Victoria gave its health bosses pay hikes of up to 54% while HEU members received 9.4% 

A special HEU investigation has revealed that B.C.'s health care bosses received pay raises of up to 54 percent between 1986 and 1990.

During the same period, HEU members' wages rose only 9.4 percent.

Among the big winners:

- Ken Fyke, president of Greater Victoria Hospital Society, whose pay rose 53 percent between 1988 and 1990 to $183,658.
- James Flett, president of Vancouver General Hospital, whose pay rose 28 percent to $165,254; and
- Ron Mulchey, president of St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, whose pay rose 13 percent in a single year to give him $155,040 in 1990.

Labour wins Harcourt pledge to repeal Bill 82

HEU members joined the B.C. Teachers Federation and hundreds of other public sector workers May 7 for a massive protest in Victoria against the Social Credit government's wage controls. Details page 3.
It's a time for a change in the Legislature

O n May 7 and 8 HEU joined other public sector unions in Victoria to rally to support all Public Service Credit and NDP members of the Legislature about repealing Bill 82, the legislation that eliminates free collective bargaining in the public sector.

I came away from that experience with a sense of disempowerment that, for the sake of the health care system alone, there has to be a change in government in Victoria.

The provincial government is in a state of utter confusion and the people of British Columbia are paying the price.

In health care, finance minister John Jensen (formerly minister of health), introduced a provincial budget which purports to increase hospital budgets by 7.5 percent. In a government propaganda piece delivered to every household in British Columbia early in June, the minister boasted that his budget would not result in lay-offs or cuts in services in health care.

Tell that to the 29 LPN's and orderlies and 45 RN's who are losing their jobs due to budget deficit at Vancouver General Hospital!

COMMENT

by CARMELA ALLEVATO

At the same time the structure of provincial government funding of health care collective bargaining settlements has been changed. Health care facilities have been told by the government that contract settlements must come out of the increases in their operating budgets.

One hospital has been given a different percentage increase (for example, 4.1 percent to Smithers, to Kitimat 5.3 percent), to Vancouver General 7.1 percent and so on. One can only conclude that this restructured funding was done to make easier the job of Ed Lien, the man in charge of contract rollbacks under Bill 82.

Ed Lien has expressed his eagerness to roll back health care collective agreements if an employer has to reduce services to pay for them.

It's clear that the government's decisions are made for political expediency. Bill 82 itself is a case in point.

During 1980 and 1989, hospital administration quietly gave themselves hefty wage increases and the number of non-union personnel in management positions grew without an alarming rate.

Where was the provincial government then?

It wasn't until 1990, when the collective agreements of health care workers, government employees, teachers and municipal workers were up for renegotiation, that the Socreds started to talk about the need to control people's wages and improvements to working conditions.

Not only do health care workers need and deserve a general wage increase to catch up with inflation, they need additional improvements to implement pay equity.

Over the next two months HEU members will be working with others to send a message about Bill 82 and unfair government policies towards each incumbent and aspiring MLA in their local constituencies.

And we will be encouraging all of our co-workers, families and friends to ensure they register to vote so that when an election is called there will be a chance for the better in British Columbia.

LETTERS

HEU member appalled by Gitksan ruling

I am appalled by the ruling of B.C. Chief Justice Allan McEachern against our people in the case of the Gitksan Wet'suwet'en on land claims.

While the land claims of our Native people, the judge has said, the people should be allowed to resolve their social and economic problems by joining "mainstream" Canadian life. This attitude is mean and simple prejudicial racism.

I see the hands of the business community government and the judicial system behind the backing of loggers against Native interests. I cannot see the Native people doing more damage to our environment then we have if we had the stewardship of the land they claim.

Where is our social conscience? Will we acknowledge the fact that we did in the Oka situation? Is the excuse that this is a case of intervention that we should sit on the sidelines and see which way the chips fall?

Natives are facing the same methods and attitudes used to put down the labour movement. The advance of the labour movement has benefited the whole of society and I see the same thing happening if Natives are given their rights and land claims.

We have abused the Native physically, mentally, sexually, socially and economically. I see serious damage being done to our country if we fail to have the Natives' claims accepted by all society.

Rita Morris, Port Alberni

Guardian cover is already recycled

I like the new look of The Guardian and the fact that I get it mailed to me. My only complaint is that it is printed on shiny paper and my recycling depot will not accept it when I am finished with it.

Please consider making it on paper I am able to recycle.

LYNNIE ANDERSON

HEU radio ads do a good job

For the last couple of weeks I have heard on the radio some ads that were put out by the Hospital Employees' Union. I am very pleased to hear such a clear message put out by the HEU.

It is good HEU tried to bring this information to the attention of the general public as well as the people who currently have some of their loved ones staying in B.C. hospitals, which are so very badly understaffed.

KEVIN LEE

Support against Safeway

Regarding men's participation in the B.C. Federation of Labour Women's Conference, Delta McDonald says in the last Guardian: "But women in non-traditional jobs say they find little support from unions which are run more like 'ol boys' networks.' I didn't miss hearing men them." Is this the way we are building the union?

TERANCE MCDONALD, Vancouver

Carpenters seek support against Safeway

The Carpenters Union has launched a massive leafletting and signature campaign against Canada Safeway. Ours members are going to be in attendance in force from all Safeway stores in B.C. over the next few months to draw attention to an important issue.

In the past, Canada Safeway has earned the respect of working people by building and maintaining their stores with union contractors.

Recent developments may mark the end of this long-standing policy and endanger labour's support. The Parkgate Village Shopping Centre in North Vancouver and a store in Kamloops are current examples of a corporatist decision to use non-union labour. This comes on the heels of Safeway's emphasis on a major building program that could see more than $300 million spent on construction and rebuilding projects in more than 30 communities in the province.

Please support our call for Safeway to re-establish its long-standing policy of providing fair union wages and conditions at all of its projects. Fill in the card when approached by our members.

MARK DERTON, Carpenters' Union, Vancouver

Guardian

"In humble dedication to all those who have to live"
What were up to

People and events around the HEU. If you have news for us—a retirement, an election, a rally, a vote or whatever—please let us know.

Columbus workers join HEU fold

Workers at Vancouver’s Columbus Residence, a 35-bed long-term care facility, have voted to join the HEU. The Strathcona local won its certification after a vote April 14, which was marked by a strong anti-union campaign in the workplace. The union plans to seek early bargaining dates at the facility. HEU member still waiting for narrow donor

Craig Caldwell, a maintenance worker and HEU activist at Bumby General Hospital who has leukemia, refuses to feel sorry for himself. As reported in the February column, the young father was diagnosed with leukemia last summer.

Just before Christmas, his doctor brought good news: a donor had been found and the transplant would take place in February.

Caldwell had spent the months of waiting helping various agencies improve awareness of the need for bone marrow donors. It may take 125,000 bone marrow donors to match the requirements of a leukemia patient.

Just days before his admission to the hospital, however, Caldwell’s life took another sharp turn. The donor decided not to go through with the transplant. Caldwell is again looking into his options, and he hasn’t let it get to me,” he said recently, “I feel good. But it really underlines the importance of bone marrow transplants as a broad community issue.”

Nanaimo coffee break protests violations

The administration’s failure to follow the collective agreement during a reorganization of housekeeping and nursing assignments led to a prolonged coffee break May 30 by about a dozen HEU members at Nanaimo Regional Hospital.

The employer’s failure to post the changes in accordance with the contract led to a number of individual and general grievances.

Friends of Royal Inland produce huge petition

VICTORIA — More than 5,000 Kamloops residents have signed a petition opposing cuts to the Kamloops Royal Inland Hospital. The petition was tabbed in the Legislature May 14 by NDP health critic Tom Pari.

The HEU, the Health Sciences Association and the B.C. Nurses’ Union are all three of the groups supporting the community movement to protect health care in Kamloops. The petition demands a reversal of recent bed closures, medical service cuts and layoffs.

Perry said the NDP supports the petition. “We agree the hospital must continue to improve and expand expanded services which will meet the widest possible range of health needs for residents of Kamloops and the surrounding region.”

McBride organizing drive results in narrow loss

HEU’s organizing efforts never stop, but existing labour laws make it extra difficult to extend union conditions to workers who want them.

Despite a solid organizing campaign at McBride and District Hospital, in April, HEU’s application for certification was defeated by an extremely narrow margin in a vote supervised by the Industrial Relations Council.

Simón Fraser Lodge contract talks open

HEU has opened contract talks for a new agreement with the owners of Simon Fraser Lodge, in Prince George. The facility is privately owned and represented in bargaining by Prican, which acts for private family members around the province.

Simón Fraser owners have recently been embroiled in controversy over the awarding of a grant for the construction of an Alzheimer’s wing.

Powell River wishes members the best

HEU Powell River local members are going to miss Georgetta Hollo-both, who retired June 2 after 10 years as a cook at Olive Darrow. Holloboth was a strong union supporter who is planning a Caribbean cruise in November.

Also planning to travel is Mario Bomba, a dietary worker at the facility.

Continued on page 4

KILLING BILL 82: The NDP will introduce a motion in the current session of the Legislature to rescind Bill 82, party leader Mike Harcourt said.

April 7. Harcourt told a delegation of leaders from HEU, BCGS, CPUE and the HSA that his party was opposed to the bill.

On May 8, members of HEU’s Provincial Executive and about 40 rank-and-file members from HEU Victoria-area locals continued lobbying politicians missed the previous day.

NPD pledges to repeal Bill 82 wage controls

VICTORIA — An NDP government will restore “fair, free collective bargaining” to public sector workers, party leader Mike Harcourt told a delegation of health workers May 7.

Harcourt told the health workers, part of a 600-strong lobby at the Legislature’s demanding repeal of Bill 82, that he would bring a motion before the house to rescind the Social Credit wage control law.

HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato told Harcourt that Bill 82, like the Socreds’ Bill 19, “needs to be gone, gone, gone” after the next election.

“We’re here with teachers and others who have felt the impact,” she said, “to demand repeal of Bill 82.”

When elected we will ask unions and employers to consult and bring forward a new labour law, she said, for restoration of full collective bargaining.”

The two-day lobby, initiated by the B.C. Teachers’ Federation, was joined by HEU, the B.C. Nurses’ Union, the Health Sciences Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and several other unions.

More than 600 unionists paraded in protest around the Legislature May 7, then broke into groups for meetings with Social Credit and NDP representatives.

Social Credit MLA’s were inflexible in their support of Bill 82. Allevato reported that Harcourt told a delegation of leaders from HEU, BCGS, CPUE and the HSA that his party was opposed to the bill.

HEU members and six others of the community which has grown up at the home, which includes the present board acquired it in 1983.

Friends of May Bennett are appealing to the board to reconsider its decision and have added the health ministry not to make any changes in funding until the matter is resolved.

May Bennett staff, residents fight union-busting change

KELOWNA — Families and friends of residents at May Bennett Home have joined forces with HEU and the B.C. Nurses’ Union to save the facility from its own board.

The Friends of May Bennett appealed to Health Minister Bruce Strachan to order a 30-day moratorium on any changes in service at the intermediate care facility.

They issued the appeal June 3, the day after an emergency meeting called to respond to management’s announcement that the facility would be transformed to a Sheltered Housing Community as soon as possible.

The change would mean the transfer of most of the intermediate care 35 residents and lay-offs for 23

HEU members and six members of BCNU.

In a joint news release May 31, HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato and BCNU president Debra McPherson denounced the schemes as “union-busting.” Harcourt won a formal agreement at the home in March after a 23 day strike.

But the labour conflict has taken back seat to the struggle to save the community which has grown up at the home since the present board acquired it in 1983.

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What we're up to

TEAM NURSING RALLY: About 80 HEU members from the Vancouver area demonstrated outside Vancouver General Hospital May 13 to demand reorganization of the nursing team. The rally was part of a number of province-wide activities during Team Nursing Week.

Team Nursing Week marked with demonstration, float

A rally, a parade float and blood pressure clinics were among the activities carried out by HEU locals and Nursing Team Committees during Nursing Team Week, May 13 to 18.

In Vancouver, 100 Licensed Practical Nurses, orderlies and patient care aides gathered for a rally in front of Vancouver General Hospital.

HEU Secretary-Business Manager Carmela Allavato told the crowd that Bill 83 wage controls could threaten HEU's work to save the jobs of LPNs, orderlies and aides.

Several locals around the province did their bit. In Ashcroft, a Disneyland-themed float featuring a bearded Mickey Mouse captured first prize for HEU's local entry in the community's annual May 11 Stampede Parade.

Several HEU members helped mark LPN day by participating in the event including local chair Loreen Martin, Tracey Peterson, Fusa Tsahima, Pam Johnson and Ida Colao. The HEU crew, assisted by residents Mary Parsons and Jenney Cummins, worked for three hours on the silver and blue float. Hundreds of spectators lining the street were treated to Heart of Health Care music booming from the award winning entry.

Six long term care residents, dressed as Grumpy, Dopey and other Disney characters, entertained young and old alike on the Main Street parade route.

The Ashcroft local has captured first prize three years running at the annual event.

The Comox local Nursing Team Committee held a blood pressure clinic in a local shopping mall.

Earlier, members at the Castlegar local took NDP health critic Tom Perry on a tour of the hospital as part of their effort to save the jobs of LPNs in the extended care ward of Castlegar and District Hospital.

Many locals distributed "Save the Nursing Team" buttons and pamphlets. This year's Nursing Team Week was designed to bring HEU's bargaining demands to save the Nursing Team to public attention.

Labour minister rejects IRC role in health talks — for now

Labour minister James Abbott has so far rejected a request from the Health Labour Relations Association to order the Industrial Relations Council (IRC) to designate essential services.

In a letter May 22 to HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allavato, Abbott said he had received a report and recommendations on the issue from Ed Peck, commissioner of the IRC.

Health care employers have appealed to Peck to intervene in the essential service process. The HEU, like other health care unions, is observing the B.C. Federation of Labour boycott of the council because of its obvious bias against unions.

But Abbott has so far resisted employer pressures.

"It would be premature to direct the council to designate essential services," Abbott wrote. "Progress is being made at the bargaining table, and I encourage all parties to put their full energies into settling their contractual differences."

The HEU has offered to allow a neutral third-party to establish essential service levels.

Babbit said that he will tell the IRC to get involved "if the public's interest requires it."

St. Mary's to close hospital laundry

NEW WESTMINSTER — St. Mary's Hospital has confirmed that plans are under way to close down the hospital laundry, which employs eight full-time laundry workers who have the facility working despite serious neglect.

Personnel director Maureen Jeffrey said June 3 that the laundry has been set for the closure but "see how the laundry will be handled when they shut it up."

Jeffrey admitted that the hospital has done little to keep the laundry up to date over the years and now finds that no funds are available to purchase replacement parts.

The only reason it still functions, she said, was because of the efforts of laundry manager Causton Goldblatt, who indeed, appears to have worked on it for years to keep the laundry operating.

By shopping for parts at suppliers throughout the region, Goldblatt has managed to keep ma- cularities dating back to 1977 in running order. HEU members say that a management company hired by the hospital has

FOND FAREWELL: Retiring Prince Rupert activist Vicky Tushar received a warm send-off May 1 by local members attending the Heart of Health Care revue. Among those wishing her well after 31 years at Prince Rupert hospital were shipper-receiver Dale Grantham and his son Josh.

Hofer got angry. There, with persistence and the use of her collective agreement, she got every story she may have wide implications for health care workers.

By the end of June, Mission Memorial will be providing hepatitis B vaccine free of charge to HEU LPN, nurse's aides, housekeeping workers, administrative workers and custodians working more than two days a week, largely thanks to Mary Hofer's efforts.

But it wasn't easy. After her first refusal, Hofer ob- tained an information package from the Liver Foundation. When she approached the hospital's infection control committee for the vaccine, its members ruled she was at risk for exposure to hepatitis B, but not at "high risk."

According to Article 57.02 of the master agreement, a worker must be "in a high risk control area as determined by the infection control Committee to qualify for vaccine."

That wasn't good enough for Hofer. She began doctoring every time she encountered a sterile needle and took her findings back to the committee. They still refused.

Finally she launched a grievance under Article 57.02 and appealed in writing to the hospital's doctors, who ordered her to take the issue up. Finally, early in May, the administration gave in.

S-A-V-E M-A-Y B-E-N-N-E-T: More than 70 residents, family members and staff involved in Kelowna's May Bennett home turned out June 1 to an emergency meeting called by HEU in the wake of management's decision to end in-house care at the facility. The meeting was chaired by Loraine Bouseinec (left), HEU's assistant to the president.

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Of June/July 1991 - GUARDIAN
VICTORIA — A Hospital Employ- ees’ Union investigation into the layoff of 15 union members from a Victoria laundry facility snowballed last month into a major scandal involving two Victoria area hospi- tals.

Union finds links to Couvelier, top Socreds

VICTORIA — When 15 HEU mem- bers at Greater Victoria Hospital Society’s Fairfield laundry received lay-off notices last March, HEU be- gan an investigation which quickly turned up links to the top levels of the Social Credit party.

Careful investigation by HEU ac- tivists and staff confirmed for the first time that the contracts had been awarded to Graham Quakenbush, a for- mer manager at the CVHS laundry who was a brother-in-law and former bus- iness associate of finance minister Mel Couvelier.

There was no evidence of any involvement by Couvelier in the con- tract awards. Further inquiries by union members and The Guardian, however, revealed that:

- when Saanich and Mount St. Mary’s hospitals decided late last year to change their laundry service from the Fairfield Hospital laundry, they failed to offer an opportu- nity for competing bids;
- the hospital boards mysteriously opted to award the contracts to a facility that didn’t exist when Graham Quakenbush’s Vancouver Island Linen Service wasn’t incor- porated until February 4, 1993;
- Quakenbush’s laundry was still under construction in May two days before work was to begin;
- in an apparent attempt to cover up the tendering violation, Saanich Peninsula Hospital in March invited the competing firm of Renfrew Health Care Systems to bid on the project, but rejected its bid even though it was lower than Quakenbush’s; and that
- the Saanich hospital board is chaired by Melisa Hernandez, who is also president of Couvelier’s So- cred riding association.

In the wake of HEU’s press con- ference May 8 calling for a public inquiry, CVHS officials released cor- respondence clearly showing that the Saanich contract with Quakenbush had been struck as late as Feb- ruary, well before Renfrew even knew the contract was available.

In fact, Renfrew owner Randy Bertsch told The Guardian that he only learned of the contract through Quakenbush’s boasting.

Bertsch says Quakenbush, who had retired from the CVHS Fairfield laundry management two years be- fore, offered to sell the two con- tracts to Renfrew in return for a prominent position with the compa- ny. The offer was later withdrawn.

The HEU was told in a March 4 CVHS memo that the loss of the Saanich and Mount St. Mary’s hospi- tal contracts would force the layoff of all 15 HEU members working the night shift at the Fairfield laundry.

Meanwhile, the Socred failure to provide proper funding has left the overloaded CVHS laundry vulner- able to further losses to opportunist- ic private operators. CVHS vice- president Rick Roger was quoted in the May 11 Times-Colonist as saying the laundry has operated well beyond capacity since a 1989 fire destroyed a second CVHS laundry facility, the Glendale laundry in Saanich.

HEALTH PRIORITY: B.C.’s ambulance service was created by the NDP government of Dave Barrett.

A LOT of people may recall it as the eve of the descent back into Hell. It was the Winter of 1975 and mem- bers of the Hospital Employees’ Union were campaigning for the re-election of the NDP government of Dave Barrett.

Despite numerous frustrations with the NDP administration, particu- larly with essential services legis- lation and laws ordering hospital staff on strike, the HEU was taking the union campaign to a new level in communications with Victoria.

But by 1975, the number of chronic care hospital beds had grown from 2,400 to 3,800, with almost 2,000 more on the way. Emergency care had improved, including a province-wide ambulance service operating for a flat $5 per trip, a concept long advocated by the union.

The system was backed up by improved training for ambulance attendants and sophisticated new equipment.

Under the leadership of Minister of Health Donnie Coope, the NDP government also began buying pri- vate hospitals, taking them under the wing of the public system, there- by improving standards, and it ex- panded and improved home care programs.

The government also cooperated in efforts by the HEU to eliminate sex discrimination in the hospital industry, and paved the way for payment for non-conventional med- ical procedures such as acupuncture through the provincial medical plan.

In a speech to the B.C. Federation of Labour during the election cam- paign, Premier Barrett declared the province could afford the govern- ment’s Pharmacare program and welfare improvements, which the opposition was proposing. Barrett said the government was prepared to levy succession duties and gift taxes on the wealthy.

Unfortunately the success of the NDP reforms and the prospect of more money for the health system was scaring the middle class, and the middle and upper income citizens of B.C. Rallying to the call by the Socreds to unite to defeat the NDP, leading members of the Liberal and Conser- vative parties threw in their lots with the Socreds.

Even though the NDP increased its share of the popular vote on Dec. 4, it was soundly defeated by the big business gang-up.

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ON THE JOB

Laundry workers clean up boss

By GEOFF MEGGS

CHICAGO — Eight months after their brand new state-of-the-art hospital laundry washed its first sheets, HEU members at K-Bro Linen Systems Ltd. are hoping life is beginning to settle down. Since several Vancouver Island hospitals decided last year to turn their laundry work over to a private contractor, many of the workers have been riding an emotional roller-coaster.

The stress of a new job in a new plant was compounded by a confrontational and anti-union manager whose actions produced more than 20 major grievances in a three-month period.

The manager had failed to implement medical and dental plans, made arbitrary schedule changes, denied overtime and worked workers for holiday time. At the first safety meeting, held five months after the plant opened, he directed workers to listen while he outlined how the committee would function.

A day-long series of meetings with K-Bro owners in April over language and hours, job reductions, termination of the manager concerned, and resolution of 83 percent of the grievances, says local chairperson Terry Rousseau. "I'm glad that part's behind us."

"HEU both in Victoria and Vancouver have been great," she says. "You feel you're here by yourself if someone is riding roughshod over you."

The plant, built from scratch in this former coal-mining town west of Comox, was opened by UBCV from the beginning.

HEU members have paid a price for Victoria's insistence on privatization. Comox and Campbell River hospitals decided to contract out their laundry work over HEU's protests.

Although all workers at those facilities were assured jobs at K-Bro if they wanted them, the change meant turmoil for many families, says Rousseau. Those who remained at the old facility had to bump others with lower seniority.

For those who made the move, there was the challenge

New workplace proves to be a big challenge

of negotiating a first agreement and breaking in a new plant which uses automated and computerized equipment to do much of the work.

"It's different work now," says Linda Ray. "We use different parts of our body. We're working just as hard, but we seem to be processing more for the same effort."

From the sorting area, where laundry is unloaded and sorted into bags, most of the handling is done by machines. An overloaded monsoon operated by the workers can deliver 500-pound bags of laundry anywhere in the plant.

Now Nanaimo General has added its work to the load, giving K-Bro a total of 2.5 million pounds of laundry a year.

The company still is running at only 50 percent capacity and is seeking other contracts throughout the north island.

Rousseau, herself a veteran of Comox, sometimes still misses the stronger community feeling at her old workplace.

Despite the changes, however, she believes the new local is setting up, has secure prospects and has established a proper relationship with the new management.

AFTER THE SHIFT

From union activist to civic politics

HEU member finds new world

CUMBERLAND — When Linda Hargreaves agreed to represent her local on the area's labour council, she had no idea she was embarking on a career in politics.

But that's how it turned out for the cleaner at Cumberland Health Centre, who last November ran second in a field of seven to become the first woman member of this Vancouver Island community's town council.

All that lay in the future in 1996, when her local affiliated to the Campbell River and District Labour Council, which represents a wide range of unions in the central Vancouver Island area. (HEU encourages all locals to affiliate to local labour councils.)

With her children grown up, Hargreaves had the time to plunge into the labour council's activities.

"It opened up a whole new world," Hargreaves says. "I got involved with the women's committee, I learned about international issues, I attended labour and human rights conferences."

The years of activity culminated last November, when local unionists asked Hargreaves to run for council with their works to deliver 500-pound bags of laundry anywhere in the plant.

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Why it anyone can run a health facility?

HARGREAVES

backing. Her convincing win has opened up a new career. Now Hargreaves must juggle existing commitments — including teaching a weight-training classes at the recreation centre — with the demands of civic politics.

She has regular council meetings, had to sit on the management side in contract talks with Cumberland's CUPE workers and represents council on several committees. It's a hectic life, but Hargreaves traces her success back to her early work for her local and labour council.

"All that experience gave me the confidence to consider running," she says. "I'm glad I did."
IWA Canada seeks wage hike, pension changes

B.C.'s lumberworkers are seeking a new contract with wage increases to compensate for inflation, pension improvements and protection from contracting-out.

Contracts for 35,000 members of IWA-Canada across the province expire June 15 and union president Jack Munro vows there will be no concessions.

The union is demanding improvements in a one-year agreement. There is no question the talks will be difficult.

Employers are complaining of slumping prices and are ruthlessly slashing jobs.

But delegates to the union's wage and contract conference set their sights on a number of contract improvements, especially to pension benefits and health and safety protection.

Zeidler workers fighting on

It may be the longest active strike in Canada at the moment. But 68 pickets at two Alberta plywood plants aren't celebrating their five-year anniversary. They just keep walking the line.

No negotiations are planned, and despite a major concession by the union last winter, Zeidler Forest Industries continues to operate its Slave Lake and Edmonton plants with scales.

It started at the Slave Lake sawmill on April 11, 1986 as a fight by the union members against rollbacks. The company kept the plant operating with scabs.

Two years later the strike spread to the Edmonton plant.

The unionists have been living on strike pay of $175 a week since then, but no one is giving up.

Says Edmonton picket captain Jim Kroznoski: "It's the principle of it. "If you let one company kick the union out and the union walks away, which would be the next (company) to try it?" -CAML

Environmental groups, labour score victory over Alcan

A unique coalition of trade unions, environmental groups and community organisations has won a stunning court victory over one of Canada's largest corporations.

A federal court ruled in May that the federal government must conduct a full environmental assessment review into the Aluminum Co. of Canada's plans to spend $1 billion on its Kemano Completion project.

The project will reduce the Nechako River, a tributary of the Fraser, to 10 percent of its original level. The water will be diverted to power new hydroelectric facilities at Kemano on the coast.

All the new electricity will be sold to the United States.

The court agreed with the Rivers Defence Coalition that Ottew was wrong to allow the project without a full review.

Among the coalition members are two unions, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU) and the Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers (CASAW), which represents workers at Alcan's Kitimat smelter.

"For the first time in 40 years, Alcan is going to have to conduct an environmental impact study and subject it to public scrutiny," said the UFAWU's Arnie Thomlinson.

"We all stand to benefit if Alcan is required to let mouch water down the Nechako River to benefit downstream users. The coalition has been fighting for a review since 1979. It has drawn together native, labour, community and environmental groups.

The project would hit farmers, fishermen and native groups through-out the Fraser. The Nechako's water helps cool the Fraser to ensure the safe passage of spawning salmon.
THE TOP 10 WAGE HIKES

How would you like a raise like these? The figures show the two-year increase in 1990 and 1991 salary.

1. 54%
   Harry (Fred) Stovall
   President
   Prince George Regional
   Hospital
   1990/91 SALARY: $75,750

2. 33%
   Dr. Gerald Scott
   Chief of Staff
   Prince Regional Hospital
   1990/91 SALARY: $152,490

3. 32%
   Alphonso R. Nunez, MD
   President
   Greater Victoria General Hospital
   1990/91 SALARY: $159,466

4. 31%
   Robert Stanley
   Chairman of the Board
   Greater Victoria General Hospital
   1990/91 SALARY: $152,490

5. 30%
   Wilfred Roper
   VP Operations/Finance
   Greater Victoria Hospital Society
   1990/91 SALARY: $117,940

6. 29%
   Brian Backhouse
   KMA, AVP
   Greater Victoria Hospital Society
   1990/91 SALARY: $131,930

7. 28%
   Dr. J. Ian Langille
   President
   Royal Jubilee Hospital
   1990/91 SALARY: $84,000

8. 28%
   Dr. John E. Brandt
   President
   Royal Jubilee Hospital
   1990/91 SALARY: $84,000

9. 28%
   Alan Hiebert
   Secretary-Treasurer
   Greater Victoria Hospital Society
   1990/91 SALARY: $106,340

10. 25%
    Dr. W. Ross White
    President
    Greater Victoria Hospital Society
    1990/91 SALARY: $97,500

You can look it up!

Want to know more about your hospital's finances? You have a right to know. Here's how you can find out.

The little-known provincial financial information Act guarantees the public access to hospital records like salaries and payments to suppliers. To obtain these reports, write to the hospital's secretary-treasurer or the provincial health authority's office in your area.

The hospital's finances are a local issue. Contact the hospital's administrative director for more information. Your local hospital board guarantees access to hospital records.
THE TOP 10 WAGE HIKES

How would you like a raise like these? The figures show the two-year increase and 1989 salary.

1 54%
Henry (Fred) Stewart
Physical Plant
Prince Rupert Regional
1989/90 SALARY: $70,759

2 53%
Ken Fyke
President
Greater Victoria Hospital Society
1989/90 SALARY: $182,659

3 52%
Linda Ross
VP Continuing Care
Greater Victoria Hospital Society
1989/90 SALARY: $99,036

4 51%
Fernande Harrison
VP Planning
Greater Victoria Hospital Society
1989/90 SALARY: $132,997

5 48%
William Rogers
VP Operations & Finance
Greater Victoria Hospital Society
1989/90 SALARY: $121,033

6 43%
Shirley Butchart
Assoc. Kre. Dir.
Prince George Regional
1989/90 SALARY: $80,769

7 37%
Jim Johnston
Dir. Employee Relations
Prince George Regional
1989/90 SALARY: $74,027

8 35%
Rae Arscott
Asst. VP Patient Care
Greater Victoria Hospital Society
1989/90 SALARY: $87,571

9 35%
Allan Husband
Executive Director
Prince George Regional
1989/90 SALARY: $98,567

10 34%
Jim Fisher
Director Finance
Prince George Regional
1989/90 SALARY: $77,079

The people who administer B.C.'s hospitals make a good dollar.

In the last two years their wages went up as much as 54% ...

and they're as tough as nails.

While Hospital Employees' Union members received small wage increases below the rate of inflation for 1988 and 1989, senior administrators at some British Columbia hospitals have garnered lucrative and massive salary boosts that range up to 54 percent for the same two year period.

That's what an HSU study of the salaries paid to senior administrators at seven B.C. hospitals shows.

Hospital workers won a three percent pay boost April 1, 1988 and a further 6.25 percent April 1, 1989, for a two year compound increase of 9.375 percent.

But while employers preached wage restraint for workers, they showed very little when it came to boost their own pay.

The big winner was Greater Victoria Hospital Society president Ken Fyke who took a $63,059 raise in just two years boosting his pay to $163,659 for 1989/90. He also received $18,771 in expense payments.

Fyke's 53 percent hike was just shy of the biggest percentage increase. That prize was won by Henry (Fred) Stewart, director of physical plant at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital. Stewart's salary ballooned by 54 percent from $45,992, in 1987/88 to almost $71,000 in 1989/90.

The average salary of an HESI member in 1989/90 was about $34,000 a year.

GVHIS tops the list of largest increases. The average increase paid to a senior GVHIS administrator was a whopping 39 percent for two years.

The top GVHIS bosses won an average pay boost of $31,500.

Prince George Regional Hospital was also very generous. Shirley Butchart, the hospital's associate executive director, pulled in a 43 percent increase from $56,550 in 1987/88 to $80,769 two years later. Her boss, PCGH executive director Allan Husband received a 35 percent boost, the second largest of any hospital president, from $73,374 to $98,567.

The presidents of the other "big three" B.C. hospitals also did well.

Vancouver General Hospital president James Fleet got $93,000 more, or 26 percent, hiking his salary from $129,304 to $165,304. He also received two year expense payments of $74,455, including a $35,538 contribution by VGH to Fleet's registered retirement savings plan.

In 1988/89, his first full year as hospital boss, St. Paul's president Ron Mulchay earned $137,864, which increased by 13 percent to $155,040 in 1989/90. Mulchay also received expense payments of $64,715.

The study is based on more than 5,000 pages of information obtained by the HESI from detailed hospital financial reports for 1987/88, 1988/89 and 1989/90 (the most recent year this HESI hospital taken on by the HESI).

You can look your hospital's financial report in the library and check the facts.

Want to know more about your hospital's finances? You have a right to know. Here's how to get the facts.

The little-known provincial Financial Information Act guarantees the public access to hospital records like salaries and payments to suppliers of goods and services for the last three budget years.

And the law allows you to inspect the documents at the hospital itself, or lets you obtain a complete copy of the information for a nominal cost. Sim-
**ASTONISHING FACTS**

- At Prince George Regional, payments to the private companies of the hospital's lab and radiology directors totalled $1,018 million and $78,998 respectively in 1989/90 for pathology and radiology services. The hospital provides all support staff, and equipment free of charge.
- Ken Fyle, president of the Greater Victoria Hos-
- pital Society, is the highest paid hospital admin-
- istrator, with the biggest salary increase and the second highest percentage increase, and his senior administrators had the highest average salary and the largest percentage increase. He is a member of the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs.

**THE TOP 10 HOSPITAL SALARIES**

Here are their salaries and expenses in 1989:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>President/Role</th>
<th>Hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>183,659</td>
<td>Ken Fyle, President</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Hospital Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>165,254</td>
<td>James Flatt, President</td>
<td>Vancouver General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13,040</td>
<td>Ron Mulvey, President</td>
<td>St. Paul's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13,192</td>
<td>Dr. Miles Kilshaw, VP Med. &amp; Clin. Dev.</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Hospital Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>122,997</td>
<td>Fernande Harrison, VP Patient Care</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Hospital Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>121,030</td>
<td>William Roger, VP Oper. &amp; Fin.</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Hospital Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>111,972</td>
<td>Dr. Tom Ward, VP Medicine</td>
<td>St. Paul's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>109,944</td>
<td>Dr. Ernest Higgins, Medical Director</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Hospital Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>109,833</td>
<td>Colin Elliot, President</td>
<td>Kelowna General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>102,832</td>
<td>Charles Rowe, VP Human Res.</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Hospital Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IT'S HAPPENING EVERYWHERE**

Here are regional samples with 1989 salary and increase since 1987.

**KOOTENAYS**

- Trail Regional
  - Garry Kjoberg, Administrator
  - Ron Parlor, President (retired)
  - Rose Marie Haltine, Dir. Nursing

**OKANAGAN**

- Kelowna General
  - Collin Elliot, President (retired)
  - Isabelle Godbout, VP Nursing
  - Garry Hastings, VP Planning

**PRINCE RUPERT**

- Prince Rupert Regional
  - Robert Myres, Administrator
  - Johanne Fort, Dir. Phys. Plant

**PRINCE GEORGE**

- Prince George Regional
  - CHF Dezel, Assoc. Exec. Dir.
  - Dr. Tom Ward, VP Medicine, St. Paul's

**LOWER MAINLAND**

- St. Paul's & Vancouver General
  - Dr. Tom Ward, VP Medicine, St. Paul's
  - Inga Schambrotzki, VP Nursing, VGH
  - Arthur Beadle, Ex-VP Employee Relations, VGH

**VANCOUVER ISLAND**

- Greater Victoria Hospital Society
  - Ken Fyle, President
  - Donald Juszczk, Asst. VP
  - Douglas Collier, Asst. VP
Bargaining goals:
a fair contract and
repeal of Bill 82

There's some progress on
pay equity but Bill 82 blocks
the way to a fair contract

By CARMELA ALLEVATO

It's been four long months since HEU's Bar-
gaining Committee began negotiations for new
collective agreements, but the unity and strength
of the union's membership is starting to show
results.

In a series of meetings early in June, HEU won
agreement from the Health Labour Relations
Association (HLRA) on some important aspects
of the union's pay equity proposals.

That means HEU will have two goals during
the coming months: negotiating a fair contract
and defeating Bill 82, the Social Credit wage
caps which stand in the way of real
bargaining.

An essential part of HEU's fightback strategy
is to continue to press for our six steps to fairness
at the bargaining table. They include pay equity,
an adequate wage increase, improved working
and caring conditions, better job security, im-
proved benefits and strengthened union rights.

Pay Equity — Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

Until this month, the employer has tried to
confuse the issue of pay equity, trying to make it
into a complicated and bureaucratic issue.

The issue is straightforward: pay equity, or
equal pay for work of equal value, means more
money for our members. HEU members have
been discriminated against, underpaid and un-
dervalued for decades.

In key meetings in June, it became clear that
HLRA has accepted some of HEU's pay equity
proposals. Specifically, the employers have ac-
cepted the union's principle that wage increases
will be in the form of across-the-board dollar
amounts rather than percentages increases.

HLRA also has agreed there will be no red-
circling or freezing of some workers' wages while
others catch up.

We have tabled other specific proposals to
achieve equal pay for work of equal value. We
are seeking an industry-wide adjustment for
all health care workers in recognition of the
fact that all health care workers are underpaid.

There's more. We've proposed a gender-neural
base rate, in the existing agreement, women
entering the least-skilled jobs earn less than men
taking least-skilled jobs traditionally per-
formed by men.

We want to make the rate for each the same.
We have identified the Maintenance Worker I as

long-term disability by making it more difficult to
establish and appeal a claim.

• covering low-wage time in the assignment of
casuals' work through the end of seniority and
making it easier to fire casuals;

• cuts in special leave for a household
emergency;

• in CCERA and PriCare Locals, the employers
have proposed additional rollbacks that amount
to cuts of $1,000 per employee per year.

At every step of the bargaining process, the
employer continues to claim that it doesn't have
the ability to pay for the fair contract that we
have proposed.

The truth is that there is an ability to pay, but
it's a question of priorities.

The 1991 Provincial Budget, that is leading to
the latest rounds of hospital layoffs increased the

That's a $228 million increase for doctors in one
year — more than enough to meet our contract
demands. (Details of the budget are on page 11)

What's more, an HEU investigation into senior
hospital administration salary increases is being
published. It reveals shocking increases in their
salaries of between 26 percent and 50 percent
over two years (1988-1990) when HEU members
were kept to only 9.4 percent.

Why Are We in Bargaining?

Although we are making modest progress in
bargaining, there is a serious block to any settle-
ment: the Sacred's Bill 82.

Bill 82 is more than wage controls and it is
helping the employers at the bargaining table.
They are saying that such basic proposals like
the right to Hepatitis B vaccines and the right of
a pregnant worker to transfer away from a comput-
er terminal is covered by Bill 82.

If we want a fair contract, Bill 82 has got to go.

The HEU Provincial Executive has adopted the
following program of action to repeal Bill 82.
We're working with BCGEU and the Health
Sciences Association to ensure all health care work-
ers are registered to vote. In some of our locals,
up to 40 percent of our members are not
registered.

We're supporting the B.C. Federation of
Labor's information program on Bill 82. And we'll
be coordinating a regional lobby campaign
against Bill 82, combining special membership
meetings, with contacts with other unions and a
lobby of local politicians over the summer.

This program of action is designed to take us
through the summer, highlighting the issue of
public sector wage controls and stressing the
importance of voting for a change in the late
summer or fall election.

The goals are clear. We're out to win a fair
contract and repeal of Bill 82.

Allevato is the chief spokesperson for the HEU's
bargaining committee.
The human cost of toxic gas leaks

By BRAD TEETER
TERRACE — The shutdown of the Mills Memorial Hospital gas sterilizer may have come too late for Central Supply Room workers who have long suffered the consequences of sloppy toxic gas management.

For years, CSR workers — all women — complaining of ETO-related health problems were told their concerns were imaginary or rooted in other causes, such as their brand of hand soap.

But the hospital has not explained why serious health disorders associated with ETO exposure have been suffered by four primary operators of the Mills Memorial ETO machine over the past decade.

“It was like beating my head against the wall!” recalls Joan Ziraldo, who has worked in the Central Supply Room since 1973.

Ziraldo, who suffers chronic nose and throat irritation, nausea and general nervous system disorders, is thankful the sterilizer finally is closed.

“At least no one else is going to get sick because of it” she says. “It’s a pleasure not to be short of breath after a day at work. Too bad it’s 14 years too late.”

Betty North, who shared ETO duties with Ziraldo for several years, is still living with her medical decision but, she too, says the order came late. “It bothers me that I was never given the benefit of the doubt,” North suffers respiratory health problems and has a serious heart condition.

North was told her hand soap was at fault after her face was burned in an ETO accident Jan. 26, 1983. The morning after an ETO leak in the sterilizer exhaust system, North woke up with a blistering face. The subsequent WCB report ordered the hospital to make ETO safety improvements, including a proper venting system.

Former HEU employee Linda Perry, a part-time nurses aide in CSR for a three-year period starting July 1980, was sick for most of the period she worked around the gas sterilizer.

“I developed a blistering rash on the neck which would come back periodically,” she says. “I also suffered itching eyes, scabs in the nose, shortness of breath and a rapid heart beat that she is still on medication for.”

Perry says she could never understand why engineers were equipped with masks and gloves whenever they worked on the sterilizer but CSR staff members were given no protection.

Veronica Williams, a fourth CSR member who suffered health problems after working with the gas sterilizer, was not available for comment.

Although CSR staff members have been unable to prove all of their health concerns are linked to ETO, their symptoms are consistent with health problems shown in numerous studies to be caused by ETO exposure.

Medical studies have demonstrated that high vapour concentrations (above 100 parts per million) may cause serious adverse effects such as severe irritation to the upper respiratory tract and lungs, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Cardiac arrest has also been linked to ETO exposure and long-term exposure has been shown to cause cancer. Exposure may also cause adverse effects on the lungs, liver, kidneys, adrenal glands, testes and blood.

Charlie Lindstrom’s stubborn denial

By BRAD TEETER
TERRACE — Charlie Lindstrom is a stubborn man. Nothing, it seems, can shake his belief in the safety of the toxic gas sterilizer at this community’s Mills Memorial Hospital.

Like his counterparts in many other facilities around B.C., Lindstrom rejected suggestions that health workers were at risk from leaks of deadly ethylene oxide gas.

But action by HEU members, backed by Workers Compensation Board orders, is forcing Lindstrom and others in B.C. health care system to undertake a major effort to make gas sterilizers safe.

The heavy-duty Mills Memorial Hospital plant maintenance director isn’t swayed by thoroughly documented evidence of dangerous exposure ratings and an assortment of ethylene oxide (ETO) related illnesses and burns suffered over the years by operators.

Even after the sterilizer was shut down March 9 because the hospital opted not to make safety changes recommended by the Workers Compensation Board (WCB), Lindstrom remained unmoved. “You know that it was only shut down because your people would not work on it,” Lindstrom told The Guardian in a brief telephone interview.

As a result of HEU members’ action, the hospital’s gas sterilizing now is done in Prince George.

“T’ve always done everything humanly possible to ensure its safe operation,” says Lindstrom.

But that view isn’t shared by Ron Mackenzie, a maintenance engineer who worked under Lindstrom at Mills Memorial for several years after the installation of the ETO sterilizer.

Mackenzie, who left the hospital in 1986 after disagreeing with Lindstrom’s handling of several hospital matters, including ETO recalls, shocked ETO exposure levels in the area used by CSR staff in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In an interview from the Queenal hospital, where he is currently employed, Mackenzie told The Guardian that he routinely advised Lindstrom of high exposure ratings over a lengthy period.

He cites as central to Mills Memorial Hospital ETO concerns, a dangerous fault in the gas sterilizer’s design. In a 1980 letter chronling his ETO concerns, Mackenzie wrote that a two-part system requiring operators to handle instruments still covered in ETO residue was a serious problem.

Mackenzie wrote that tests later showed that CSR staff were exposed to ETO residue 50 times above the acceptable level.

Nevertheless, Lindstrom maintains the ETO sterilizer was safe to operate and would be running today if staff only would agree to work on it.

ETO leaks plague HEU members

About 25 surgical sterile supply department workers at Vancouver’s St. Paul’s Hospital evacuated their work area May 1 when alarms indicated an ETO storage tank leak. The gas leak came on the heels on an incident earlier in the week when two workers became ill after apparent exposure to the gas.

HEU has pressed St. Paul’s management for several months to upgrade safety precautions in the area as recommended by an internal review.

In Nanaimo April 29, the Workers’ Compensation Board ordered major changes in the operation and maintenance of the gas sterilizer at Na-naimo Regional Hospital in the wake of tow toxic gas leaks and the evacuation of the hospital’s sterile supply department.

The HEU demanded the inspection after another incident April 25 when alarms twice indicated ETO leaks. The problems were traced to a defective ventilation system. The WCB inspection led to orders improving in training, record keeping, testing and ventilation.

The human cost of toxic gas leaks

Victims of denial: Betty North (left) and Joan Ziraldo both are suffering the long-term effects of repeated exposure to ethylene oxide (ETO) in their work at Terrace’s Mills Memorial Hospital. Despite repeated illnesses and WCB orders regarding the gas sterilizer at Mills, administrators deny any shortcomings in their safety program.

Eto leaks plaque HEU members

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VICTIMS OF DENIAL: Betty North (left) and Joan Ziraldo both are suffering the long-term effects of repeated exposure to ethylene oxide (ETO) in their work at Terrace’s Mills Memorial Hospital. Despite repeated illnesses and WCB orders regarding the gas sterilizer at Mills, administrators deny any shortcomings in their safety program.
cleaning up history

I am raising a subscription to erect a statue to the unknown janitor —

to the slave wiping the blood from the republic's marble walls while Marcus Antonius praised his good friend Cassius:

it will be a monument to the rest of us, to those who must follow, armed with mops and buckets, after the great men of history have tracked their muddy boots across the kitchen floors of our lives.

no expense will be spared; this memorial will be stronger than the wharf of heroes, more durable than the travestry of kings.

not even the most sympathetic of scholars will be able to ignore this concrete proof that history itself requires a regular spring cleaning.

By M.C. Warrior

Companion

This machine is advertised as a companion: personal companion — or perhaps I misunderstand and the innuendo implies status.

Neither interpretation is real: it takes up space in my office but it is in fact, mere mechanical apparatus, a replacement part in the false hierarchy of jobs.

an absence of someone else's hands sharing the full range of work side-by-side with mine.

By Sandy Shreve

- Mark Warrior fishes commercially and keeps house when not writing poetry. Sandy Shreve spent many years as a clerical worker and now is Program Assistant for the Women's Studies Program at Simon Fraser University. Both poems are from the new anthology entitled More Than Our Jobs, edited by Glen Downie and Pam Turnfield, published by Pulp Press. It is highly recommended.

The Guardian welcomes submissions from its readers of either poetry or fiction.

Mt. St. Joseph takes jobs protest to Victoria

Two loads of hospital workers from Mount St. Joseph Hospital in Vancouver went to Victoria on B.C. budget day to protest cutbacks that mean the closure of 12 acute care beds and layoffs of 17 workers, including 12 HEU members.

Mount St. Joseph was loaned $800,000 last year by the Ministry of Health to help stave off a $1 million budget deficit. The ministry carried out an operational review of the hospital, but in late April, the ministry ordered paybacks of the loan this year.

The ministry refused to release the results of the review to the hospital when it demanded the payback, which sparked the the layoffs and bed closures.

Sixty workers from the hospital were addressed by HEU secretary-business manager Carmen Allerga, B.C. Nurses' Union president Debra McPheron, Vancouver councillors Luba Davies and NDP health critic Tom Paris.

As part of the rally on the legislature steps, workers sang a special song about their concerns.

Allerga said Mount St. Joseph is a unique facility because it serves the Chinese and East Indian communities in the Lower Mainland.

"These bed closures are punishing the sick and the ill in order to meet some bureaucratic bottom line at the ministry of health," she said.

Finance Minister John Jansen, Health Minister Bruce Strachan, and Vancouver-Little Mountain S. Cred MLA Grace McCarthy declined to meet with the workers.

New West dietary crew grieves to stop the clocks

NEW WESTMINSTER — The assignment had all the ingredients of a TV game show, but, in a hospital setting, it was anything but funny.

Hard-working St. Mary's Hospital dietary aides, outfitted with stopwatches around their necks and a chart in hand, were ordered in early May to bud the clock in a dash to see how fast food trays could be distributed to patients.

They've filed a grievance against the scheme, which was the brainchild of a private contractor managing food services.

A new food tray distribution system was to be time tested for efficiency, dietary aide Filemenna D'Souza told workers the morning of the experiment.

Although dietary aides are fully qualified to deliver trays to patients, the task has traditionally been done by LPNs and Registered Nurses.

The three-day test demanded that the dietary aides not only perform a new task, but do so with little explanation and under the pressure of stopwatch timing.

The workers were directed to use the stairs of the four-floor facility to free up elevators for food carts.

Their supervisor was also equipped with a stopwatch to monitor their performance.

Feeling "degraded and angry" at the end of the ordeal, dietary aide Christine Barnes asked not to repeat the exercise the next day but the request was denied. In fact, management changed staff rotation to ensure that the fast-moving nurses would serve the runners role.

Dietary aide Denise Jansen found the exercise humiliating. Jansen, who is deaf, said the stopwatch was handed her with almost no explanation. "It was stupid, not fair. People were looking at me and I didn't have any idea what it was all about!"

Cool cutting experiments have become old hat at the hospital since Versa Services, a privately owned management company, was hired to manage several departments, said St. Mary's local chairperson Lynn Halstead.

"These workers were treated like race horses, ordered to put clocks around their necks and then . . . on your mark . . . get set . . . go! Wouldn't it make sense when trying something new to go easy and make sure no mistakes are made?"

Halstead says Versa likes to cut costs to increase its profits, regardless of the impact on staff. She says Versa managers are planning a stop watch follow-up involving the cleaning of water jugs.
B.C.'s empty building budget

Social Credit's latest budget
has money to build new hospitals
but none to staff existing ones

By Chris Gainor

To NDP Finance critic Glen Clark, it was an "empty building budget" with no improvement in health care.

To Social Credit government, its 1991 provincial budget provides for "caring, compassionate and fair government" with a deficit of less than $400 million.

This much is clear: Social Credit's pre-election budget promises more hard times for B.C.'s health care system and the workers who make it run.

The government is building more hospitals while it closes existing beds, reduces staff and lays off experienced workers.

Finance Minister John Jansen, who was moved from the health ministry just two weeks before bringing in the last Social budget before this year's election, boasted about his government's support for accessible health care and promised that "this government will protect that accessibility for all British Columbians."

Health care spending for 1990/91 rose by 9.1 per cent over 1989/90, but hospital programs rose by only 7.3 per cent, just one percentage point ahead of inflation.

While operating spending is being held down, the budget boasts that $1.3 billion will be spent on building programs in several areas, including $285 million in health care.

B.C. Budget at a glance:

- Spending on buildings up $285 million.
- Medical Service Plan premiums up to pay for doctors' settlement equivalent to an increase of 19.3 percent or $228 million.
- No new money to improve staffing.
- Freeze on spending for new equipment.
- Increased Pharmacare charges will gouge seniors.

This priority for buildings over services prompted Allevato to label the budget an "empty building budget."

"Bed closures and staff reductions will continue, but the government will be able to point to large empty buildings," Allevato said.

Funding for hospital equipment has been frozen at last year's level, but the health budget includes massive increases in Pharmacare to cover the spiralling costs of prescription drugs made by multinationals, and for the Medical Services Plan, covering the costs of the new settlement for doctors, including a fully-paid pension plan.

These increases will be financed in part by a 13-per-cent increase in MSP premiums starting July 1, and a $50 increase in the Pharmacare deductible.

Controversy centred on the size of the budget deficit. Jansen said the deficit was only $398 million, but the NDP and virtually everyone else outside the government argued that the deficit was actually more than $1.2 billion.

Jansen argued that $890 million from the infamous Budget Stabilization or B.S. fund produced the lower deficit number, but figures elsewhere in the budget documents make it clear that the B.S. fund is empty.

If the costs of certain crown corporations and agencies were added in, the operating deficit would be even higher than $1.2 billion.

One reason why the deficit is such a controversial matter is because the Social Credit government boasts that it manages its finances better than other provinces.

However, when the true deficit figures are considered, B.C.'s deficit and debt situation is a lot closer to other provinces, including Ontario, which Jansen called a "fiscal horror story."
Coffee Break

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Strong response to HEU survey on political issues

With major reforms due in the B.C. health care system, this year’s provincial election will be crucial to the interests of every member of HEU.

As one of the first steps in HEU’s participation in the election, a mail-in survey was sent to 5,000 HEU members living in every part of B.C. asking for comment on political and union issues.

This survey, one of the first of its kind carried out by a union in B.C., asked HEU members to rate their satisfaction with the performance of the provincial government, the way in which government programs were delivered, and their views on current political issues.

The survey found that 60 percent of the membership was “somewhat satisfied” with the union and 22 percent were “very satisfied.”

The survey was based on a random sample of the membership drawn from HEU records.

Poll tests HEU performance

HEU members are generally satisfied with the union and its performance, according to the results of a province-wide telephone survey conducted for the union in May.

The survey, one of two sponsored by the union during the spring, asked members about the union’s views on current political issues. The telephone survey tested the union’s communications program and member views on political issues.

Preliminary tabulation of the telephone survey results indicated that 60 percent of the membership was “somewhat satisfied” with the union and 22 percent were “very satisfied.”

The survey was based on a random sample of the membership drawn from HEU records.

CEDARVIEW hearing to rule on use of 'agency personnel'

A vital arbitration hearing on the right of health care employers to use non-union “agency personnel,” rather than HEU members hired from the central list opened in Vancouver May 15.

The arbitration, which is being heard by a three-person panel headed by former B.C. Provincial Court Justice Norm E. McDonald, will determine if the employers can hire from a list of grievances filed by HEU members at North Vancouver’s Cedarview Lodge.

The HEU workers, including care aides and housekeeping workers, were fighting the employer’s practice of hiring casual labour from an employment agency rather than from the casual pool.

As a result, the HEU members pointed out, residents were cared for by non-union workers who received no contract benefits, were paid a lower rate and often provided inferior care because of their lack of familiarity with the facility.

The panel hearing is necessary because of the difficulty of finding casual workers and the cost savings and administrative convenience. If the use of agency workers is allowed, the HEU believes, the door will be open to widespread privatization of patient care.

The case is based on eight of 29 grievances filed in 1988. Hearings are scheduled to continue in mid-June.

VGH plumbers first to feel sting of the free trade agreement

Plumbers at Vancouver General Hospital have the dubious honour of being the first B.C. members to feel the effects of the direct impacts of the Canada—U.S. free trade agreement.

Six U.S. plumbers appeared at VGH to work on a list of 2,500 steam traps, work that could be done by HEU plumbers.

A VGH spokesperson claimed that the U.S. plumbers were brought in because of a patent held by an American firm on the steam traps.

HEU plumber Frank Lalrane said all the work could be done by HEU plumbers, and added that HEU members are in fact working on the replacement project in a subsidiary role.

When the use of the American plumbers became public, immigration officials were asked if they would investigate.

Under the U.S.-Canada free trade agreement, non-union workers have temporary access to work in the other country.

June/July 1981 • GUARDIAN
PUZZLE

Unscramble these five jumbled words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words. Now arrange the circled letters to form the answer suggested by the cartoon.

RENE

TAACK

YEPLR

NAME

SOER

Print answer here

Calender

The Guardian welcomes freemime for Calendar. Mail to 2004 4th Ave, Vancouver or phone 734-3431. HEU section will get priority in the space available.

JUNE

10-14

Vancouver, B.C. Supreme Court hearing of HEU's Chuiton of Rights case demanding pension of same sex husband by the Medical Services Plan. Court house on Smyth's, look for case called Tim Brown vs GM The Queen.

11

TUESDAY, Victoria, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Victoria Labour Centre, 7 p.m.

13

THURSDAY, Courtenay, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Courtenay, 7 p.m.

19

WEDNESDAY, Fort St. John, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Pioneer Inn, 7 p.m.

25 TUESDAY, Kitimat, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, CPU Hall, 7 p.m.

26

WEDNESDAY, Trail, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, location to be announced, 7 p.m.

AUGUST

5-16

Vancouver, HEU Summer Leadership School, University of B.C.

25-28

WEDNESDAY TO FRIDAY, HEU Provincial Executive meeting in Vancouver.

27

THURSDAY, Vancouver, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Holiday Inn, 7 p.m.

BUDGET CUTS...

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

Call 734-3431 or your nearest regional office to get your copies today.

GuARDIAN  •  JUNE/July 1991
Health bosses in the money

While the Social Credit government is preaching restraint for health care workers, it has allowed their bosses to take raises of up to 54 percent in the last two years.

Bargaining: slow progress

HEU's Bargaining Committee reports some progress as talks with health care employers go into their fourth month.

The bad news budget

Social Credit's latest budget has money to build new hospitals, but none to improve staffing at the ones we already have.

Turning off the gas

Terrace HEU members are paying with their health for management's stubborn refusal to improve safety on gas sterilizers.