single person in Victoria.

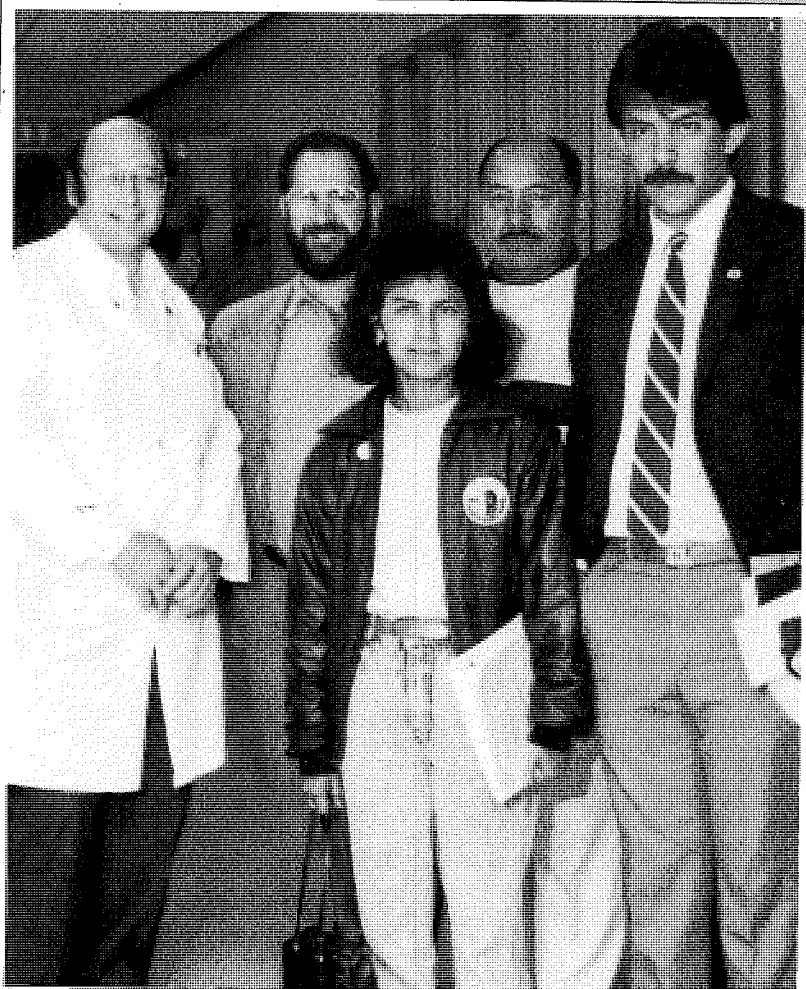
Disabled in a 1979 on-the-job accident at Victoria General Hospital, Kereszti still lives in constant pain today. Eight major back operations haven't helped, and neither has the WCB.

The Board refused until early this year to acknowledge her total disability, and it still insists on granting only a half pension because of legal technicalities.

(Those problems, experienced by many back-disabled workers, are addressed by an HEU position paper and a companion brochure published in July. Copies can be ordered from the provincial office.)

Despite the obstacles, Kereszti won't give up, and her union is helping with another formal appeal for a full pension. Meanwhile, her former employer has opened another legal front, arguing that even a half pension is too generous.

It seems Kereszti's struggle may yet hit the ten-year mark.



**LOS AMIGOS** — A health care tour brings Latin American trade unionists to Vancouver and St. Paul's Hospital. From left: Fred Muzin, HEU unit chairperson; Paul Puret, Canadian Labour Congress representative; Susana Rodriguez, a Salvadoran textile worker; Benjamin Cardenas, a Panamanian steel worker, and Carlos Solano, a Costa Rican hospital worker.

## New HEU units

HEU organizing efforts have led to membership for workers at a half dozen long term care facilities.

The most-recently certified units are: Deer Lake Private Hospital, Burnaby, with 35 members; False Creek Residence, Vancouver, with 28 members; Jackman Manor, Aldergrove, with 48 members; Little Mountain Place, Vancouver, with 70 members; Paradise Care Home, New Westminster, with 15 members; Simpson Hospital, Fort Langley, with 35 members.

## Making more points against privatization

It was a Queen Charlotte City fundraising fair called "Hospital Days", and members of HEU and other health unions came together to make points against a favorite approach of the provincial government.

In one day at the summer event, they collected signatures from 119 people opposed to privatization.

The joint effort "shows beyond doubt that the people of Queen Charlotte are not in favour of privatization of our health care system," said Unit Secretary-Treasurer Alfred Muma.

## A fight to save jobs at Mission

A fight for 54 licensed practical nursing jobs at Mission Memorial Hospital was nearing a climax, as this went to press.

The battle had begun in July when the hospital laid off four LPNs and announced plans to replace all the rest with a mix of registered nurses and aides.

With HEU support, the LPNs went public. They approached local doctors, wrote letters to newspapers, circulated leaflets, collected 1,200 signatures on petitions, and got the city council to pass a resolution opposing the loss of LPN jobs.

The final chapter was to be a hospital board meeting in late September, when the nurses planned to ask the trustees to reverse the administration's plan.

# HEU effort draws 3,200 supporters

HEU findings confirm recent polls showing significant public resistance to the provincial government's privatization schemes — especially in health care.

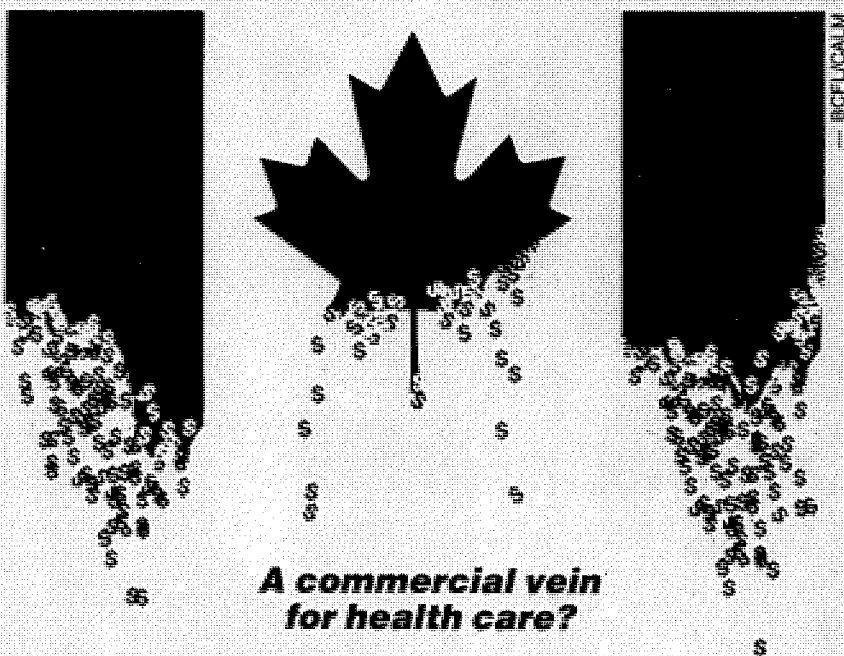
The union assessment reflects the response to its Stop Privatization campaign. Beginning last spring, HEU invited British Columbians to put their opposition on the record and to receive background on the dangers of

privatized health care.

By late summer, a total of 3,203 respondents had sent cards to HEU's provincial headquarters offering to help in the fight to keep health care services kept out of private hands.

Of those, 2,087 asked for free union information kits which had been developed after months of intensive research.

## Out for blood with free trade



**A commercial vein for health care?**

Some supporters of the so-called "free trade" deal are truly cold-blooded.

At least they seem unconcerned that it threatens to destroy Canada's voluntary blood donor system by allowing U.S. firms to lay siege to the Canadian Red

Cross.

Federal Health Minister Jake Epp has confirmed that commercial American blood banks could operate in Canada and profit from buying blood and selling costly by-products to laboratories and hospitals.



SEE US AT CLC — A full delegation represented HEU at the 1988 convention of the Canadian Labor Congress, conducted this year in Vancouver. The two dozen delegates took an active role in debate and consideration of resolutions and other issues before the national meeting of the house of labor.

## BOYCOTTS BOYCOTTS

The B.C. Federation of Labor asks all HEU members for their support in boycotting certain companies and products.

Unions representing the workers involved seek Federation support in the hope that boycott actions will help end longstanding disputes. The boycotts remain in effect until settlement of the disputes.

- All non-union postal outlets — by Canadian Union of Postal Workers/Canadian Labor Congress.
- All goods and services of Shell Canada and Royal Dutch/Shell — by CLC.
- All Hyundai Products — by B.C. & Yukon Building Trades Council.
- All products of Zeidler Forest Products — by CLC/IWA Canada.
- All forest products of Louisi-

ana Pacific Corporation — by Carpenters/IWA Canada (Look for Waferwood construction panels, Pabco xonolite insulation, Weatherseal windows and doors and other construction material.)

- All California table grapes — by United Farmworkers of America.

In addition, Federation affiliates are asked not to purchase or handle any products originating in Chile or South Africa.

Federation hot edicts continue against:

- Royal Canadian Legion #26 in Kelowna — for Hotel and Restaurant Employees' and Bartenders' Local 40.
- Callwood Industries in Surrey — for Carpenters Union Local 1928.
- Hyundai-Kerkhoff — for B.C. & Yukon Building Trades Council.

## It's tough for Bill 19 supporters

It was a tough summer for the Industrial Relations Reform Act, also known as Bill 19.

On one front, a boycott led by the B.C. Federation of Labor and supported by HEU produced a court case that threatened the law's validity.

The boycott centres on the Industrial Relations Council which in July said a carpenter's union picket line was illegal.

But the pickets stayed up, and Supreme Court Justice William Trainor refused to issue a court order against them. He said the courts should not be required to "rubber stamp" IRC decisions.

The B.C. Court of Appeal was to rule on that judgment later in the fall, and agreement with Trainor would make Bill 19 a paper tiger.

(Meanwhile, HEU President Bill Macdonald offered Carpenters Union Local 1928 support for "the firm stand your members have taken on behalf of the entire British Columbia labor movement.")

A separate blow to the legislation came this summer with an official condemnation issued by the International Labor Organization.

A United Nations body with union, management and government representation, the ILO ruled in June that Bill 19 violates workers' rights and interferes in collective bargaining.

But Premier Bill Vander Zalm — saying "we're happy with the legislation" — insisted that Bill 19 would not be changed.

Still, HEU and other boycotters could record some progress, and they predicted more tough times ahead for supporters of the anti-labor law.

## FRONTLINES

### Presenting HEU bursaries

More than \$4,000 in educational assistance for the 1988-89 academic year has been awarded to nine post-secondary students by the HEU Bursaries Committee.

Awarded annually, the union bursaries go to HEU members with at least one year's continuous service or to their children or spouses.

The recipients this year are:

- \$1,000 to Marilyn Kingspon of the Crossroads Unit — the Edward James Ashmore Memo-

rial Bursary (jointly sponsored by the Surrey Unit and Provincial Executive).

- \$500 to Beatrice Scott of the Richmond Unit — the Lions Gate Unit Bursary.

- \$500 to David Way of the St. Paul's Unit — the Prince George Unit Bursary.

- \$500 to Susan Park of the Prince George Unit — the Provincial Executive Bursary.

- \$500 to Felipe Libre of the Vancouver General Unit — the Royal Jubilee Unit Bursary.

- \$350 to Lauren Piau of the West Coast General Unit — the Mission Unit Bursary.

- \$350 to Barry Dorval of the Fort St. John Unit — a Vancouver General Unit Bursary.

- \$350 to Janice Morrison of the Shaughnessy Unit — a Vancouver General Unit Bursary.

- \$350 to Balvinder Gill of the Royal Jubilee Unit — the Victoria General Unit Bursary.



**GOOD AND WELFARE** — Money for research goes to Alzheimer Society of B.C. representative Paula Macdonald (left) from Joanne Martin, Good & Welfare Committee Chairperson of HEU's Evergreen Unit in White Rock. A two-day garage sale raised the \$1,000 donation; unit members volunteered their time and energy, as well as many donations of goods," said Secretary-Treasurer Kathy Garner.

## LETTERS

### We want long shifts

LPNs at Royal Inland hospital request that extended work hour shifts be re-opened to change, thus providing continuity of care to patients — including time spent with patient needs and better communication with RN team leaders, providing safety for both patients and nurses.

Our duties as LPNs involve direct patient care. Patients have appreciated one nurse on days and one on nights, instead of the confusion of three shift changes.

We have received positive feedback due to the morale of the staff involved and the superior organization provided by the extended hours.

As our patients' comfort and welfare are what we are working toward, it is imperative that an open-minded look be given to where LPNs' needs differ — with respect to patient care and with regard to the needs, in comparison, of Housekeeping, Dietary, Laundry and Maintenance. Please realize that our objectives are completely different and that we should be considered a separate body of people with special working hours to accommodate and fulfill our objectives.

We feel that the Union and the Hospital, who are representing our needs, should accommodate the wishes of the LPN employees in this particular area of concern.

— Judy Burr, LPN, Kamloops Unit

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The union's current policy on extended hours of work was arrived at by democratic process during HEU's Fifteenth Biennial Convention which decided to place a freeze on

existing extended shift arrangements.

This edition went to press before the deadline for membership resolutions at this year's convention in October, so it was unclear whether the policy would be reconsidered.

Delegates supporting the policy at the last convention raised

several arguments against shifts longer than the 7½ hours specified by HEU's master contract. Among them:

- Extended hours are detrimental to workers' health and amount to a retreat from the long-established trade union goal of a shorter working day.
- Longer shifts often lead to

staffing cutbacks.

- Employers can utilize night shift coverage of 12 hours instead of eight hours, leading to a loss of jobs for HEU members.

- Under current provincial labor law, an 11-hour shift with its two meal breaks, means employers pay only 22 hours in a 24-hour period.

## Picking up the torch for Gordie Meagher

Many personalities contribute to a Union's growth and strength. We have little trouble remembering the flamboyant ones. But often the quiet and thoughtful ones — going about their business without looking for pats on the back — are the backbone of the union.

Such a man was Gordie Meagher, who passed away earlier this year.

Born and raised in New Brunswick, he worked as a logging camp cook, fished and home-steaded before joining the army. As a lance corporal, he transferred to Vernon, B.C. where he met and married his wife, Louise.

Discharged a year after their December 1946 marriage, Gordie soon began work as an orderly at a home for the aged. In 1952, he was hired as a night shift OR orderly at Vancouver General Hospital, where he eventually transferred to the transportation department.

These bare bones of Gordie's life don't tell you how much a "Union man" he was, holding numerous positions until his retirement in 1987, from chairing the social and sports committees ... to Trustee, Vice-Chairperson and Chairperson of the Unit ... to serving on the Bargaining Committee and as First Vice-President



Gordie Meagher pictured as bargaining committee chairperson in an early edition of *The Guardian*.

on the Provincial Executive.

He worked quietly and diligently over the years, taking people as they came, and in so doing became a stalwart of the union. He represented strength and stability to many members, especially those in need.

In his personal life as in his union life, Gordie was kind, generous and dependable, a source of strength to his wife and only son. They miss him sadly.

Gordie's other family, the Hospital Employees Union, also misses him. The union cause, in particular HEU, is the poorer without him.

Gordon Meagher has passed the flame to someone else. Let us all pick up the torch as a tribute to him.

— Bob Davis, VGH Unit

## MILESTONES

**Phyllis Douville**, an LPN at Creston Valley Hospital since 1984, retired earlier this year to enjoy her garden and get away for some travel. She had also worked briefly at the unit in the early 1970s, shortly after completing her training in Nelson and Kimberley.

A three-decade career at Kootenay Lake District Hospital ended this spring for **Carmela Iallorardo**, who began work in the Nelson facility's dietary department in April 1957. Her co-workers wished her a special farewell with a retirement party at HEU's Kootenay Regional Office.

Enjoying life is at the top of the retirement agenda of **Helen Simmons**, a square dancer and bowler who ended 16 years at Kelowna General Hospital this summer. She worked in the laundry at Cottonwoods and was much appreciated by residents and staff.

## Thank You

This is just a quick note to thank all my brothers and sisters from the HEU Summer School who sent me the basket of fruit when I had to leave early due to illness. It brightened up my hospital stay to know that you were thinking of me.

— Ray Gameau, Shaughnessy Unit



# How free trade can get you down

By Jeani Read

Gosh. Every time you think it's safe to go out shopping again like you did in the old days, without a worry in the world except whether or not you should actually be wearing higher heels with that cute short skirt, somebody will try to ruin your mood.

They will try to ruin your mood with things like nuclear war or acid rain, or the abortion issue and Bill Vander Zalm, or political prisoners in Central America or free trade and the threat to democracy — things that a person who is interested mainly in shoes should not have to worry about.

The other day, for instance: There I was, happily heading out the door with nice new shoes on my mind, when my eye fell on a flyer sent out by an anti-free trade group who did not fail to mention the threat to democracy expressed

in the Conservative government's complete about-face on the free-trade issue.

They quoted Brian Mulroney in 1983: "This country could not survive with a policy of unfettered free trade."

At the moment, I was more interested in free trade with Italy, where the best shoes — not to mention the best cotton sweaters *and* pasta and cappuccino bars — come from. But I did decide to give the threat to democracy some thought, as I was driving up to the mall.

It seemed to me that democracy had *always* been under threat, ever since it was invented — even though, of course, these days things are worse than usual. These days, it seems, the only countries moving *toward* democracy instead of away from it are the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, which makes it pretty suspect right there, don't you think?

Democracy: What makes it so good anyway? Why does it always have to be defended?

Is it worth the trouble?

And if it *is* worth the trouble, why is everybody sitting around in restaurants eating expensive lettuce instead of demonstrating in the streets?

This is why: The democratic process means running things according to *what most people want*. And we all know how we feel about most people, right?

I mean just *look* at them. Do they even know how to dress properly, with humor and irony, as befits a

decade as sophisticated as the '80s? No. Everywhere you look are people — *most* people — dressed with appalling taste. Some of them even wear Ultrasuede. What makes them think they can run a country?

You know how *you* feel about it. As soon as most people start doing something, you know that thing is a good thing to stay away from.

Most people watch the Bill Cosby Show. Most people want cheap transportation, resulting in the Hyundai. Wouldn't the world be a more attractive place if people could only drive Jaguars, Porsches and Ferraris? Of course, it would.

Look what most people have got us so far: Prime-time television. Movies about bartenders. Stephen King novels. Nostalgia. Balsamic vinegar.

You just can't trust most people. And if you still doubt it, consider: Most people got us Brian Mulroney for prime minister, too, causing us to get all those depressing flyers in the first place.

I rest my case.

(Jeani Read is a regular columnist for The Province, the Vancouver daily newspaper for which she originally wrote this piece.)