Under interim award

HEU Members Receive 8 Per Cent Increase

Approximately 250 health care workers took part in a demonstration July 23 in Victoria to protest government underfunding of hospitals and health care facilities throughout the province. The demonstration was organized by the six unions (including HEU) that make up Alliance To Save Health Care.

Nielsen's Resignation Called For

The Hospital Employees' Union has called for the resignation of Health Minister Jim Nielsen for his negligence in the wake of hospital lay-offs and bed closures at B.C. hospitals and health care facilities throughout the province.

Union Secretary-Business Manager Jack Gerow said Nielsen's refusal to address a demonstration July 22 of 250

Executive Suspends Campaign

The Provincial Executive, at a meeting July 12, decided to suspend HEU's "Don't Get Sick in B.C." campaign.

The executive made its decision after discussing legal alternatives to maintain health care jobs and hospital beds. At this time, HEU is pursuing such legal action not only through grievance arbitration but also through court action.

The purpose of the "Don't Get Sick in B.C." campaign was to:
- force the Provincial Government to provide more long-term care and acute care beds;
- protect as many HEU members as possible from reduced hours of work and layoffs;
- relieve pressure on overloaded hospital elective surgery waiting lists;
- increase pressure on Provincial Government to provide adequate funds to underfunded hospitals.

In effect, the campaign was HEU's "strike" to win back the jobs of our members and the hospital beds for our fellow British Columbians.

Issues To Be Arbitrated For '83, '84

The following issues are to be arbitrated for 1983 and January-February 1984 portion of the collective agreement as outlined in the interim award released July 12:
- wages, including "equal pay for work of equal value" and COLA;
- hours of work, including overtime;
- reduction in the work force;
- contracting out;
- compassionate leave;
- scheduling;
- maternity leave;
- dental plan;
- extended health;
- severance allowance;
- patient security;
- long-term disability;
- an addendum which deals with Kaslo isolation, meal allowance for Red Cross and parking.

A number of issues flowing from various addenda to the 1978-81 Master Agreement remain in dispute. According to the interim award HEU and HLRA "are to establish a joint committee to study such issues, to attempt to reach agreement thereon."

Matters Referred to Larson

The interim award also stated that the issues of employee status, temporary promotion or transfer and job postings and applications would be referred to arbitrator Dalton Larson for binding resolution.

If it becomes necessary to move from mediation into arbitration, it will be a three-member board with Larson as Chairman.

The arbitrator's fee is $300 for the first day, $150 for each additional day.

HEU members covered by the Master Agreement arbitration will receive an 8 per cent wage increase effective August 31, 1982, under the terms of an interim arbitration award handed down July 12.

The Bergering Committee has sought an interim raise retroactive to January 1 when the last agreement expired but arbitration board chairman Don Munroe decided against retroactivity at this time.

"We feel HEU members have gained enough without a general wage increase and a retroactive wage increase would have relieved that hardship," said Union Secretary-Business Manager Jack Gerow.

"The 8 per cent interim increase therefore doesn't go as far as we wanted because there is no retroactivity at this time but we are somewhat satisfied that the chairman agreed with our request at the beginning of the arbitration proceedings that the interim award was just fairly," said Gerow.

The arbitration board's final award for 1982, including decisions on wages, is expected in the fall.

"We will continue to argue for a 20 per cent wage increase retroactive to January 1," added Gerow.

Munroe also called for a 27-month agreement expiring March 31, 1984, with a reduction free grace period of 3½ hour work week to a 35 hour week commencing January 1, 1983.

Munroe stressed that the 8 per cent wage hike was only an interim raise and will not affect the final award made by the board.

In the interim award Munroe stated: "I wish it clearly understood that this is an interim measure in the purest sense - no finality, just relief, with the intention of the adjudication of outstanding issues and this included a schedule for issues to be arbitrated for 1983. These are issues:

- percentage increases in wages for 1982;
- red waiting list waiting dates; and
- closure of overpayment amounts.

Munroe said all the evidence and arguments from HEU and HLRA on those issues will be concluded by "late August or early September." He said that the board will deliberate and deliberate and then forward a final award on those issues thereafter.

The Items Below Have Been Agreed To

Thirty-Five Cents (35c) per mile from the employee's home to the Employer's place of business and return. Minimum allowance shall be $2.00.

Article IX, Section 4 - Change to: "Annual vacations for employees with ten (10) work days' vacation or more shall be 21 days as continuous vacation period but only after all other first vacation periods have been posted. Seniority shall also prevail in the choice of the third vacation period, but only after all other "first" and "second" vacation periods have been posted. Seniority shall also prevail in the choice of the fourth vacation period, but only after all other "first," "second," and "third" vacation periods have been posted.

"Annual vacations for employees with less than ten (10) work days' vacation shall be reduced to one (1) continuous period."

[Editor's Note: The following are among the items that have been agreed to by the parties and were included in the interim award.]

Article VIII, Section 3 (f) - New: "If the Employer changes a shift schedule without giving a notice of fourteen (14) calendar days' advance notice and such change requires an employee to work on a scheduled day off, then such hours worked shall be paid at overtime rates pursuant to Article VIII, Section 7."

Article VIII, Section 7 (x) - New: "An employer required to work overtime adjoining his/her regularly scheduled shift shall be entitled to eight (8) clear hours between the end of his/hers overtime work and the start of his/her next regular shift. If eight (8) clear hours of time off are not provided, overtime rates shall apply to all hours worked on the next regular shift."

Article VIII, Section 8 - Change second paragraph to: "These employees shall receive a transportation allowance at wages based on the cost of taking a taxi from their home to the Employer's place of business and return or, if the employee normally drives his/her automobile to work an allowance of
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:

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The Alliance To Save Health Care made sure Premier Bill Bennett and Health Minister Jim Nielsen got the message at a demonstration on the steps of the legislature July 22. The message may have reached the premier as Bennett promised in July that "news about health care funding" would be forthcoming in August.

Getting The Message

It took nearly six months of public campaigning, the formation of a health care workers' alliance, and the outcry of many B.C. citizens but now it appears as though the health care message is finally getting through to Premier Bill Bennett and Health Minister Jim Nielsen.

At Guardian press time in early August, Premier Bennett had promised that a major announcement on provincial government health care spending was forthcoming.

Bennett revealed at a press conference in late July that health care was NOT an area that was going to be affected by government "restraint."

Of course, HEU is not jumping to conclusions on the basis of Bennett's July promise of health care expenditure increases.

We'll wait until the 'promise' is written in black and white before getting up any hopes that a return to B.C.'s previous high standard of health care (before the government cutbacks) is imminent.

What HEU finds hard to believe is that it took so long for the government to understand and realize that a high standard of health care is perhaps the vital concern of British Columbians.

Withholding money from hospitals and health care facilities places unnecessary risks on hospital patients, long term care residents and citizens waiting for hospital beds. The people of this province, including over 40,000 health care workers, have put the message to Bennett and Nielsen over and over again for months — "Stop Eroding Health Care."

We hope it didn't take an airplane flying a sign over the Parliament Buildings (see photograph above) to ensure that the message was finally received.

Now that the point has been driven home, we hope it is not easily forgotten by Mr. Bennett and Nielsen.
At Richmond General Court Injunction Prevents Layoffs

On June 16th of this year, the Richmond General Hospital, one of Summons in B.C. Supreme Court against the Richmond General Hospital Society.

The purpose of the writ was to enable the Union to seek an injunction preventing the withdrawal of beds from service at the Richmond General Hospital. The Richmond General Hospital Society was stated to be the defendant.

HEU won the injunction on a subsequent hearing on June 30th to prevent the closure of beds and the actual closure of many HEU members at the Richmond Hospital. Health Minister Jim Nielsen then wrote the hospital management giving them permission to proceed with the bed closures.

The Union's actions were merely the first step in defense of the patients, HEU members and health care standards. The purpose of the injunction was to require the hospital and the government to obey the laws passed by the government and at the same time while HEU members' continued employment was being protected, to provide the Union with time to bring others into the courts.

The injunction also had the effect of identifying just who is responsible for the withdrawal of beds and services — Health Minister Nielsen.

"It's not good enough to hide behind the hospital board. Hospital boards have no strong voice in this," said HEU Secretary-Treasurer Madil Joop. "Doctors should be directly involved in this."

"HEU had no choice but to make the court declaration."

Richmond General Hospital was an appropriate selection to test the legality of bed withdrawals for several reasons:

"We have good organization, support from the community and are fighting for public interest."

"Richmond General Hospital is greatly undermined for a community its size and URGH determined to bring about the suspension of Richmond's international air travel."

"Nielsen is obviously determined to continue withdrawing the health care delivery system, and it is to his responsibility for it," said Gerow. HEU reiterated its call for an examination of Richmond's care facilities.

Nielsen’s resignation July 22nd is due to a decision of its government contact with Vancouver's international airport. The first step in this is to inspect the hospital facilities and to identify the reasons why they are not operating at full capacity.

Microchip Technology "Frankenstein's Monster"

Microchip technology is rapidly becoming "Frankenstein's Monster" because of the health risks and social side effects that are associated with it, according to HEU.

"Sewers briefly described a July at a hearing held in Victoria by the Federal Task Force on Microelectronics and Health. HEU stated that the introduction of microchip technology into B.C. hospitals is adversely affecting the working conditions of its members.

"Insomniac automatically causes pain to our members, both in terms of lost jobs and in the form of exposure to hazardous x-ray and microwave radiation," stated the HEU brief.

"Those who work with such the public will accept the potential for possible and have been exposed to data and word processors which have video display. One HEU member at the University of Science and Technology was suffering from hearing loss, one ear; two stenosis at Shaughnessy Hospital developed migraines, and three stenosis there now suffer from increased sensitivity to light. two stenosis at Surrey Memorial have suffered ruptured blood vessels in their eyes and out of six pregnancies than have resulted in only one healthy full term baby."

"HEU recommended to the Task Force that legislation be passed requiring that unions, or employees themselves where there is no union, give their consent before new technology of this type can be introduced in the workplace."

"Employees should be able to ensure the continuation of their health insurance programs so that those whose jobs were affected would not be thrown out of work," stated the brief.

"Other recommendations made by HEU to the federal Task Force were:

- an expansion and updating of the Canada Manpower Retraining Programs, that would better cope with retraining workers who find their skills are no longer marketable, to be funded by a special tax levied on the sale of all high technology goods; and
- development of a national plan for the implementation of a full employment for all sectors of society, including women and minority groups."

"Examination of the federal government's subsidies to high technology manufacturers; HEU recommends that the government cease funding R&D in such investments."

"The passage of the Canada Labour Code to provide protection for workers against health hazards caused by VDT's; and
- a redefinition of the term 'work' to include the alteration of federal and provincial legislation, and
- finally, making sure that part-time workers (regardless of hours worked) are fully eligible for all government plans, such as Unemployment Insurance and Canada Pension."

1982 Wage Settlements

The following information is derived from the wage settlement program conducted by the Program Services Branch of the Ministry of Labour. After the second quarter of 1982 there were 56 reported collective bargaining settlements covering 10,091,853 hours of work across the province. The average hourly wage increase negotiated in these settlements was 11.9% ($1.38/hour).

The second quarter 1982 average annual increase represents a 1.2 percentage point increase from the second quarter of 1981 when settlements were averaging 14.3% wage increases.

These HEU members gathered beside a sign that summarized their point of view to who is the victim behind the declining health delivery of health care in B.C. The Hospital Guardian, July/August, 1982/3.
HEU Sit-In
At Surrey
Over Tests

HEU has referred to arbitra-
tion suspensions given to Sur-
rey executive Unit members for
their part in a sit-in at Surrey
Memorial Hospital in June. 23.
About 150 Surrey Unit
members walked off the job to
protect the hospital manage-
ment’s type policy that is
imposed on clerks applying for
clerical positions.

The sit-in was sparked when
four clerks were forced to take
typing tests to requalify for
their own jobs.

"The thing that upsets us is
having to be tested for jobs we
have already shown we are
capable of doing," Unit Chair-
person Mary Gobblot told The
Guardian.

The Unit executive members
received suspensions ranging
from one to three days and HEU
rank-and-file members at the
hospital who took part in the
18-hour sit-in were given disci-
plinary letters by management.

Como Lake
Birthday
Party

Como Lake Unit members were
proud to take part in activities
that surrounded Mrs. Blancina
Crouiche on her 100th birthday
celebration June 29 at Como
Lake Private Hospital.

"We are all very fond of Mrs.
Crouiche here at the hospital. She
is a model resident," Unit Secre-
tary-Treasurer Chirley Bentlcy
told Th Guardian.

The birthday celebration
included a wine and cheese
party that was attended by a
number of Mrs. Crouiche’s rela-
tives as well as residents and
staff at the Como Lake health
care facility.

Dave Ross
Retirement
Party

The Chilliwack Unit gave Unit
member Dave Ross, a warm
essay in June when he threw a
retirement party for him.
Brother Ross was presented
with a $25 cheque, an HEU
retirement pin, and a unique
cake in the shape of a sailboat
constructed by Unit member
daycare worker Verne Brown.

"Dave served the Unit well
from 1970 to 1976 in the posi-
tion of Unit Chairperson and in
other capacities until January
of this year," Unit Secretary-
Treasurer Carolle Schultes told
The Guardian.

Brother Ross, who worked 17
years at Chilliwack General
Hospital as a carpenter, plans to
do a lot of sailing on Cultus
Lake during his retirement.

Non-Clerical Classified
Wage Rates

Aug. 1, 1982 Monthly Wage Rates (including 3½% interim increase)*

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HEU has recently received
long-awaited job descriptions
from HLRA in non-clerical cate-
gories, however, because of
HLRA staff limitations, nego-
tiation are not expected to
resume in non-clerical classi-
fication until after clerical clas-
ification is completed.

HEU had been waiting since
April for the job descriptions in
order to respond to the pro-
posed job matching and wage
tables contained in HLRA’s "fin-
al" offer of March 12, 1982.

An exchange of job descrip-
tions is an essential preliminary
step in the classification com-
parability process.

Fire Safety Posters
Part of HEU Campaign

HEU, for some time, has been
raising the issue of fire safety
through:

- Union meetings
- HEU’s last Biennial Conven-
tion
- HEU’s Long-Term Care
Study
- HEU’s Occupational Health and Safety Study

As a result, HEU has written
telegrams to government officials,
requesting the need for fire drills
and emergency training in our
Long-Term Care Report and
contacted local fire departments.
But, frequently, when HEU
takes the pressure off, em-
ployee concern for fire safety
tends to drop.

As a result, HEU members, at
the last Wage Policy Confer-
ence, adopted a Provincial Ex-
ecutive Patient Security con-
tact demand which includes a
requirement for monthly fire

Langley Member
Misquoted

In the June Guardian, Lang-
ley Unit member Kathleen van
der Groef was quoted on page 5
of The Guardian.

Prior to a hearing held by
the Public Commission on Social
and Community Service Cut-
backs in Abbotsford May 10,
she told The Guardian: "These
cutbacks are causing untold
suffer for people. I personally
know of one instance where a
bed closure eventually led to
the separation of a married
couple who were in the Long
Term Care program. Now who
would want to be responsible for
that?"

"He wants to know where he came from."

The Hospital Guardian, July/August, 1982/4

The Hospital Guardian, July/August, 1982/4
HEU/HLRA Clerical Pay Rate Schedule

(Editor's Note: Printed below is the HEU/HLRA Clerical Pay Rate Schedule (revised August 1, 1983). By looking at the schedule, classified HEU clerical members can only determine their current rate of pay but cannot also calculate their retroactivity arising under the E. R. Peck consent award.)

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HEU and HLRA Agree On Clerical Wage Rate Implementation

HLRA and HEU have now agreed on how classified wage rates for clerical employees are to be implemented.

In a letter to HEU June 23, HLRA agreed to procedures that should avoid problems in implementation that have occurred at Lions Gate, Surrey Memorial, Grace and Royal Columbian hospitals.

Grievances were filed by HEU at those hospitals because of classified rates being implemented under differing slotting procedures.

The grievances were filled because of two basic issues:

— the proper increment step slothting of employees in their new classified wage rate structures.

— the proper calculation of retroactive wages.

Due to a misunderstanding of the Peck Award, the hospitals mentioned above had not taken the provisions of the HEU/HLRA Master Agreement (governing such questions as permissibility, promotions, demotions, transfers and other matters) into consideration when slotting into their new multiple step classified wage rate structures.

HLRA agreed that the following provisions, in particular, must be applied in slotting employees at the appropriate increment steps in their classified wage rate structures and in determining their increment progression through their classified wage rate structures:

— Article VI, Seniority;

— Article VII, Leave of Absence;

— Article XIV, Wage Schedules, Attachments and Addendums;

— Article XVIII, Language Provisions;

— Addendum, Part-Time Employees.

Both parties also agreed that the provisions of the Peck Award regarding the four percent civil servants' Mitigation Rule and the freezing of wages under certain circumstances shall be applied. Agreement was also reached that for the purpose of classification, prior variations of stamped job descriptions shall be deemed to carry the same classification as the stamped job description unless specifically indicated otherwise.

In another classification news, Vancouver General Hospital will be classified in September instead of July as originally expected.

The Hospital Guardian, July/August, 1983/5
CUPE Application Rejected by LRB

The B.C. Labour Relations Board has rejected an application by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 118 to reconsider a previous LRB decision as it relates to an HEU bargaining unit at the UBC Health Sciences Centre Hospital.

Pension Entitlement Sought

HEU has written the commissioners of the Superannuation Plan in order to protect an HEU member's rights to a pension.

The Superannuation Branch in Victoria had advised St. Paul's Unit member Bernice Sharp that she was not entitled to receive a pension because she would not have obtained 10 years' service as of her retirement date (May 19, 1980).

Sharp had been paying into the Pension Municipal Plan since August 1, 1973. However, HEU learned that Sharp had continued contributions on May 27, 1972, which was not allowed to continue contributions to the pension fund until August 1, 1973.

Under the HEU/HLRA Master Agreement, all employees on completion of their contributionary period of three months, shall be brought into the scope of the Superannuation Pension Plan.

HEU plans to file a grievance at the hospital to see to it that Sharp receives the sufficient months of service to be entitled to her pension.

HEU Members' Search Uncovers Ring

Renée Hefti, a registered nurse at Lions Gate Hospital in North Vancouver, feels grateful to HEU members Chris Cameron and Irene Gadil in the laundry department at the hospital for an incident that occurred in November last year.

Hefti pinned her engagement ring to her uniform (many hospitals insist that nurses not wear any rings or jewelry while on duty) and at the end of her shift threw her uniform in with the pile of dirty uniforms.

Because of the sentimental value of the ring, she asked HEU member Irene Gadil if a search could be conducted through the dirty laundry for the ring. Irene and Chris Cameron then started looking for the ring after working hours.

Lois Reimer, an HEU member and clerk in the laundry department, said extensive searches are not usually done because of the great amount of laundry that is done at the hospital.

"Not only do we have the Lions Gate laundry, we have laundry from Burnaby General, Dogwood and Sunny Hill hospitals too — so we're talking about a lot of clothes and linen," said Reimer, a former Unit Secretary and Chairperson.

"And once Mrs. Hefti received her ring, she sent the laundry staff a nice note and a box of chocolates. Believing we girls really appreciated that she acknowledged their diligence in finding the ring."

HEU Kootenay Office

HEU's Provincial Executive has decided to establish a regional office in the Kootenays.

The Union hopes the office to be fully operational sometime in the fall.

At Guardian press time, it was not known where in the Kootenays the location of the new HEU office would be.

HSA/HLRA Negotiations Suspended

Contract negotiations between the 4,500 member Health Sciences Association and the Health Labour Relations Association are suspended for the time being.

"The HSA is seeking a 33% increase, to replace losses from inflation over the past contract period and catch-up to the B.C. Nurses Union," stated a recent HSA press release.

HLRA and HSA exchanged proposals on March 15 for a contract to replace one which expired March 31.

"Our main concern now is the affect of cutbacks on health care. We will carry on active work with the Alliance to Save Health Care, to warn the public that the government is destroying the health care system through its policies," stated the HSA news release.

HLRA rejected an HSA request in July for a 6.8 per cent interim wage increase. HEU would like to require contract negotiations "once HLRA has planned itself to engage in meaningful collective bargaining."

Vancouver Council Lashes Out at Government

Vancouver city council lashed out at the provincial government at a meeting in June over financial cuts in the province's health care system.

After presentations from several groups, including HEU, council members voted unanimously to urge the government to restore hospitals hit by recent provincial cutbacks to full service and expand preventaive and community-based programs.

"It's bizarre that at the same time as hospital beds are being closed and employees laid off, hospital construction continues," Vancouver medical health officer David Kinloch told council.

Seminar Schedule

HEU's educational seminars will resume August 23 in Cranbrook.

The complete schedule of seminars through December is printed below.

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Photographed On The Job

HEU Members At Kelowna General Hospital

Mary Burt is a housekeeping aide. Mary, who is married with two children, began work at the hospital in 1972.

Erich Schur works in the maintenance department. Erich, who has been at the hospital for 18 years, lives in Kelowna with his family.

Irene Burt worked as a housekeeper for eight years before recently retiring from service.

Susan Plumpston has worked as an admitting clerk since 1975. Susan, who is single, commutes to and from work on her Honda motorcycle.

Ann Stengel has worked in dietary for the past seven years. Don Innes, who is a shop steward, has been employed in dietary since 1976.

Al Fullerton, a resident of Westbank, works in the admitting department. Al has been on the job for seven years.

Sharon Baker began working at the hospital this year. Married with two children, Sharon is a laundry aide.

June Turner is a dietary aide at the hospital. She is married with two children and lives in Rutland.

Jim Bishop works in the maintenance department. He has carried out his duties in maintenance since 1975.
At Cumberland Diagnostic and Treatment Centre

"Dede" Works In The Housekeeping Department

This feature appears regularly in The Guardian and is designed to profile an HEU member, in most cases a rank-and-file Union member. The article focuses on the member's job and the duties that member performs while at work. The monthly feature also deals, in part, with the HEU member's personal views on a number of varying subjects. The purpose of the Guardian profile is to gain recognition of the work performed by HEU members and the members who perform the work.

Mildred Hofmann has worked at the Cumberland Diagnostic and Treatment Centre for over 11 years in a number of jobs. "I started in dietary and then I moved to laundry and for the last few years I have been in housekeeping," Hofmann told The Guardian in a July interview. A Cumberland native, Mildred (or "Dede" as she is known as Cumberland) has an affection for the central Vancouver Island area. "I guess because I was born and raised here there is something to do with it but naturally I do like this part of the island. We sometimes get jokes in Cumberland about being the bedroom community for Courtenay but we don't mind. We'd rather be up here anyway," says Hofmann.

A widow with three children, "Dede" became Unit Chairperson of the HEU in the Cumberland Unit six years and has found her experience to be very rewarding. "I was a Trustee on the Unit executive a couple of years before I became Chairperson so I'm used to getting involved. It's (Chairperson) an interesting job to say the least. I don't pretend to know all the answers but I do the best I can."

"I particularly enjoyed the Wage Policy Conference last year in Vernon. It was democracy in action," she said.

She added that she also learned a great deal from attending several HEU educational seminars.

"That too was interesting and helpful for me. I didn't realize there was so much to know until I sat through one of those shop steward seminars. I quickly found out how much I didn't know."

The subject of new provincial wage controls (announced in July by Premier Bill Bennett) is a sensitive one with Hofmann. What can I say about it? I don't feel they're right. You know and I know they're going to make us pay. Lower wages mean lower prices. In fact, they almost never mean lower prices. When you lower public sector employee wages, you're punishing one group unfairly for the wrongs of the provincial government.

Getting warmed up to the subject, she went on to criticize the provincial government for the hypocrisy of trying to hold down public sector wages while allowing uncontrolled spending by cabinet ministers.

"Look at the waste of money those cabinet ministers indulged in! (Peter) Nygard is paying a gander, and whatever it is, they are cutting public sector wages. It's a disgraceful, blind policy."

She said that she was emotionally moved recently by a hospital patient's comment about health care.

"Here was this sick woman telling me that she heard that health care was a privilege. She said she didn't consider herself privileged to be sick."

Mission Unit Members Set Record Straight

Dear Sir,

Now is the time for the people of Mission to wake up and smell the bacon.

White layoffs have become a sign of the times, when they occur in the hospital it means only one thing, a decline in the previously-established patient care.

Surely the members of the community have the right to be vexed by such pitiful statements as those found in last week's edition of the Fraser Valley Record in the article headed: "Cutbacks Hit Hospital Staff!"

First we are told that jobs will be created with the opening of a 25-bed addition to the extended care unit; then we are told that further reductions could become necessary in the fall.

Well, the fall is only two short months away. Which is it? Where does this leave the patients that will be occupying the extension? Are they running the risk of inadequate patient care?

The first lay-off notices reached the staff on June 1, less than two weeks after an article was printed in The Record stating no permanent staff would be affected by the reduced funding situation.

The following week we were told, in fact, that seven part-time positions have been eliminated in the dietary department. To date there have been 16 part-time and six full-time positions eliminated with numerous positions lost through attrition. With these lay-offs the remaining staff is asked to become more flexible, which will detract from our main goal of quality patient care.

For one dollar, a resident of Mission can become a member of the Mission Memorial Hospital Society. This will entitle the resident to vote in members of the hospital board.

Don't you dare write a letter to your elected officials and Jim Nielsen, minister of health. It is the job of elected officials to serve the public.

We are all well aware of the crisis brought about by the current economical situation, and we appreciate that hard measures must be taken to meet them. We do not appreciate having our health care institutions slowly starved down in much the same manner as the unfortunate pup whose owner was too compassionate to cut off its tail in one motion, so, hacked away inch by inch at a time.

Anyone who feels this does not have a direct and definitional effect on patient care is only fooling his or herself.

NANCY MOSER
Mission; and
CHRIS POLAK
(Reported for: Nancy Moser and Chris Polak are HEU members at Mission Memorial Hospital. This letter was originally sent to the Fraser Valley Record newspaper in July.)

LETTERS

Cutbacks Affect Vancouver Patient

Dear Sir,

Health care cuts hit me last week. They will hit almost everyone eventually. Are there any other patients out there who have been affected by cutbacks? The government doesn't believe we exist.

I was never in a hospital anyplace but before I entered Vancouver General on April 29 for an operation. I stayed there for about a week after the surgery. On June 1 I returned to the hospital for a similar operation. I was in the same unit — on the same floor, in fact — both times. The first time I went in, health care cuts were just being announced. I found the care very good and the staff attentive, although the nurses were obviously kept busy every minute.

When I returned only a few weeks later I noticed a diminished standard of care. Health care cutbacks made me uncomfortable for only a couple of days, but there are many others who were more concerned, including hospital employees who have to work in that frustrating, demoralizing situation.

CAROLYN JONES
Vancouver
(Editor's Note: The letter above (edited in The Guardian for space) first appeared in the Vancouver Sun June 15th.)

Redirect

Tax Money

Dear Sir,

The gross injustice being done to hospitals and their patients was the clear message of the June Guardian issue.

As a concerned citizen and a conscientious human being who is akied by the misuse of my tax and health care dollars. If there is any legal way (as Canadian citizens exercising our freedom of conscience) that we can withhold those dollars and give them directly to the hospitals, let's initiate action to do it.

I don't know if that's the answer, but it may be a step in the right direction.

JIM NOBLE
(address unavailable)

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