

## PROUD OF OUR PAST... ...PREPARED FOR OUR FUTURE

Nearly 400 delegates from around the province gathered together at the Richmond Inn 27-30 September for the 13th Biennial Convention of the Hospital Employees' Union. More than half the 400 members were first-time delegates who fully

participated in the union's democratic decision-making process. Under the banner "Proud of our Past, Prepared for Our Future..." this thirteenth convention represented 38 years of organized hospital workers in the province of British Columbia.

The erosion in the quality of health care services was a subject of long debate on the floor, as delegate after delegate outlined the effects of layoffs and budget cuts on the morale of health care workers. They cited rapidly increasing workloads as the most serious factor undermining the health and safety of hospital employees, which, in turn, affected the level of service the public has come to expect. The Provincial Executive was directed to take a number of actions which would pressure provincial and federal governments to act more responsibly in the field of health care services.

One resolution, pointing out that health care cutbacks are politically motivated, called upon the new Provincial Executive to draw up a comprehensive questionnaire for each MLA, and to publish the results in future issues of the Guardian. This would, the resolution stated, enable HEU members to "make intelligent choices at the next Provincial election."

### VDTs

Delegates expressed concern over the impact of microchip technology and video display terminals on both jobs and health. In a well-worded resolution, delegates called for a Union strategy that would educate members about the hazards of VDTs and microchip

technology, and instructed the Wage Policy Conference to develop contract demands giving Union control over their introduction and use. The convention supported a resolution giving the moral and financial backing of the entire HEU membership to any member who must refuse to work on VDTs the Union labels hazardous to health.

Two important constitutional amendments called for a dues increase and an increase in the amount of money in the Union's Defence Fund. Membership dues will increase to 1.25 percent of gross salary, with a minimum of \$5.00 per month, effective January 1, 1983. This rate brings HEU in line with other B.C. trade unions, and was found a necessary precondition to maintaining and extending the level of membership services. The increase in the defence fund of 100 percent to \$2 million will provide more protection for the membership.

### HEU Outward Looking

Other amendments to the Union's constitution were passed with regard to conducting internal business, a slightly expanded Provincial Executive, the re-establishment of a political education fund. Most amendments were designed to help the Union function more smoothly and efficiently.

One of the most striking features of this convention was the number of resolutions reflecting concern over issues not exclusively work-related. Delegates spent four days debating, discussing, arguing and agreeing about the course the Union would take over the next two years. And, the decisions made covered many areas, from water softeners used in hospitals, to rail service across Canada. Delegates exhibited a sensitivity to the needs of health care recipients in British Columbia, based on their collective experience as workers in that field. The cutbacks in the provincial denticare programme were blamed for causing much pain and suffering to young children and senior citizens, and delegates called for the restoration and improvement of this important service.

A resolution on abortion demanded that the federal government repeal Section 251 of the Criminal Code which gives hospital boards the power to approve or deny women free choice. It further demanded that no hospital interfere with a woman's decision to have or not to have an abortion, and called on the Provincial Government to establish community health clinics providing family planning services and contraceptive information.

### Support for Education

Education cutbacks were de-

nounced by delegates, and the Provincial Executive was directed to express solidarity with those unions involved in and fighting to preserve the quality of education in B.C. HEU will also be sending a message to the Provincial Government demanding that education funding be fully restored — immediately.

All in all, the 1982 Convention was a time to set the Union on a strong course for the years ahead, a time to renew our commitment to build the Hospital Employees' Union into an active, progressive and democratic trade union.

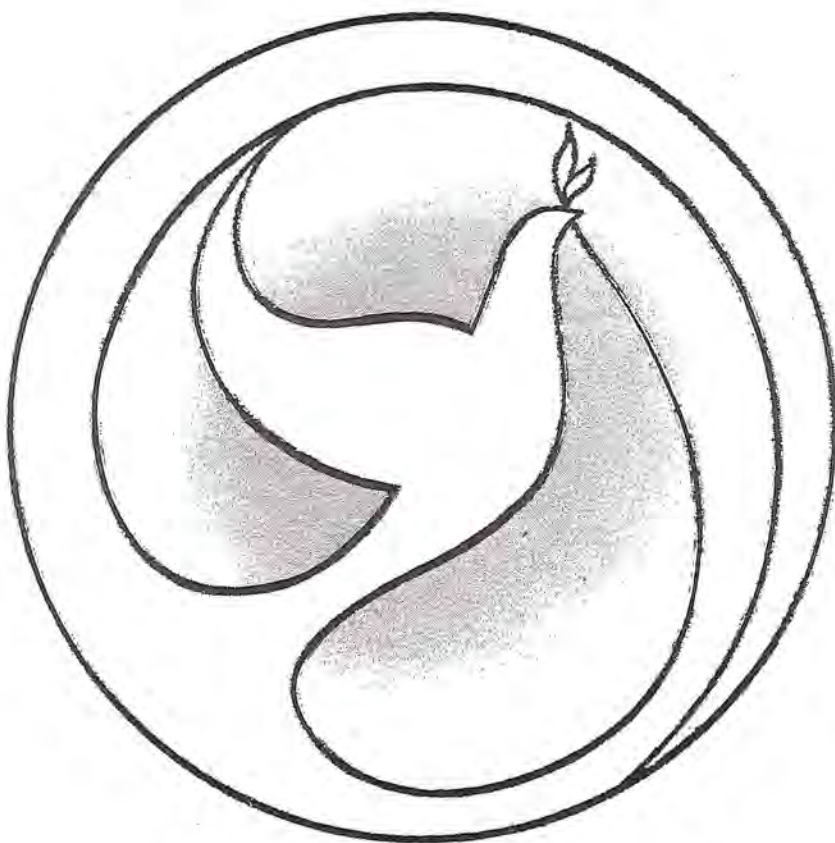
### Inside...

- Convention '82 Resolutions
- Gerow Convention Speech
- MacPherson calls for Solidarity
- Special Report on VDTs
- BCTF insert on Education Cutbacks



# PEACE

## The Ultimate Health Victory



The Hospital Employees' Union has a commendable record of fighting to ensure that every British Columbian has equal access to steadily improving, good quality health care.

But, all our work will be futile if we're not successful in working with sisters and brothers all over the world to reach the ultimate health victory — peace.

Why is peace a fundamental health care issue?

Because the objective of good health care is survival. But, 50,000 nuclear weapons targeted on virtually every person in the world puts mammoth odds against even this elementary goal.

Just as our survival is a health issue, so is the survival of about 50,000 Third World inhabitants who die *every day* of preventable causes: poor sanitation, lack of immunization, malnutrition, non-existent medical care. Even in Canada, we have pockets of people who suffer more and die earlier than most of us. In Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, for example, women have the same life expectancy as Guatemalans. The million dollars per minute that's being squandered to bolster world military might could save all these people from contemporary health nightmares.

Disarmament is a health care issue because health must now compete with the military for tax funds — even in Canada where about half of the money that provinces spend on health comes from the federal government. As health care workers, HEU members see daily the effects of government underfunding of our health care system. While hospitals are being squeezed into martyrs of fiscal restraint, and our employer offers HEU members a zero percent wage increase, the Canadian military is guaranteed a spending hike of inflation plus three percent.

It is not surprising to see that people involved in health care are already leading the way in peace education. Across Canada, and in B.C., groups are being organized, meetings are being held, resolutions are being passed — all in support of nuclear disarmament.

But simply understanding the problem is not enough. We have to convert the understanding that pushed us to vote for disarmament at our own union convention, and, recently, in municipal referenda, into political action. We must use all the democratic traditions of our country: votes, letters to politicians and editors, discussions at Union meetings and with friends. We have to create such a large and critical peace movement that politicians who talk peace but act to escalate the arms race will not continue to represent us.

The Liberal Government in Ottawa was presented with the perfect opportunity to show effective world leadership in the struggle over fundamental health care issues when the U.S. proposed testing the Cruise Missile on Canadian soil. Instead of taking this opportunity, the Liberals consented to Cruise testing in Northern Alberta.

The Cruise is an offensive nuclear missile that is very small, very accurate, and, because it flies so low, impossible to detect with radar. Part of the Cruise is manufactured in Canada by Litton Industries, a company with a Canadian government subsidy.

It is the size of the Cruise that makes it a critical escalation of the nuclear arms race. That's because an essential element of arms reduction is the ability to verify that your opponent has, in fact, limited or reduced weapons in accordance with an agreement. Because the Cruise is so easily hidden, verification becomes impossible. Negotiated arms reduction becomes impossible.

That puts Canada on the world's centre stage as the country which could symbolically and perhaps even effectively say "no" to Cruise, "no" to the nuclear arms race. Despite the federal government's betrayal of the wishes of the Canadian people, it is still not too late to "refuse the Cruise."

And it fits perfectly within HEU's tradition of fighting for better health for all when we also say "no" to the Cruise Missile. Stopping the Cruise is the most immediate and effective action that we can take in the fight for peace, the ultimate health victory.

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

The Hospital **Guardian**

Official Magazine of the  
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EMPLOYEES'  
UNION LOCAL 180

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# An Ounce of Nuclear Prevention

In November a number of municipalities in British Columbia held referendums on the question of nuclear disarmament. It is no exaggeration to state that an **overwhelming** majority of voters support disarmament, thus giving as strong as possible a mandate to politicians at all levels of government to pursue that objective.

British Columbia was not the only province to ask its people how they feel about nuclear disarmament. Across Canada, and across the United States during 1982, people expressed in no uncertain terms their support for a more peaceful, harmonious world. North Americans, through their ballots and by their participation in peace actions, have joined with the millions more in Europe, the USSR, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom in calling for an end to the insane nuclear arms race.

Vancouver City Council, aware of public sentiment on the nuclear question, requested that the Medical Health Officer prepare a position paper on the role of the city's Health Department in future discussions of nuclear weapons and disarmament. His report was submitted November 5th, and four days later Council unanimously passed a motion directing the Officer to "act as a resource to groups undertaking distribution of information about the threat posed by nuclear weapons, their proliferation and their potential use."

This action, along with a similar position taken by Toronto City Council in April 1982, links the build up of nuclear weapons and their threatened use to issues of public health. The Vancouver Medical Health Officer's report begins "The weapons of war have not customarily been the subject matter of public health. But these are not customary times." The threat of nuclear war, it continues, "has had a major impact on public health today." The report mentions specifically the "oppressive uncertainty" young people feel about their future, and the fact that large expenditures on nuclear weapons fuel inflation and unemployment, which generates the ill health associated with these twin devils.

## Surrey Lodge

# Determination Wins

A standing ovation greeted the news at the HEU Convention last September that members at Surrey Lodge were still in a fighting mood, and still as determined as ever to win a collective agreement.

It was this strong show of support from the entire Union that helped bring about a settlement on November 25th.

The Surrey Lodge settlement represents an important victory for the Union, and especially for those members employed at the facility.

Negotiations began heating up in February of this year after the Florence Nightingale Private Hospital was purchased by Jerry Neufeld. At the time of the purchase, HEU was between contracts, the old one having expired before a settlement had been reached with the original owner.

While negotiations with the previous owner were in progress, staff were served with layoff notices, elderly patients were transferred to other facilities, and renovations had begun on the building. There were rumours of an imminent sale.

Neufeld began his proprietorship by changing the name of the facility to Surrey Lodge, and refusing to enter into negotiations with HEU. Neufeld claimed that the 'business' of the facility under his ownership was not within the HEU's jurisdiction.

HEU responded by seeking a Labour Relations Board decision that Neufeld was bound to negotiate with the Union. On July 27th, the LRB declared that Neufeld was a "successor employer," and therefore obligated to negotiate with the HEU, and not with any other union.

These negotiations were long and difficult. Over the period of one year, the facility changed ownership, there was a five week strike, and the order from the LRB to force Neufeld to the bargaining table. The picket line went up during the

summer, and stayed up until negotiations finally got underway, September 9th.

Though the picket line was lifted, members made it clear that they were not prepared to accept wages and benefits that were inferior to the prevailing standard in the health care industry. In addition, Neufeld's attempt to take the Union's right to binding arbitration out of the collective agreement met with a determination to make this a strike issue if necessary.

Surrey Lodge members knew, particularly after the September Convention, that the full weight of the Union was behind them. This was also understood by Neufeld, who was anxious to reopen the facility in December. The opening would have been extremely difficult if a picket line were surrounding the building.

The determination of the Surrey Lodge members, the full backing of the HEU, and the scheduled reopening all combined to bring negotiations to a successful conclusion on the 25th. Members, unanimously ratified the contract in a vote on Nov. 29th.

The new collective agreement maintains the present standards in the industry. Members who were laid off in February by the previous owner will be recalled on the basis of seniority. Surrey Lodge was scheduled to reopen on December 6th.

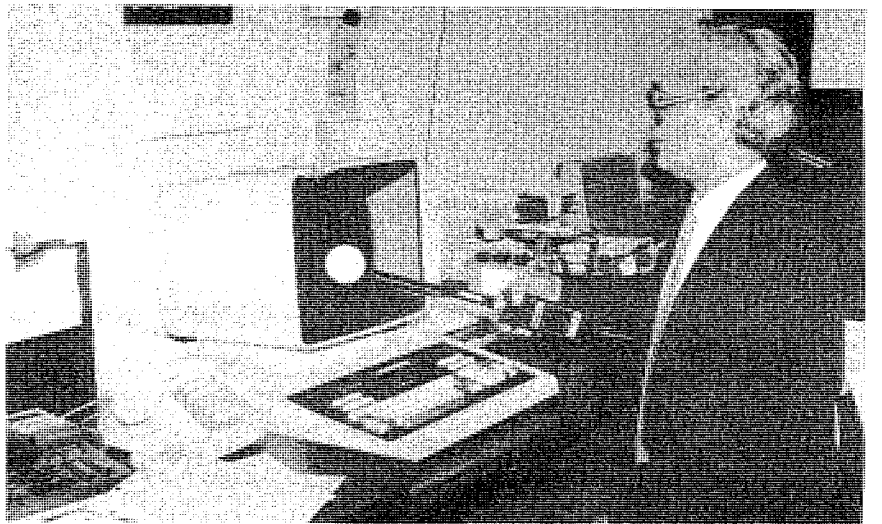


Both the Vancouver Report and a similar one adopted by Toronto City Council cite the special responsibility of those involved in public health to open their eyes to "nuclear reality." Too many people, the report say, still "harbour illusions of surviving a nuclear war." Professor Bernard Lown of the Harvard School of Public Health describes the threat of nuclear war as "the world's number one health problem." The world's number two health problem, he said, is that people are ignoring the number one health problem.

The fact is, that if a nuclear bomb fell on Vancouver (or Toronto) there would be **no response** from public health personnel: "Doctors, hospitals, and public health agencies would be **destroyed** in a nuclear attack; no organised response would be possible. The medical consequences would be multiple and devastating," states the Vancouver report.

Like many others in the field of public health in Canada — from doctors and scientists to health industry unions and elected or appointed officials — Vancouver's Medical Health Officer takes the position that "the only viable approach is prevention — the threat of nuclear weapons demands their dismantling." In Toronto, City Council adopted the Report of the Local Board of Health on 1st April 1982. The Report was entitled "Public Health Consequences of Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War." Both the Vancouver and Toronto Reports see those Canadians involved in health care having a large and positive role to play in educating the public.

The reports are clear and explicit: nuclear weapons, by their mere presence, are creating a gloomy and oppressive climate, they are draining the economy of much needed financial resources, and in an unpredictable world, any number of events can lead to a major nuclear war; it is in the interest of public health and safety that nuclear weapon systems be dismantled before its too late; and, finally, that those in the public health field have a responsibility to work for prevention of a nuclear disaster by promoting first the limitation, and then the total elimination of nuclear weapons.



Testing of the video display terminals at Surrey Memorial Hospital by Dr. Hari Sharma was conducted Oct. 18 and 19. Dr. Sharma is shown here testing a VDT for radiation emission.

## VDT Study Completed

Dr. Hari Sharma, one of Canada's leading experts on radiation testing, has just completed a study of the video display terminals at Surrey Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Sharma, a nuclear chemist from the University of Waterloo, began testing the VDTs on October 18th, after an attempt by the hospital to block the testing failed.

The Hospital Employees' Union had originally planned to pay the full cost of the study. Surrey Memorial requested, at a meeting on Oct. 18th, that the cost be shared in order to ensure that results were released to both the Union and the hospital at the same time.

However, the hospital wanted to interfere in defining the terms of reference and the parameters of the study. HEU insisted that Dr. Sharma should be allowed to work independently of both parties. The hospital finally agreed, and the testing at Surrey Memorial commenced after the meeting was concluded.

HEU's success in winning agreement from an employer to terms of reference established by an independent tester is believed to

be unprecedented with respect to the study of VDTs in Canada.

No sooner had Dr. Sharma announced that the testing of the VDTs had been completed, however, when the hospital called for yet another study.

Jack Gerow, HEU's Secretary Business Manager, criticized Surrey Memorial for attempting to evade the issue of corrective measures, should that be necessary.

"I would expect," said Gerow, "that if radiation leaks are discovered at Surrey Memorial, the hospital would act immediately to remove the VDTs."

He added that more testing by the hospital is no longer the central issue. "The health and safety of our members comes first," he emphasized. "If they are in danger, our members should be taken off the machines."

Dr. Sharma is not only checking for radiation in the VDTs, but also for levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The final results of his study will be known later this month, and published in an upcoming edition of the **Guardian**.

The Hospital Guardian, December, 1982/3



Convention '82

# Federal/Provincial conspiracy



HEU Secretary-Business Manager Jack Gerow told the convention delegates in his report that the Social Credit government "cannot be entrusted with the welfare of our young, our senior citizens and the working people of this province."

Following are excerpts from Secretary-Business Manager Jack Gerow's speech to the 1982 HEU convention.

Six years ago, HEU delegates were discussing and debating the success of HEU's first hospital strike — a strike that was carried out during a federal government wage control program.

Although HEU won the strike in at least the sense that the Provincial Government of the day pretended to side with the Union and legislated a Master Agreement based on HEU's strike demand, the Union was betrayed and was not permitted to maintain its collective agreement victory when the imposed contract was reviewed under the Federal Government wage control program. In the result, HEU was rolled back to compensation increases of 8%, 6% and 4% for the calendar years 1976, 1977 and 1978.

## ... Propaganda and Punishment

Today, throughout this land — throughout Canada — throughout British Columbia — there is another insidious federal/provincial conspiracy aimed at working women and working men.

It is the program that attempts to fix the blame for the current economic downturn in our country.

This propaganda and punishment, its substance and its form, is aimed against the worker.

Its efficiency is ruthlessly measured exclusively by its effect.

The end, no matter how cruel or insensitive, is to justify the means.

This new wage control conspiracy — this big lie — attaches blame for the depressed state of the economy on the working woman and the working man.

But I must say this:

It is not the worker who has forced interest rates up to the level of usury.

It is not the worker who has forced banks, oil companies, and the multi-national corporations to extract obscene profits from the economy and from the workers who labour under it for less than their fair share.

And it is not the worker who forced the northeast coal giveaway, the building of Pier B.C., and the construction of B.C. Place.

The government is fully culpable for these misadventures.

The government is fully responsible for its priority of profit before  
**The Hospital Guardian, December, 1982/4**

the priority of health, essential social services and full employment.

We are squared off against a provincial government that is prepared to forsake, for the purposes of political expediency, our inalienable rights of safe health care and free collective bargaining.

In a desperate attempt to cling to power as long as possible, the provincial government, like some Middle Ages gamesmaster, has pitted the sick and the injured against the healthy, the student against the teacher, and the public sector worker against the private sector worker.

Such inhuman treachery must not be allowed to continue.

This Social Credit Government cannot be entrusted with the welfare of our young, our senior citizens, and the working people of this province.

Those who produce the wealth that is British Columbia must rise up and organize against this megaproject-mad Social Credit Government and vote it out of office.

## ... Collective Bargaining

The collective bargaining workload that must be handled by the Provincial Executive in terms of policy and by the Staff in terms of carrying out such policy has never been greater.

It was not that long ago when HEU had the responsibility of negotiating only the Master Agreement.

At the time of this Biennial Convention, however, HEU negotiates 70 separate collective agreements covering 25,600 members. (The Master Agreement covers 119 Units and 22,495 Members).

For those HEU members under the HEU/HLRA Master Agreement, I want to say something about the controversial Classification System.

The "four year" Master Agreement for the years 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1981 included the concept of "comparability" of wages and benefits with the employees of the Provincial Government as represented by the B.C. Government Employees' Union.

This demand for "comparability" has been one of the most rewarding wage and benefit demands HEU has won to date.

At a number of hospitals across the province, health care employers who are dissatisfied with the wage increases won by HEU under

the Classification System are attempting to downgrade as many classifications as possible by writing new and lesser-paid job descriptions for the same work.

HEU's response to that action is to take on HLRA under the grievance procedure, at the Labour Relations Board and through the courts if necessary.

At the last Convention, some 70% of the membership were "classified". Today, added to that 70% is a substantial number of Clerical Department workers and, in addition, all Dietary Department workers.

This brings the total number of classified HEU members up to 85%.

The remaining 15% to 20% will face Classification later this fall and early next year.

## ... Classification

Having said that, I fully expect to be asked by unclassified workers, "When will I be classified?"

The only answer I can give is this: the Classification team (of HEU) is working as hard as is humanly possible to complete a "best possible" Classification System.

HEU could have accepted a settlement of the Classification System a long time ago. All HEU had to do was accept HLRA's "final" Classification offer.

This would have meant that a substantial number of HEU members would have been underpaid and/or red-circled. Further, it would have meant that any bid for reclassification at a later date would have been doomed to failure.

It would have meant that too many HEU members would have been relegated to too many Classification ghettos that would have been impossible to escape from.

The course of action to be taken by HEU is one whereby the best effort must be made to upgrade as many unclassified workers as possible.

HEU members must continue to support the Provincial Executive's and the Classification Team's efforts to produce the best possible classification. This means continuing a course that is less expedient (and probably subject to criticism in the short term), but one that is expected to provide the foundation for a solution of HEU's longstanding policy to eliminate wage rate discrimination against female workers and establish wage rate justice for all HEU members.

## ... Fight of the Future

*"We are not supposed to play politics.*

*But it is alright for big business to do it.*

*The fight of the future is going to be one of freedom."*

These are the words of the late W. M. (Bill) Black.

As HEU's Secretary-Business Manager, he expressed these sentiments over twenty years ago at the Second Biennial Convention held in June 1960.

We are now in the "future" that Brother Black spoke of.

And, indeed, our fight is one of freedom.

## New Prov Executive

One of the most important responsibilities that face delegates at any HEU biennial convention is the election of a Provincial Executive.

The Union's Provincial Executive is HEU's ruling body between conventions and as such is mandated to carry out the decisions made at conventions as well as direct and shape Union policy until the next biennial convention.

Delegates to the convention September 27-30, re-elected 13 of the 16 eligible members of the 1980-82 executive (three members withdrew from the race), and voted in six new members to HEU's ruling body.

Two members have been added to the executive (the office of Member-At-Large) as a result of a constitutional amendment proposal passed by the delegates during the convention.

According to the constitutional amendment proposal, the Member-At-Large position will provide a reservoir of experienced Executive Members to fill vacant Vice-President or Trustee positions on the Executive.

The additional two members to the Provincial Executive gives broader representation and will allow for more input on HEU's ruling committee (between conventions).

The following is the list of officers that were elected to stand on HEU's 1982-84 Provincial Executive.

- Gordon MacPherson, President;
- Maurice Smith, Financial Secretary;
- Bill MacDonald, 1st Vice-President;
- Gordon Meagher, 2nd Vice-President;
- Alberta Dorval, 3rd Vice-President;
- Phyllis Shiplock, 4th Vice-President; (new)
- Eileen Henneberry, 5th Vice-President; (new)
- Clarke Gardner, Senior Trustee (4-year term);
- Nancy Cardy, Trustee;
- Cathy Chadsey, Trustee; (new)
- Andy Kozyniak, Member-At-Large #1;
- Gwen Parrish, Member-At-Large #2;
- Alice Jones, Regional Vice-President Fraser Valley;
- Margaret McMahon, Regional Vice-President Kootenays;
- Phil MacLeod, Regional Vice-President Lower Mainland - 1;
- Julie Amendt, Regional Vice-President Lower Mainland - 2; (new)
- Mary LaPlante, Regional Vice-President North; (new)
- Bob Shortland, Regional Vice-President Okanagan;
- Carole Campbell, Regional Vice-President Vancouver Island (new).



**Delegates met the challenge**

**Four Long Days Of Decision-Making**



Prince George Unit delegates Jim Brammer, Andy Kozyniak, Peggie Heinze and Joyce Dawson.



Kamloops Unit delegates Ron Finigan, Lillian Cooper, Dollia Ferguson, Laura Cameron and Henry Theobald.



Maple Ridge Unit delegates (from left): Alice Jones, Jean Blyth and Warren Ballard. MSA Manor delegate Donna Pettersen and Golden Ears delegate Doreen Topping.



Royal Columbian Unit delegates (from left): Gordon Tilley, Bill Hasselaar, Neville Dennison, Annette Wilkins and Evelyn Farrelly.



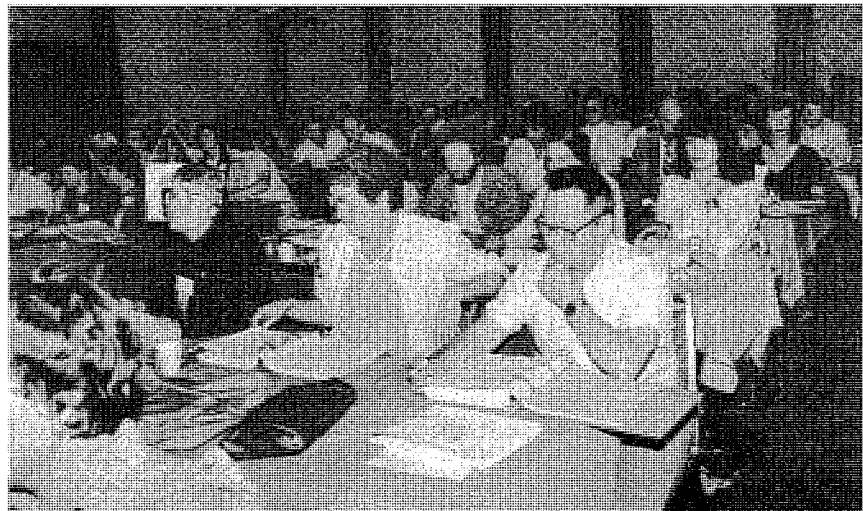
Ponderosa Unit delegates (from left): Frances Neilsen and Robert Tindall. Penticton Retirement Service delegates Diane Schultz and Larry Farley.



St. Paul's Unit delegates (from left): Eva Redmond, Paula Stooshnov, Gail Dodson, Tom Knowles and Peter Stokes.



UBC Unit delegates (from left) Jim Craig, Alice Longridge, Sharon Bellesen, Darlene Greenwood and Claude Francis.



Duncan Unit delegates Renee Johnson, Jean Cameron and Barney Baines.



## **Their impressions and observations**

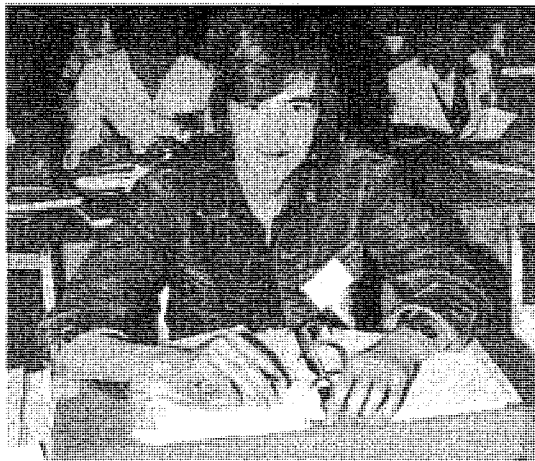
# **First-Time Delegates At Convention**

There were approximately 200 first-time delegates in attendance during HEU's 13th Biennial Convention Sept. 27-30 in Richmond. New delegates more than make up for their lack of experience by the vitality and enthusiasm they bring to conventions. The Guardian interviewed several first-time delegates to get their impressions of their first HEU convention.



**Linda Graham, Clerk  
Cariboo Memorial Hospital**

"I've never been to anything like it before. I was nervous about speaking in front of so many smart people. What I noticed after a couple of days was how quickly the hours flew by, even the night sessions. It was a learning experience. It was a mental load at times to realize that I was there to represent the Williams Lake Unit members."



**Ed Johnston, Dietary Aide  
Sunset Lodge VS Services Ltd.**

"I immediately found out I had a lot to learn after the first day. It helped me that I was a student in the education program, that's for sure, otherwise I might have been completely lost. I was amazed by the intelligence of the delegates. They seemed to know so much about a lot of things. Listening and talking to other delegates assisted me over the four days."



**Mary LaPlante, Accounting Clerk  
Prince Rupert Regional Hospital**

"I was struck by the amount of parliamentary procedure and impressed by the strict adherence to it throughout. I realized this is a very politically-minded Union and so much of our activity is directly related to what kind of government is in office. It was very well organized considering there were about 400 delegates. I was enlightened by the vast degree of knowledge among the delegates and noticed the democratic way the whole convention was run."



**Jim Craig, Porter  
UBC Health Sciences Centre Hospital**

"It was a drastic departure from my recollection of the CUPE conventions I've attended. For one thing, the HEU convention was a lot more democratic and orderly. I particularly noticed that attention was paid to women delegates as opposed to what I was used to at previous CUPE conventions where women were treated like second-class citizens."



**Zorica Bosancic, Timekeeper  
Vancouver General Hospital**

"It was an extremely interesting experience to say the least. What I enjoyed was getting to meet the HEU members from around the province and exchanging ideas and information. I was very surprised by how hard the work of a delegate is. The four days went by quickly. In fact, four days didn't seem to be enough time to cover all the issues, at least that's how it seemed to me."



**Darlene Fennell, Nurse Aide  
Altamont Private Hospital**

"I quickly was impressed by the overall knowledge of the delegates. I recognized that I didn't know that much in comparison but I asked a lot of questions and that gave me some answers. Many of the issues were difficult. It takes a lot of preparation to be a good delegate, I know that much. I thought it would be easy. It wasn't. As it turned out there were 14-hour days. Also I was impressed by the high level of debate."



**Lauraine Thompson, Food Service  
Supervisor  
Arrow Lakes Hospital**

"It took some getting used to the parliamentary procedure and coming from a small hospital I was slightly intimidated at first. But after meeting other delegates it makes things easier. It took me nearly all of the four days to really understand what was going on in the true sense. Attending for the first time, it is disorienting. There was heated debate on a lot of topics by very knowledgeable delegates."

**The Hospital Guardian, December, 1982/6**



**Elizabeth Beyers, Laundry Aide  
Tilbury Regional Laundry Society**

"It's hard to put it into words but I guess it's the knowledge I gained that I most remember about the convention. There were so many delegates who knew so much about everything. In fact, at times it was hard to make a decision when both sides of a debate were convincing. I was very pleased and honoured to attend on behalf of Tilbury Unit members and I can say this: it was an exhausting four days of work."



**Rhon L'Heureux, Licensed Practical  
Nurse  
Nanaimo General Hospital**

"It was a big letdown when it was all over. For four days, you're riding such a high, that once it ends it feels like a letdown. But what a learning experience! By attending you realize what HEU is all about and it was a great feeling to find out. I noticed that the Provincial Executive members were very approachable as well as being very well-informed."



## **At the 13th Biennial Convention**

# **Committees And Recognition**



The Constitutional Amendments Committee had the very difficult task of taking the 78 Unit and Provincial Executive constitutional amendment proposals, correlating and combining them and in so doing not changing the intent of the original amendment proposals to the convention delegates in a consistent, efficient and orderly manner. The six HEU members pictured above were successful in their appointed task and their selfless contributions expedited the business of the convention.

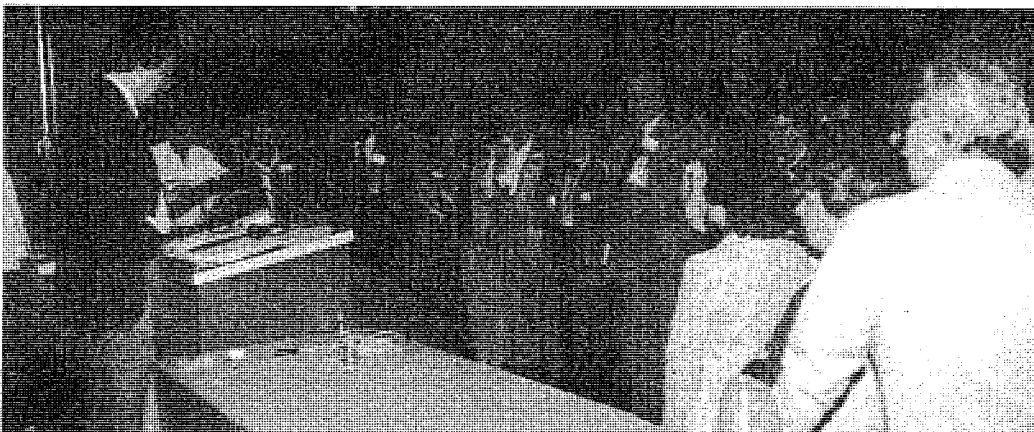
One of the most demanding responsibilities at an HEU convention (along with serving on the Constitution Amendments committee) is serving on the Resolutions Committee. The 1982 Resolutions Committee did a marvellous job of correlating and combining Unit and Provincial Executive resolution proposals. Their diligence on the proposed resolutions assisted in expediting the work of the convention delegates.



The Tabulations Committee had the duty of counting ballots, tabulating voting during standing votes and distributing composite amendments/resolutions and reports to delegates during the convention.



Kensington Unit delegate Tupou Moimoi was recognized by the convention delegates for her generous donation of cakes and other baked goods. Sister Moimoi, who baked 16 large cakes and approximately 1,000 cookies and muffins for the convention, was given a chef's hat and flowers.



HEU Secretary-Business Manager, Jack Gerow swears in the 1982-84 Provincial Executive (and elected alternates to the executive) on the last day of convention. HEU's Provincial Executive now has 19 elected members as a result of a constitutional amendment passed by delegates.



Sechelt Unit delegate Dorothy Goeson handed a plaque to Ray McCready, HEU's Director of Membership Services, in appreciation of his excellently-run education seminars. HEU's education program is recognized as being one of the finest in Canada.



Tabulations Committee member Barb Roberts (of HEU's Como Lake Unit) gathers ballots during a vote at the convention. The tabulations committee, like all the committees at the 13th Biennial Convention, worked hard at tabulating votes and distributing materials to delegates and in so doing helped toward making the convention the success that it was.



## Convention '82

# "Solidarity Vital" —MacPherson

The following are excerpts from Union President Gordon MacPherson's Report to HEU's 1982 Convention.

Both within the Health Care Industry, and without, working men and women are confronted with the threat of unemployment; of staff shortages; of redundancy brought about by technological change; and restrictive legislation enacted by uncaring and hostile governments.

And yet, despite the temptation to become pessimistic in the face of the horrendous problems that we, as hospital workers, must overcome, I am filled with optimism for the future. Our organization is structurally strong and our membership continues to grow. Our Officers are well-informed and dedicated. Our Members are militant and committed to their Union and our full-time staff are devoted in their zeal to serve.

In translation of the membership's desire to improve conditions for both patients and members in the long-term care sector of the industry, the Union embarked on a province-wide crossroads survey of investigation into patient care and working standard levels in long-term care institutions.

The results of the Union's extensive investigation were subsequently published in a 100-page brief to the Provincial Government.

Throughout this project I could not help but be tremendously impressed by the obvious devotion of our Sisters and Brothers toward the patients and residents in the long-term and extended care facilities of our organization.

### Windermere Strike

A major concern to all of us was the Windermere strike. Along with

other members of your Provincial Executive and members from other Units, I spent many an hour on the picket line. Some of the members of your Provincial Executive unselfishly walked the more distasteful shifts from midnight to morning in all kinds of weather with few, if any complaints. The strike was brought to a successful conclusion because of the courage and commitment of our Windermere members and by your enthusiastic support in the donation of funds and the providing of picketers.

### On the Road

Many hours have I spent on the road reporting the negotiating efforts of your bargaining committee and taking strike votes. Not all of these were pleasant duties, mind you, but I did sincerely enjoy the "after meeting" meetings and the opportunity to discuss with members some of the problems facing our Union.

At the time of this Report there is the overshadowing cloud of jobs lost and continuing to be lost through cutbacks by the Provincial Government. This attempt by the present Government to cut costs has resulted in putting the lives of B.C. citizens in peril. The end result of this is fear, anxiety, frustration, and depression among Health Care Workers in B.C.

In spite of our present on-the-job problems we cannot overlook what we stand for: Our oath of obligation underlines that we shall not wrong a Sister or Brother and implicit in that is that we shall help a Sister or Brother if we can. That not only applies to our Union but to all our Trade Union Sisters and Brothers!

## More To It Than Meets The Eye

Behind all the smooth efficiency of an HEU convention, is a group of hardworking individuals. Mostly they are known as "committees," each with its own job to do, acting in co-operation with other committees to ensure all the worries, panics, and running around are known only to themselves. The end result is a well organized convention where every delegate has the agenda, the reports, the amendments, the resolutions; where the business at hand is dealt with; where coffee is served in the nick of time, and even a little entertainment is offered to delegates so they can relax and get to know each other.

A debt of gratitude is owed to those people who contributed much time and energy to and are ultimately responsible for the success of HEU's 13th Biennial Convention. Those brothers and sisters are:

**CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE** — Bob Raffle, Royal Columbian Unit; Helen Burnell, Kelowna Unit; Bob Standell, St. Paul's Unit; Jan Ashmore, Saanich Unit; Barbara Hunt, Cranbrook Unit; and Kay Hepplewhite, Terrace Unit.

**RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE** — Phyllis Shiplack, Royal Jubilee Unit; Mary Gobillot, Surrey Unit; Beverley Grund, Merritt Unit; Bill O'Brien, Burnaby Unit; Audrey Phillips, Mt. St. Francis Unit; and Leslie Wolford, Duncan Unit.

**TABULATIONS COMMITTEE** — Dick Doorschot, Willowhaven Unit; Kathleen van der Groef, Langley Unit; Maria Costaganna, Dawson Creek Unit; Carole Campbell, Aberdeen Unit; Eileen Henneberry, Nanaimo Unit; and Barb Roberts, Como Lake Unit.

**CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE** — Cathy Chadsey, 100 Mile House Unit; Donna Lowe, Victoria General Unit; Shirley Baker, New Vista Unit; Mary Koran, Fernie Unit; Carol Saunders, Kiwanis Unit; Carole Schulties, Chilliwack Unit; and Henry Theobald, Kamloops Unit.

**INFORMATION COMMITTEE** — Alice Jones, Maple Ridge Unit; Margaret McMahon, Cranbrook Unit; Bob Davies, Vancouver General Unit; Andy Kozyniak, Prince George Unit; Bob Shortland, Kelowna Unit; and Nancy Cardy, Royal Jubilee Unit.

## Education Workers Supported

The 13th Biennial Convention of HEU wholeheartedly condemned provincial government cutbacks in education and attempts to force education workers to give up negotiated wages. In a resolution demanding full restoration of education funding, delegates accused the Social Credit government of depriving young people of their right to a high standard of education.

The delegates, many of whom have children in the public school system in B.C., were angry about school closures and the elimination of important programs. The unfair treatment and abuse of education workers was totally

unacceptable, and delegates voted to send messages of solidarity to unions representing public school and college employees.

In this issue of the **Guardian** a special B.C. Teachers' Federation Newsletter has been inserted. This was done at HEU's invitation, in order to give our members more information about the crisis in education brought about by the Social Credit government in Victoria. Though the information in the BCTF Newsletter applies to education, the impact of budget cuts is well understood in our own health care industry.

## Unity and Strength in Labour

The B.C. Federation of Labour held its 27th annual convention from November 15 to 19 at the PNE Agrodome. Over 800 delegates from around the province came together to decide what direction the B.C. Fed and its affiliated unions and labour councils will take in the year ahead.

Our union was well represented by 19 members of the Provincial Executive (one member was unavailable), who were welcomed by the Convention as fraternal visitors. The Hospital Employees Union was invited by the officers of the B.C. Federation of Labour, a fact which reflects a growing desire among trade unionists for unity and strength in the labour movement. The invitation to the HEU can be seen, too, as a recognition of our union's important contribution to the solidarity and strength of the B.C.'s trade union movement.

Without a doubt, the high point of the Convention came with a call for labour unity in British Columbia. The discussion centred on a resolution directing the B.C. Fed to work towards bringing the building trades unions back into the "house of labour." The building trades unions left the Canadian Labour Congress, and all its chartered organizations, about two years ago after disagreements over a number of issues could not be resolved. The Convention delegates criticized the CLC for failing to work towards real unity in the trade union movement. They demanded that the B.C. Fed take the lead by bringing back the building trades unions in this province, and encouraging the CLC to follow suit.

The debate concluded with a heartfelt expression of support for the building trades, who were represented by about 15 of their members sitting in the visitors section next to our own delegation. The entire convention stood up and applauded the passage of the resolution, and in a show of solidarity, turned to extend that applause to the representatives of the building trades.

Some of the delegates were not altogether happy about either the building trades or the HEU having a legitimate and recognized presence at the Convention. In the case of the HEU, it was clear that there was a deliberate attempt to create tension between our union and the B.C. Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. On the third day of the Convention there was suddenly a demand by CUPE that the HEU banner be removed.

The issue of the HEU banner was a straw man, an excuse to maintain the long-standing position that CUPE will decide if and when HEU enters the Canadian Labour Congress. Jack Gerow, secretary-business manager of HEU, commented in the **Province** (18 Nov., 1982) that the "flare-up" was the job of "a hatchetman from Ottawa for (president) Grace Hartman" — a reference to the CUPE National Office.

The HEU was asked to remove the banner. As a result, the members of the Provincial Executive walked out of the Convention. Their action was based on principles dear to our union: the HEU banner is a symbol of **our** strength and **our** unity. It has been carried by our members in demonstrations where we have stood with other trade unions in opposing high interest rates, in May Day parades where we have joined with other working people in recognizing the struggles of the labour movement and in protests against provincial government cutbacks in health.

This attempt to stir up division in the B.C. trade union movement will inevitably fail. The sentiments expressed time and again by delegates during the B.C. Fed convention were strongly in favour of unity in British Columbia. The position taken by our union representatives at the Convention demonstrates that unity begins, first and foremost, within the union. The Hospital Employees Union has the respect of trade unionists in B.C. because we are strong and united. And that is the way we will enter the "house of labour."



## Convention '82

# HEU Ready For Future

As the Government and hospital employers wage an increasingly aggressive campaign to cut labour costs in the delivery of health care services in British Columbia, the Hospital Employees' Union is, in turn, increasingly involved in protecting members from erosion of wages and benefits, from wholesale layoffs, and from attacks on existing collective agreements. The necessary ingredients in fighting these battles are commitment, skill, energy, experience — and money.

Maurice Smith, HEU Financial Secretary, gave a detailed description of how the Union's money has been spent during the last two years at the 13th Biennial Convention in September. He pointed out that the biggest strain on the budget was a result of continued layoffs in the hospital industry due to Premier Bennett's budget restraint program, as well as the provincial Compensation Stabilization Program. On the other hand, servicing to the membership was not sacrificed to the altar of restraint, but was, in fact, increased during the last two years.

Brother Smith made it clear that most of HEU's increased spending was necessary to counter the employer's attack on our members' wages, benefits and job security. Increases in spending were also brought about by the classification system (the E. R. Peck Award) the

Union's Education Seminars, and member demands for increased servicing.

### Union Solidarity

Smith praised HEU Units who contributed an extra \$46,000 over and above the amount paid from the Defence Fund, to provide extra support for the HEU members who went on strike at Windermere Central Park Lodge. "The members at Windermere," he said, "understood that they were not alone on that picket line. They had the support of 25,000 fellow Union members, both financially and morally."

Brother Smith concluded his Report to the convention by drawing the delegates' attention to the fact that the Union has been affected by the economic conditions of the times, and, in 1982 especially, by the attack on public sector workers by both Government and employers.

"At this convention," he concluded, "there has to be some hard decisions made."

### Union Resources

And he was right. Delegates made a number of "hard decisions" regarding the financial resources of the Union: where they would come from, and how they would be spent. A Constitutional Amendment was passed increasing the Defence Fund by 100 per cent to \$2 million, in order to bring it up to a level that sufficiently reflects the

increased need to protect the membership of HEU. Delegates voted in favour of a quarter per cent dues increase to enable the Union to expand its present capacity to deal with arbitrations, education, and increased membership servi-

ces. A political education fund was re-established by members, and the Provincial Executive was called upon to better equip the Union to fight for and expand the number of organized hospital workers in British Columbia.

## Union Brother Honoured

### Alex Paterson

Alex Paterson. The name is familiar to any HEU member who has stepped inside the Union's Provincial Office boardroom in Vancouver. Brother Paterson was one of the founders of HEU and was elected HEU's first president back in 1944. A plaque dedicated to him hangs on the door of our Union's Provincial Office boardroom.

Brother Paterson was, along with W. M. Black (HEU's first Secretary-Business Manager), one of the driving forces behind the forming of our Union. He served as President until 1949 when he took over the post of Financial Secretary, a position he subsequently held until 1964.

When he helped establish HEU back in 1944, his dream was to organize a strong union that represented health care workers throughout British Columbia. In the 28 years he devoted to building a union of health care employees in B.C., he had seen the dream come a long way towards fulfillment by the time of his retirement in 1964.

Today HEU represents 25,000 members at more than 140 hospitals and health care facilities in B.C. — thanks to the dedication and perseverance of Alex Paterson.

Brother Paterson passed away January 4 of this year at the age of 82 (see the January 1982 *Guardian*).

Convention delegates passed a Provincial Executive constitutional amendment proposal making Alex Paterson an honorary HEU member. Brother Paterson becomes the fifth person to be made an honorary member. The others are: W. M. Black, Mary Black, W. D. Black and John Darby.

# Convention Decisions

*The following are the highlights of the decisions made by the Convention Delegates during the four long days at the Richmond Inn. Convention decisions were first reported at Unit meetings in October immediately after the Convention by Convention Delegates elected or appointed by local Units.*

### Job Sharing

HEU condemns and fully rejects employer and employee-initiated job sharing proposals which result in reducing income for HEU members. Moreover, delegates endorsed the Provincial Executive resolution that HEU continue efforts to achieve adequate government funding of health centres to provide proper staffing levels and full employment for Union members.

### Dues Increase

After much heated debate, delegates voted to increase Union dues in order to maintain and expand quality levels of servicing for all HEU Units. The dues are now 1.25 per cent of gross salary with a minimum of \$5 per month, effective Jan. 1, 1982.

### Defence Fund

It was decided to increase the defence fund to \$2 million and to give the Provincial Executive the authorization to use money from the defence fund toward the purchase of regional Office buildings.

Effective Jan. 1, 1983, \$1 per month for each regular full-time and regular part-time Member shall be set aside from the Monthly Dues in the Defence Fund.

### Press Releases

The convention passed a resolution that the Provincial Executive, wherever practicable, inform the

Units of press releases before they are released to the media.

Furthermore, the incoming Provincial Executive is to develop and implement techniques to improve the present communications system to the members and report at the next convention.

### Report On Health Care Cutbacks

The convention delegates passed a resolution that the incoming Provincial Executive draw up a comprehensive questionnaire on health care for each MLA. Results of the questionnaire will be printed in the *Guardian*.

### Convention Representation

A constitutional amendment proposal submitted by the Penticton Unit to reduce the number of delegates to a convention was defeated. As one delegate put it: "By reducing the number of delegates, we're going against our tradition of democratic representation for all."

### Superannuation

A resolution from the Chilliwack Unit was carried that a survey of the membership be taken by the Provincial Executive to determine if the present Superannuation scheme is acceptable to the majority of the HEU membership.

If the present Superannuation Plan is determined not to be accep-

table, the Provincial Executive shall bring their recommendation to the next Biennial Convention.

### VDTs and Microchip Technology

VDTs and microchip technology will be a high priority of the Union.

Delegates passed a resolution to give the moral and financial backing of the entire province-wide HEU membership to Union members who must refuse to work on VDTs the Union considers hazardous to health.

The delegates decided to make the control of VDTs a high priority at future collective bargaining negotiations.

### Abortion

Debate was intense and lively on a Provincial Executive resolution that urges the provincial government to ensure that no hospital forces or denies the right of a woman to choose abortion.

Some delegates voiced the opinion that abortion was morally wrong and therefore shouldn't be endorsed by the Union.

The majority of delegates however voted to pass the Provincial Executive resolution. Delegates who supported the resolution felt strongly that women deserve the right to choice on abortion.

### Nuclear Disarmament

The Union will petition the Secretary-General of the United

Nations to support a plan of total nuclear disarmament. The resolution proposal was put forward by the Kamloops Unit.

### Master Agreement Negotiations

Delegates passed a constitutional amendment proposal that will now allow more time for units to study proposed bargaining demands before a Wage Policy Conference.

Copies of proposed bargaining demands shall now be forwarded to delegates 15 days prior to the conference instead of the previous 10 days.

### Assessments

Convention delegates passed an emergency constitutional amendment submitted by the Provincial Executive that "the Provincial Executive shall have the authority to levy an assessment of 100 per cent of gross earnings for time worked during an HEU strike on all unauthorized employees who cross an HEU picket line."

Delegates concluded it is imperative that there be no question as to HEU's ability to make such assessments.

### CLC Affiliation

The convention confirmed HEU's long-standing desire to rejoin the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement. Delegates voted to have HEU seek direct affiliation with the Canadian Labour Congress.



# Getting Classified

Many hospitals around the province are bungling the correct implementation of classified wage rates. The result is that some HEU clerical workers are losing thousands of dollars in lost retroactive and current wages.

It is not good enough for a hospital to properly classify a clerical employee as per the Peck Award. The hospital must also pay the affected HEU member at the proper increment step of the classified wage rates. Too often, in too many hospitals, this is not happening.

Many hospitals are ignoring the collective agreement in paying classified wage rates. There is one basic error that hospitals are making.

In sorting out the proper classified wages and increments may hospitals have pushed HEU members back to the start rate every time an employee switched from one job to another after January 1, 1980 — whether the switch was the result of promotion, demotion, transfer, past reclassification or portability from one hospital to another.

This practice is wrong. The Hospitals know it is wrong and yet they persist in doing it. The hospitals are ignoring what the collective agreement clearly provides for in these situations.

For example, in one hospital an employee at the maximum Clerk 2 wage step of \$1,188 (Jan. 1980) received a promotion to a Clerk 3 position.

The HEU/HLRA Master Agreement is quite clear on promotions. If you receive a promotion, you must end up making more money.

This HEU member should have ended up earning more than \$1,188 per month.

The Master Agreement says so. HEU and HLRA reached a written agreement in June that says so. The matter is clear cut. Yet the hospital came up with its own, peculiar definition of a promotion.

In sorting out the employee's classified wages, the hospital moved her from the top Clerk 2 rate of \$1,188 per month to the starting Clerk 3 rate of \$1,139!

The hospital's bizarre definition of a promotion resulted in the HEU member earning \$49 per month less than she did in her lower rated position!

HEU's collective agreement states that because she was promoted, the employee must progress to the Clerk 3 wage rate immediately higher than the \$1,188 she had been earning as a Clerk 2.

And 12 months later the HEU member would move to the 48-month step for a Clerk 3.

To review this bungled promotion, the employee should have been paid at the classified wage rate of \$1217.00 per month. The hospital decided to give her a wage cut and pay her at \$1139.00 per month. She lost \$77.00 per month to which she was entitled.

Fortunately this story has a happy ending. The employee filed a grievance and HEU got her wages sorted out properly.

Olive Devaud Residence

June 15, 1979

Clerical III

Job Summary

To prepare patient and Long-Term Care billings, prepare payrolls and accounts payable and prepare monthly financial statements.

Job Requirements

Education - High School Graduation or partial High School plus on the job training.

Skills - the work performed requires the person to be conscientious, with particular attention to detail and accuracy. The ability to communicate clearly, operate an adding machine and maintain complete and accurate files on vendors and payrolls.

Degree of Supervision - supervision by management will vary as to the degree of development. Early stages of training will require direct and frequent supervision. As experience is gained, supervision will be reduced to minimal required.

General Responsibilities

1. To prepare monthly billings for patients and Long Term Care.
2. To prepare the bi-weekly payroll and keep proper payroll records.
3. To prepare monthly accounts payable.
4. To do monthly recording of accounts to ledger and prepare financial statements.
5. To deposit cash to bank.
6. Clerical duties: a) typing letters and filing  
b) sorting mail when required  
c) answering phone  
d) performing related duties.

**AGREED MATCH**

Class/Rate C5/R14

For HLRA JB

For HEU JB

Date May 18/82

Pictured above is a STAMPED job description that each and every classified HEU member should have in their possession. If you do NOT have a stamped job description, get one immediately from your hospital.

The Peck Arbitration Award states that every hospital must give every HEU clerical employee a **STAMPED** copy of their classified job description, similar to the one pictured above.

If you do not have a stamped copy of your job description, ask for one from the hospital immediately.

If the hospital refuses to give you one, see your shop steward and file a grievance immediately.

If you are given a job description that is not stamped your job has not been classified. File a grievance immediately.

Remember, you can only be assured that your job is properly classified if the hospital gives you a proper stamped job description.

## Easy-To-Remember Rules

The following are some easy-to-remember rules to keep in mind if you want to ensure that your retroactivity has been properly calculated and that you are being paid correctly:

1) If you are promoted you must receive more money in your new job. You must receive the increment wage rate in the new job which is immediately higher than the wage rate you were making in your old job. And you must assume the increment seniority of that new increment wage rate.

2) If you are demoted to a lower paying job, you must carry all of your seniority with you and you must be slotted at the increment step of the new job in line with your seniority.

3) If you are transferred to a new job paying the same wages, you must carry all of your seniority with you and you must be slotted at the increment step of the new job in line with your seniority.

4) If you have portable seniority from another hospital, it must be counted in determining your proper increment step in your new job.

5) If you were hired as a new employee at an increment step above the starting wage rate, this must be counted in determining your proper increment step in your classified wage rates.

6) In order to determine your proper increment step on January 1, 1980 (to which all calculations are retroactive), your job changes before 1980 must be considered according to the above rules.

If any of the above rules have not been properly applied by your hospital, you may have lost a substantial amount of retroactive money and your current wage rate may not be right. File a grievance immediately and then contact your staff representative.



# VDTs and Reproductive Hazards



**This is the first article in a series on video display display terminals to appear in the Guardian.**

The growing use of microchip technology in North America is changing the working conditions of literally tens of millions of workers, the great majority of whom are women. The health care industry in British Columbia is beginning to depend on video display terminals more and more, even though there is evidence that prolonged exposure to VDTs may be responsible for birth defects and miscarriages among pregnant operators.

The women who are operating VDTs and their spouses and families are increasingly alarmed at the numbers of reported birth defects and miscarriages. The response to their concerns from employers and many government officials has been frustrating to say the least. Women who have suffered abnormal pregnancies while operating VDTs have been told they are victims of "chance" or that their claims are exaggerated, imagined or hysterical.

The trade union movement in Canada and the United States is demanding that workers on video display terminals be given shorter workdays, frequent rest breaks and the right, if they are pregnant, to be transferred away from the terminals with no loss of wages and benefits. More and more, unions are demanding that the machines be shielded to prevent the emission of any level of radiation.

As one of four women who worked on VDTs at the **Toronto Star** newspaper said, after giving birth to a son with a nearly fatal heart defect: "Any one of those machines doesn't give off enough radiation at a time to harm — maybe. But I wonder about the cumulative effects of radiation. It just seems like we're going to be the asbestosis people of the future." (Asbestosis is a disease found especially among asbestos miners which caused death and misery for thousands of miners and their families in North America — ed.)

At hearings of the federal Task Force on Micro-Electronics and Employment in June, the Hospital Employees' Union reported that five out of six pregnancies at Sur-

rey Memorial Hospital had adverse outcomes. Later the figure was found to be as high as six abnormal pregnancies out of seven.

Both Ontario and the Federal Government have established task forces to investigate the complaints of VDT operators. Both groups recommended that pregnant operators be removed from VDTs. But neither went further than stating the obvious: that there was an urgent need to launch a full-scale study to investigate the possible effects of VDTs on reproduction.

The Ontario task force, headed by G.J. Stopps, spent two years investigating the possible health hazards of VDTs. The Stopps task force recommended that employers be required by law to give pregnant VDT workers alternative work at no loss of pay. If such work is unavailable, the report said, women should be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits for the duration of their pregnancy, with the difference in wages made up by the employer. The task force also called for increased surveillance of VDTs where they are made to ensure that every terminal is shielded to prevent radiation emissions.

## Stopps Task Force

The Stopps Task Force urged the Ontario government to undertake a serious study of the possible health hazards faced by women workers on video display terminals. Of the ten "clusters" acknowledged by Stopps to have had high rates of abnormal pregnancies, only two were given in-depth studies by the Ontario government. Although neither study established a causal link between VDTs and reproductive problems, the evidence being collected by new studies throws some doubt on the Stopps conclusion.

Government agencies and study groups are calling for scientific research into VDTs. But their recommendations are falling on the deaf ears of politicians and employers. The trade union movement in Canada has begun doing

its own research and they, along with independent medical researchers, have concluded that workers are being exposed to unsafe VDTs in thousands of workplaces across North America.

Employers and in some cases government agencies are even manipulating statistics to cover up the fact that the rate of abnormal pregnancies among VDT operators is unusually high. In the U.S. the Centre for Disease Control studied the case of Sears, Roebuck Co., in Dallas, Texas, where 12 pregnancies among VDT operators resulted in eight miscarriages. The CDC's Dr. Nancy Binkin concluded in her report that the miscarriages were due to "chance."

Dr. Binkin's convenient explanation has been echoed by Canadian government officials, who have done no studies of the potential health hazards of VDTs. And the four abnormal pregnancies out of seven at the **Toronto Star** were attributed to "chance" by Dr. Anthony Muc, who heads the Ontario radiation protection branch. The birth defects at the **Star** may have caused alarm, Dr. Muc said in October, "but they were no more remarkable than a lottery winner." Such a cavalier attitude is of small comfort to women operators and their families.

## Union's Response

Bob DeMatteo, research director for the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU), has accused many scientists such as Dr. Muc, of "number crunching" to explain away reproductive problems associated with VDTs. "I don't know how anyone could chalk up the clusters to chance, to a statistical quirk," said DeMatteo. "They warrant very intense investigations, including radiation testing."

The numbers of women suffering abnormal pregnancies cannot continue to be ignored. Pressure from unions is mounting on employers and regulatory agencies to either provide immediate protective measures, or to remove the VDTs from the workplace until they are made absolutely safe.

It hasn't been only HEU that has met employer resistance to questions regarding the health hazards of VDTs. The experience of another union, OPSEU, demonstrates how difficult it is for workers to get justice and health protection from both employers and governments.

## Old City Hall

The 150 women working in the small, crowded rooms of Toronto's Old City Hall had complained frequently about ventilation problems. With VDTs gradually introduced since 1979 into nearly every room in the building, concern about working conditions grew.

Between 1979 and 1981, there were 27 pregnancies among VDT operators at Old City Hall. Among these, there were 12 miscarriages and one birth defect. In one room every single pregnancy over a period of one year resulted in a miscarriage.

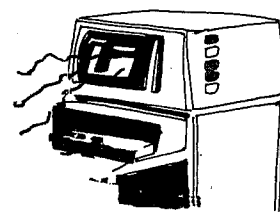
"The occurrences at Old City Hall are not what any medical officer would expect statistically or for any other reason," said OPSEU's DeMatteo.

Tests conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Labour's industrial

health and safety branch did not result in any action whatsoever — even though Old City Hall was found to be in violation of the Ontario Health and Safety Act. The director of the branch, James McNair, said before the tests were to be conducted, that he did not intend to prosecute another Ontario government ministry (in this case, the Attorney-General's department which employs workers at Old City Hall). McNair was removed from office after opposition parties complained in the Ontario legislature, but his attitude appears to differ from his fellow bureaucrats only in that he was publicly frank.

OPSEU's formal complaint and request for prosecution have, to date, met with resistance and lack of action. Provincial government inspectors who documented the violations did not write a single order that the violations be prosecuted.

OPSEU has been more successful at the bargaining table than they have in their dealings with provincial government inspectors. Pregnant VDT operators have the right to transfer to other work with no loss of pay, and all operators now have frequent rest breaks from the machines. But the matter of prosecuting the Attorney-General's office is still not settled, even though the employer has not even complied with a "request" by the Ontario health and safety branch to improve ventilation.



## Con Job

"There is a con job being foisted onto the public and onto workers that these video display terminals are absolutely safe, when, in fact, the lack of scientific research ... is absolutely shocking and does not justify a complacent statement on the part of any employer or any regulatory agency," said DeMatteo.

In the meantime, unions across North America are continuing to pay for independent, scientific and medical research that should be funded by governments and employers. A key issue and a political question yet to be resolved, is the funding of scientific and medical research. Governments are simply not giving money to researchers involved in areas concerned with the health and safety of workers.

The position of the trade union movement has been that the researchers employed by government agencies and by employers using microchip technology are biased in favour of their paymasters. Trade unions — especially those representing workers who operate the new technologies — will continue to fight on two fronts: at the collective bargaining table, and in the political arena to ensure protective legislation is passed and that funds are released to scientists and medical researchers who identify with the concerns of working people.



# FRONTLINES

"News from around the Province"

## Cowichan Agrees to Status Quo

The threat of job action has forced the Cowichan & District Hospital to agree to an arbitrated settlement of a mass layoff of LPNs at the facility.

In August, hospital management served 34 Licensed Practical Nurses with layoff notices, saying that the positions would now be filled by Nurse Aides and Registered Nurses.

The LPNs did not take this announcement lightly. They made it clear that the hospital would face job action unless there was an attempt to have the matter resolved by an arbitrator.

HEU met with the hospital on November 9, and obtained a Letter of Intent: the hospital would maintain the status quo until the dispute was settled by arbitrator Nancy Morrison. This means that the LPNs are working their normal schedules until the matter is resolved through arbitration.

## Chetwynd Hospital Changes Philosophy

Chetwynd & District Hospital in the South Peace River area of B.C., announced in November that it was intending to lay off Licensed Practical Nurses. The reason, said hospital administrator D. Welch, is to improve the service to the patients and the community.

The hospital is planning to replace two Licensed Practical Nurses with two Registered Nurses. This will cost \$1.57 more per hour (the difference between the two wage scales), but the hospital insists that the community will gain a "higher standard of care." The LPNs affected were told that they would be "laid off in mass because of a change in hospital management philosophy."

The Union is demanding an arbitrated settlement of the grievances filed as a result of the layoff notices. Since a similar situation exists at Cowichan & District Hospital in Duncan, HEU wants Chetwynd to accept the ruling of the Cowichan arbitrator.

## "Stop" Buttons Win Green Light

HEU members at the Matsqui, Sumas, Abbotsford Hospital were told in September that they were not to wear their STOP buttons. (The buttons refer to the provincial government's budget cuts.)

This put the MSA Hospital in the position of appearing to defend the Socred cutbacks, a conclusion that was unavoidable. But the hospital must have come to its senses, because at a September 30th hearing, they conceded the right of employees to wear the STOP buttons if they so wished.

## Welcome, Comox

St. Joseph's General Hospital employees finally won certification on November 15th. HEU has served notice to commence bargaining.

has served notice to commence bargaining.

To these brothers and sisters, the Union extends a warm welcome, and solidarity in the years ahead.

## H.S.C. Tight-fisted

Negotiations between HEU and the Health Sciences Centre at the University of British Columbia broke down November 22, and the Union has demanded an arbitrated settlement.

HEU was certified at the Health Sciences Centre on April 23, 1982 after employees voted to change over from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 116. Notice to commence collective bargaining was served by the Union on June 1, but the hospital was not prepared to enter negotiations until nearly five months later.

On October 26th both sides sat down to the bargaining table. After four days of talks (which were spread over three weeks), it was clear that the hospital was not prepared to offer a contract that would obtain "working conditions, comparative salaries and benefits" comparable to those prevailing in the hospital industry in B.C. This was the goal as set out in a Letter of Agreement between the employees and the hospital on November 3, 1981.

The employer made a wage offer of 6 percent, while the prevailing interim increase in the rest of the industry is 8 percent. The last increase HSC employees received was on August 1, 1981.

Despite the hospital's tight-fisted offer to HEU members, it has been quite generous to HSC management, which was given parity early last year with other hospitals in the province. In June 1981, management received a 10 percent increase, and another 5 percent in September (retroactive to June '81). In the spring of 1982, they received a 12 percent increase retroactive to January '82.

The Union's bargaining committee requested that the Hospital respond to HEU's demand for an arbitrated settlement by December 2nd, stating that "further delays can only have a negative impact on employee morale."

## Union Ed.

HEU's educational seminars, which are sponsored by the Union's Provincial Executive, were re-established in September 1982, and since that time 85 members have graduated from the program.

The five step program includes contract and statute analysis, parliamentary procedure, public speaking, history, steward and officer training. It is organized under the able hand of Ray McCready, HEU's Director of Membership Services, and has strong support among the Union's membership.

Internal union education is of great importance to HEU, which depends on an active, informed membership. The five step program is designed to give members the basic skills and the confidence needed to administer the collective agreement at the local level. Members who participate in the Union's education seminars learn how to defend the gains made at the bargaining table — something that all members of HEU benefit from.

## Carolyn Hiltz: Interview at Surrey Memorial

Carolyn Hiltz has completed her second year of service as an accounting clerk at Surrey Memorial Hospital but the HEU member is fearful that working with video display terminals (VDTs) may cut short her working life at the hospital.

"I spend usually about four hours, or half a day, in front of the VDT and the physical problems that I have to face because of that can be downright scary," Carolyn told *The Guardian* in an October interview.

"I was having problems last summer with my eyesight because of improper-lighting, but who knows for sure if the VDT didn't have something to do with it."

Hiltz said the fears of HEU members working on the machines

*The Hospital Guardian, December, 1982/12*

at Surrey Memorial Hospital have now peaked in light of the six abnormal pregnancies among HEU members who work with machines at the hospital.

"It is so frightening. I'm young, single, and would like to someday have children, but I'm afraid I won't be able to because of working with the VDTs."

Hiltz said she suffers from headaches frequently, headaches that she never had prior to beginning to work with the machines.

She added that on days when she has to spend the whole day in front of a terminal, the tension in her head and back can become unbearable.

"We have deadlines to meet each month, so there will be days each month when I'll have to spend the

whole day in front of it. The short breaks away from the VDT we have now just don't seem long enough."

Usually, 10 work days after the end of every month, her job entails billing to agencies that has to be completed and that means working faster as well as maintaining complete accuracy.

"It's mostly lab and X-ray billings that I handle. They're sent to agencies like the Workers' Compensation Board or Alberta Blue Cross. Also, I do billing of outpatient services to the B.C. Hospitals Program."

Carolyn, a native of Surrey, is 23 years old and laments the change in her municipality over the years.

"When I was younger, there seemed to be so much more parkland around here. The city has

grown up so fast and the parkland has disappeared as quickly as Surrey has grown."

"I like the outdoors, hiking and walking, so the more urbanized Surrey gets, the less I like it."

## Something's Wrong

Carolyn hopes the VDT tests to be conducted by Dr. Hari Sharma might provide some answers.

"Right now, it is the uncertainty that is the worst part. We know something is wrong because of the headaches we all have as well as the problem pregnancies that have occurred."

If the machines are found to be dangerous, we want our health to be protected. Is that asking too much?"



# DEFEND EDUCATION

BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS' FEDERATION

OCTOBER, 1982

## Government cuts put public schools in crisis



Our children deserve a future. It's time education became a priority in this province.

### School Services (Interim) Act adds to public school crisis

Recent government legislation will only create further anxiety and confusion among those who work and learn in B.C.'s public schools. Rather than addressing the serious problems developing in public schools as a result of government funding cutbacks the legislation singles out teachers for an arbitrary and unfair attack.

#### GOVERNMENT CLAIM

The government has said their legislation will:

- (a) ensure services to students are maintained
  - (b) return stability to B.C.'s public school system
  - (c) provide job security for teachers
- In FACT the legislation accomplishes none of these.

#### A. NO GUARANTEE OF SERVICES TO STUDENTS

Budget cuts projected for 1983 far exceed the amount which will be recovered from the government's legislated pay cut for teachers.

Assuming a 6% increase\* in per pupil operating costs between restrained 1982 school board budgets and 1983 budgets, B.C.'s public schools will be short by approximately \$188 million next year. The legislated pay cut imposed on teachers will return about \$26 million to the system in 1983 leaving boards still short by close to \$162 million required to maintain programs.

Student programs and services will

have to be severely cut to meet government budget cuts in 1983.

#### B. NO END TO INSTABILITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The legislation overrides the separate contracts that local teachers' associations had negotiated in good faith with their boards. The inequities evident in cutbacks this fall appear again in the legislation which penalizes teachers with a pay cut of anywhere between 6 to 11 days, the amount varying from one district to another. Teachers are being forced to work for no pay.

The legislation poses a real threat not only to the education system but also to free collective bargaining. It will ensure that the instability which has come to characterize B.C. public schools throughout the budget cutbacks this fall will continue into 1983.

#### C. NO JOB SECURITY FOR TEACHERS

The legislation requires that the Minister of Education approve all terminations of teachers before they can take effect. This in no way gives any career security to teachers during the budget cutbacks. Teachers with an extensive number of years invested in teaching are still subject to termination with 30 days' notice with the arbitrary provision of ministerial approval.

\*(The 6% increase in per pupil operating costs is far below the present inflation rate of more than 10%.)

The provincial government is making severe cuts in funding public school education for the remainder of this year. In April, 1982, school boards were ordered to cut \$28.3 million from their budgets. This fall, the provincial government has cut grants by a further \$37.5 million.

These two rounds of cuts are devastating public education in British Columbia. In less than a year the government has systematically dismantled the education system. It is totally insensitive to the needs of students and local communities.

The specific budget cuts vary from district to district but the pattern is very clear. **Budget cuts mean all students will be short-changed on their education.** Here's how they will be hurt:

#### LOSS OF PROGRAMS

- An end to cultural enrichment courses such as Art, Music and Drama;
- elimination of skill-oriented electives in Industrial Education and Home Economics;
- dropping of such important language classes as French Immersion and English as a Second Language.

#### LOSS OF SERVICES

- Curtailment of school library services which help develop essential research and reading skills;
- elimination of student counselling

services when social problems are increasing;

- a sharp reduction in special services to the growing numbers of students with special needs, including handicapped, learning disabled, socially disadvantaged.

#### LOSS OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Larger classes will result in little individual attention for students;
- learning will be limited on days when teachers are ill if no substitutes are provided;
- teaching supplies, textbooks and instructional materials will be harshly restricted or unavailable.

#### LOSS OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- Health and safety of students will be threatened by curtailed custodial services;
- lack of regular maintenance will mean a deterioration in school buildings and grounds;
- morale of teachers, support staff and students is low.

All of this poses a serious dilemma for the future of today's student. Schools not drastically affected by the cuts so far imposed by the provincial government will see the damaging results when the planned 1983 cuts are imposed.

## WHAT CUTS MEAN TO STUDENTS

- Loss of programs
- Loss of services
- Loss of learning opportunities
- Loss of a healthy school environment

## 1983 cuts — more drastic

The proposed cut for 1983 school district budgets is considerably greater than either of the first two cuts and will be more drastic in its effect on children. **If the 1983 budget cuts are not stopped, public education as we have come to know it over the last few decades will cease to exist in this province.** Since there is nothing left to cut from school board budgets and teachers can't close the schools for the required month or so, massive terminations of teachers will occur.

Students will end up being the real losers in terms of the quality of education they will receive after the cutbacks. Their futures and the future social and economic well-being of this province are being jeopardized by the short-sighted anti-education policies of the provincial government.

Students, teachers, support staffs, parents, and others in the community must join together now and reject cutbacks in

education. We must stand together to defend public education and unitedly call upon the provincial government to **re-store education funding.**

*"Webster: What do you think is going to happen to the system unless the government backs down?"*

*Kuehn: It's going to be dismembered. Between what is happening now and the cuts coming in 1983, we won't have an education system that resembles the one we have now.*

*Webster: What do you anticipate will disappear from the system?"*

*Kuehn: The things Mr. Vander Zalm, I think, would describe as frills; the things which in fact are the basis of the culture of this province, of preparing a broadly educated populace — the arts, music, drama. Those programs simply aren't going to be able to survive this."*

Larry Kuehn, President of the B.C. Teachers' Federation on the Jack Webster Program, September 9, 1982, BCTV.

## SCHOOL SERVICES (INTERIM) ACT

- No guarantee of service to students
- No end to instability in public schools
- No job security for teachers



## B.C. GOVERNMENT VIEW:

# Education: not a priority

As the tables and statistics on this page indicate, education funding in B.C. seriously lags behind that found in other Canadian provinces. This situation reflects years of underfunding on the part of the provincial government and, in general, the low priority level given to maintaining and improving the education system.

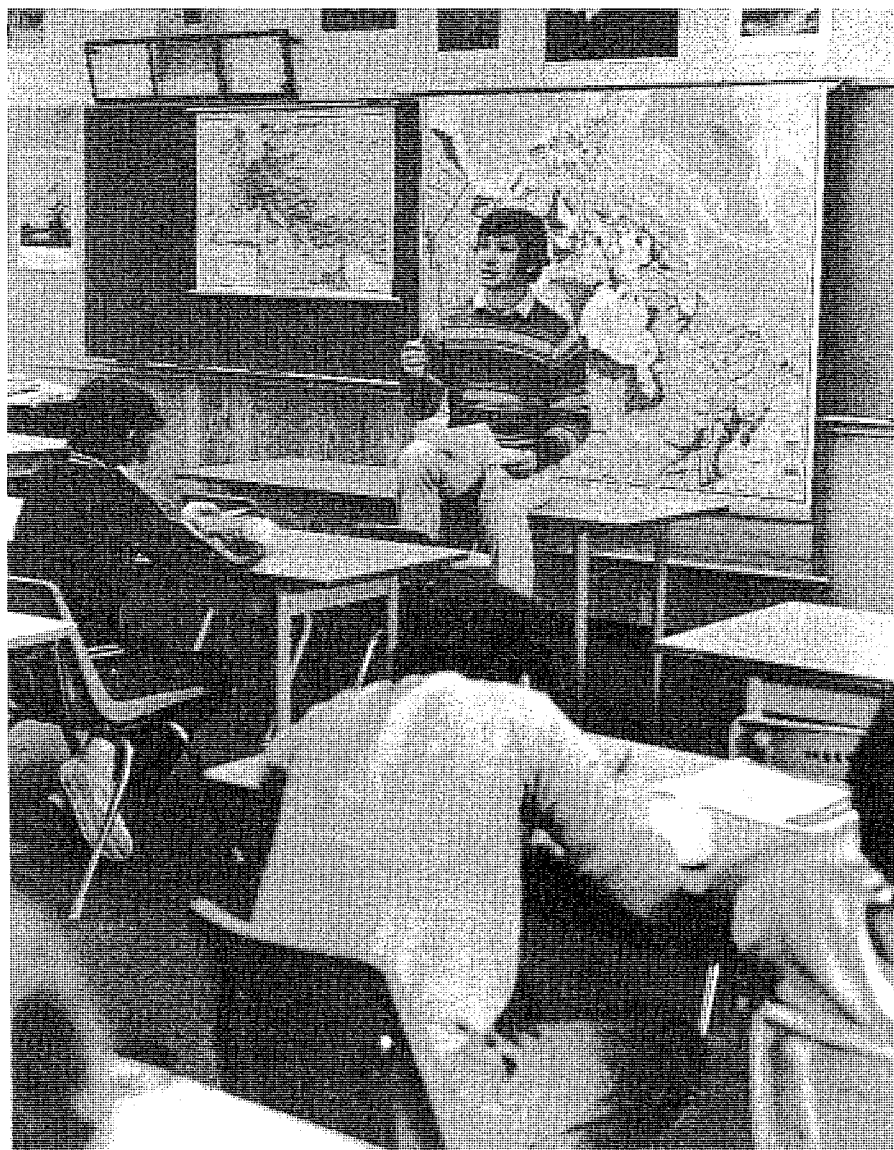
Governments in this province have failed to recognize that money spent in education represents an investment in the province's future. Moreover, it is an investment that pays dividends in the areas of our skills, our ability to handle a technologically changing society, our cultural literacy, and our understanding of the social and physical environment we live in.

The B.C. government has placed a higher priority on various megaproject spectacles using public money to fund schemes like northeast coal, B.C. Place

and the downtown stadium project. All of these projects place emphasis upon the tangible, "here and now" side of social and economic development — immediate jobs, resource extraction and increased exports. In doing so they tend to overshadow the less immediate but no less real contribution of the education system to the all around growth of the province and its most valuable resource, its children.

Budget cuts in the education system are an example of false economy. Whatever short-term savings the government hopes to make will be more than offset by long-term damage done to a system carefully constructed and improved through years of hard work.

Education funding is a valid form of investment in the province's future. Compared with northeast coal or B.C. Place, it may lack high profile visibility but, unlike the megaprojects, its long-term benefit is not open to question.



Education budget cuts have eliminated teaching supplies and materials in many districts.

## B.C. ranks dead last

Education costs expressed as a percentage of personal income are higher in every other province.

Newfoundland	12.3%
Quebec	11.6%
Prince Edward Island	11.3%
Nova Scotia	10.4%
New Brunswick	10.2%
Saskatchewan	9.2%
Manitoba	9.1%
Ontario	8.7%
Alberta	8.6%
British Columbia	7.6%

Do the children of B.C. deserve less of a commitment from us than the children of other provinces? Will our children be equipped to compete in the future?

Source: Statistics Canada Catalogue 81-208

## No money for children?

In 1982, budget cuts in education will total over \$65 million. However, the province can still find money for other areas.

- \$53.3 million for B.C. Place and the stadium in 1981-2.
- \$250 million for B.C. Place and the stadium in total.
- \$100 million in borrowed funds to start rail construction for northeast coal in 1982-3.
- \$500 million for northeast coal in total.

Let's get our priorities straight.

## B.C. Government gives less

The B.C. Government share of public education costs is far less than the other provinces for which 1982 figures are available.

B.C.	32.6%	67.4%
Alberta 1982	62.1%	37.9%
Saskatchewan 1982	53.0%	47.0%
Manitoba 1982	54.2%	45.8%
Ontario 1982	50.6%	49.4%



Provincial government contributions



Taxes from property owners (residential and commercial)

Source: B.C. School Trustees Association, The Facts Vol. 78, No. 3

## GOVERNMENT RESTRAINT - 1983

I.C.B.C.	6% MORE
B.C. HYDRO	6% MORE
MUNICIPALITIES	5% MORE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7.5% LESS*
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\*School board budgets for the first three months of 1983 will be 7.5% less than for the same period in 1982.

## WHAT DOES THIS GOVERNMENT HAVE AGAINST CHILDREN?

## Opposition would restore education funding

In reply to a call from a school trustee, who asked: "Will you, if you're elected to the next government, restore funding to education to, at a minimum, the levels that existed last May before the second round of cuts?"

Dave Barrett, leader of the opposition, answered "Yes. Because you're legally

entitled to those negotiated budgets that were negotiated by the government of the day. I believe it is illegal and immoral to go back on the work done by the school trustees and the government on those budgets."

Jack Webster Show  
on BCTV — Sept. 16, 1982.

This special tabloid was published by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation for distribution to parents and the public.

British Columbia Teachers' Federation  
2235 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6J 3H9



# CUTBACK OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO GROW

## Trustees are angry

"The government is asking us to gut our education program. It's despicable. I feel sad, powerless and angry."

**Bowen Island trustee Brian Hodgins**

"I wasn't elected to destroy the system."

**Langley trustee Donna Rantamaa**

"I think the move by the government is short-sighted, high-handed and arbitrary."

**Gordon Ingalls, chairperson,  
Prince George School Board**

"The 513 elected trustees of this province represent directly people who, we believe, care more about education of children and less about the questionable political motivations of government. In the final analysis we are convinced the government's positions will be rendered practically and morally indefensible."

**Gary Begin, President,  
B.C. School Trustees Association**

## Teachers worried

"School budget cuts in early childhood education will likely mean larger classes and reductions in services and materials. This happens in a period in our history when students and their families have come to need, depend on and expect our personalized instruction and attention. Any decrease in the quality of instruction given and loving care expended may well contribute to increased learning problems and social and emotional difficulties which are likely to multiply and intensify as these youngsters progress through the system."

**Margaret Shore,  
B.C. Primary Teachers' Association**

"Budget cuts are affecting the English as a Second Language program in my district and school. These are disadvantaged kids to begin with because of the language

barrier. What chance can they expect to have in the future?"

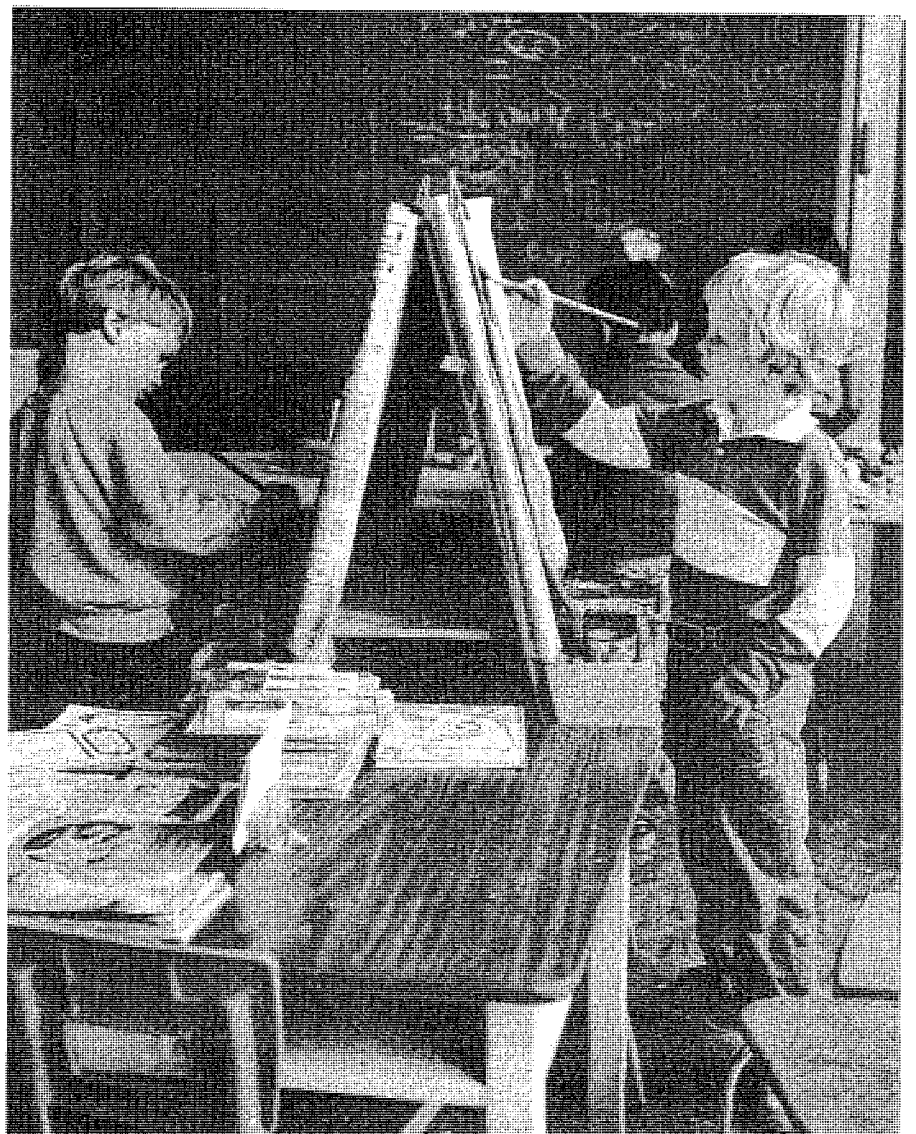
**Jill Hutchison,  
E.S.L. Teacher, Victoria**

"In a small school district with only one high school if programs are cut in that school there are no other schools for kids to attend to get the benefits of those programs."

**Anita Chapman,  
Kitimat District Teachers' Association**

"Cutbacks in supplies and instructional materials in our district have forced a return to teaching techniques which are no longer appropriate. The result is teacher oriented rather than pupil oriented education."

**Rod Andrew,  
Kamloops District Teachers' Ass'n.**



*Courses like Art, Music, Drama and electives in Industrial Education and Home Economics are threatened by government cuts to education. It's time Education funding was restored.*

## Parents/public speak out

"And those were callers on our Talkback show on Friday. We were able to take 20 calls in the 15 minutes of studio time allotted us. Nineteen people felt that the quality of education would suffer due to government funding cutbacks; one caller supported the government move."

**Gail Hulnick,  
Talkback Feature on CBC Radio,  
06:50, Monday, September 13**

"With the present cutbacks students and teachers are already pushed to the limit. Burnaby schools no longer hire substitute teachers for one or two days absence of the regular teacher. As a result, the students are left with unsatisfactory instruction."

**Lisa Gardner, student,  
Alpha Secondary, Burnaby  
(Vancouver Province, Sept. 24/82)**

"I am appalled when I listen to the electoral bribes being handed out daily by members of the Social Credit government. They can obtain money to loan to people with mortgages. They can build five new prisons to replace Oakhalla. But they say they cannot finance education and health to last year's standards and must cut back. What are the values of a government which puts criminals before children?"

**D. M. Spears,  
Vancouver  
(Vancouver Province, Sept. 23/82)**

"Without libraries, music, shop, opportunities for the gifted as well as the handicapped and other essential courses for our children, we will be reduced to a form of cultural illiteracy."

**Pauline Romaine,  
Castlegar News, Sept. 12/82**

"We can't afford to accept any cuts in education. B.C. already has the seventh largest class sizes in Canada and rank eighth in per capita education spending."

**D. Jorgenson,  
Mission parent  
(Abbotsford, Sumas, Matsqui News,  
Sept. 22/82)**

"If we reduce the programs offered our boys and girls in schools we reduce their future opportunities and we reduce the social and economic benefits that would flow from the nurturance and fulfillment of their many talents."

**Robert Jackson,  
Castlegar News, Sept. 8/82**

"If you remove the creative aspect of our educational system, you will destroy a large proportion of our creative young people."

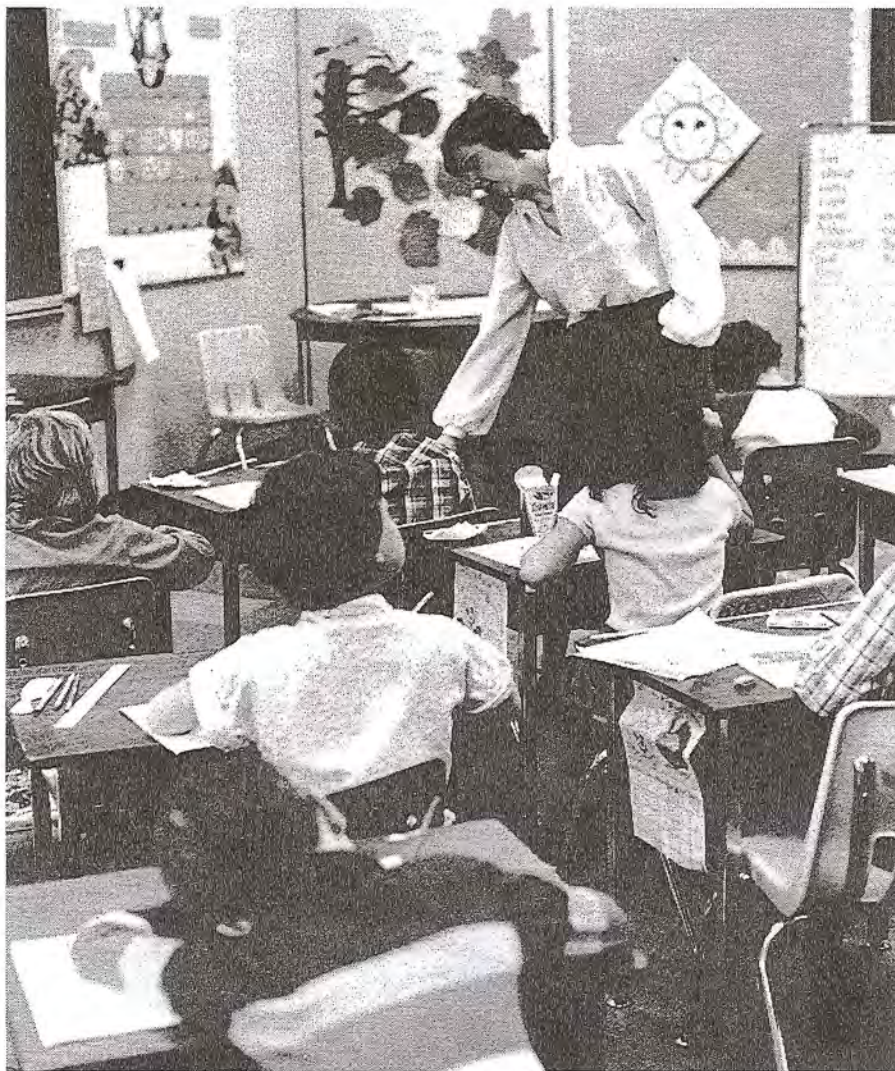
**Wendy Tolksdorff  
Ingrid Segger  
Vivi Twellmann  
Abbotsford District parents  
(Abbotsford, Sumas, Matsqui News,  
Sept. 22/82)**



*Students in special programs like English as a Second Language will be hurt by government budget cuts. It's time people said "No" to cuts in education.*



# Communities lose control of education



Larger classes resulting from budget cuts will mean less individual attention for students.

## What it means for children and their parents.

- School programs won't reflect students' needs.
- Parents have less say at the local level.
- Elimination of programs such as learning assistance, French immersion, art, music and drama.

During the past year, the provincial government has been tightening its grip on education by taking more and more control of education out of the hands of school boards. School boards in B.C. are now left with virtually no local decision-making, except the dubious power to determine how to further dismantle the public school system during the current crisis in education.

In the past, local boards had sufficient control to establish programs in response to children's needs at the local level. Boards could give special emphasis to children with learning problems, establish enrichment courses, or offer locally-developed programs for children. Moreover, boards had adequate taxing powers and decision-making authority to meet many of the special needs of children. Tragically, the past several months have seen a gradual erosion of local powers. School boards in B.C. are now left with little power.

*"It is this sense of powerlessness that angers me. It's literally a dictatorship now. School boards have no recourse . . . and government can make the legislation retroactive. It's a really dangerous situation for democracy."*

Joan Jellie, Chairperson,  
Courtenay School Board

The biggest blow to local autonomy came with the new Education Interim Finance Act, made law in April 1982. It

gives the provincial government the power to set a ceiling on school board budgets and to determine how much of each board's budget will be paid by the provincial government. More importantly, under this act the government has seized tax revenues from local boards. The act removes non-residential property taxes from local school boards and gives it to the provincial government.

Given the sweeping powers now in the hands of the provincial government, it is not surprising that school boards feel powerless. They have become unwilling puppets of the provincial government.

It is clear that school boards must have more autonomy if they are to be accountable to their communities. Parents, quite rightly, want a quality education for their children. The provincial government must ensure that local boards have sufficient autonomy to meet the high expectations placed on schools by parents. If boards do not obtain more autonomy, more and more students can look forward to a mediocre education.

*"School board autonomy" means trustees doing Victoria's dirty work. After the imposition of the new education finance formula, plus two Sacred budget cutbacks, boards have no real autonomy."*

Crawford Kilian, Trustee,  
North Vancouver

## Teachers defend education

B.C. teachers have sacrificed personal income and working conditions to save student programs and the jobs of thousands of their colleagues.

Despite teachers' efforts, the government is proceeding with additional cuts that threaten to destroy the education system.

Government cuts are hitting schools in three stages.

The first government cutbacks, applied in the spring of 1982, created a loss of 1,000 teaching positions in the province. The resulting larger classes and reduction in services have only become apparent this September.

The second round of cutbacks forced many teachers to forfeit professional days without pay or withdraw services to pre-

vent massive terminations. This direct subsidy to keep the education system going has cost teachers many millions of dollars.

Many districts have also cut classroom supplies and substitutes for student programs and services such as gifted education, field trips, music, extra-curricular sports and native education.

The crisis is not over. The government has served notice that more cuts must be made in January 1983.

Teachers have already sacrificed days without pay and boards have reduced student programs and services that have lowered the quality of education.

Further cuts to education will be intolerable.

Parents and the public must join with teachers to defend education.

## What it means for school boards.

- Boards are puppets of the provincial government.
- Trustees are unable to represent local taxpayers.
- Local educational concerns are ignored.

## YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION IS AT STAKE

Parents and the public  
can force the government  
to stop the cuts in education

## JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND SCHOOLS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

## DEFEND EDUCATION — ACT NOW!

- Visit your local school — find out what is really going on.
- Talk to teachers and other educators.
- Ask children what is happening.
- Talk to your neighbors — show them this tabloid.
- Ask provincial election candidates where they stand on education cutbacks.
- Attend public meetings to hear about the impact of the cuts to your child's school.

- Attend local school board meetings to express your concerns.
- Ask school board candidates where they stand on education cutbacks.
- Phone or write your MLA to protest the cuts to education.
- Initiate petitions/letters to the minister of education to protest the cuts.
- Join or form a parents group to inform your community about the impact of the cuts.

# RESTORE THE FUNDS