



# Newsletter

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## **The verdict on Bill 37: A mean-spirited disaster**

*HEU members, public united in  
condemnation of vicious BC Liberal legislation*

**T**WO WEEKS after the BC Liberal government introduced back-to-work legislation that slashed wages and benefits while ordering an end to the HEU strike, members of the public continue to stand beside health care workers in their condemnation of Bill 37.

In newspapers throughout the province this week, HEU members and members of the public have been almost unanimous in blaming Gordon Campbell and his cabinet for the chaos in health care and the new low that Bill 37 represents for labour relations in B.C.

Here's a sampling of their comments:

I read the article "Anger lingers over HEU contracts" (*Saanich News*, May 5).

The story states: "Darlene Trudeau, a licensed practical nurse with the HEU, said the rollbacks show the government places little value on the work of LPNs. 'Management, to my face today, looked at me and told me I'm replaceable,' she said. 'I feel lower than I've ever felt in my life.'"

Below is a letter published in the Nanaimo Bulletin:

"The day after Gordon Campbell's government cut the pay of hospital workers, I called MLA Murray Coell's constituency office. When I informed the lady who answered that I disagreed with the government's action she must have presumed I was a Hospital Employees' Union member, which I am not, as she told me to get a real job and do something with my life. I was stunned."

Both of these comments show the contempt this government has towards hospital workers.

– Carmen Spring  
Saltspring Island  
*Saanich News*  
Wed 12 May 2004

I am a licenced practical nurse and I am a member of the Hospital Employees' Union. HEU represents a very large, diversified sector of employees who work in the health care profession, but I am going to tell you about LPNs. We are nurses. We do almost everything an RN does.

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In long-term care and in the hospitals, LPNs, resident care aids and RNs are the hands-on caregivers....Colin Hansen said the health care dollars should go to patient care. Who does he think does this job? Just the RNs?

- Wanda Merriman, LPN  
Lake Cowichan
- *Lake Cowichan Gazette*  
Wed 12 May 2004

I am very resentful because the Campbell government is classing HEU workers as “unskilled” and trying to lower their wages and benefits. These workers do the work that others would or could not do. They earn every penny they get from the job.....Why pick on them to accept wage cuts and benefits? The hospitals would soon be germ filled and filthy without these skilled workers. I suggest that Campbell and company do one day washing dirty laundry, working in the kitchen, or cleaning hospital floors and rooms....

- Laura Hopkins, Victoria  
Vancouver Island News Group (*Victoria News*)  
Wed 12 May 2004

Some of you should ask yourselves if contracting out at lower cost is a good thing considering the fact that a person pays more tax if the wage is \$20 per hour than if it is \$10 per hour. If you believe that the \$10/hour is better, then get used to the phrase “user fees”, because you will be hearing a lot of it in the future.

- Lorne Scott, Campbell River Mirror  
*Langley Times* – Opinion  
Wed 12 May 2004

I work in the private sector for a low wage, but why would I want to drag other workers down to my wage? Do you think the wage cut for the HEU is going to fix our health care system? The waiting list has been growing out of control for three years. My husband waited 15 agonizing months for open-heart surgery. The explanation by the surgeon: “Lack of proper funding, hospital bed closures, bureaucracy.”

- Heidi Bumann  
Surrey  
*Peace Arch News*  
Tue 11 May 2004

Premier Gordon Campbell said that if you want good people, you have to pay them. Based on the Liberals’ tactics, they have no regard for the kind of people that work on the front lines in our health care system. They have no respect for health care workers and feel they are not worthy of making a decent wage. Health Minister Colin Hansen finds it unconscionable that HEU put patients at risk as millions of dollars are taken out of the health care system. I find it

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unconscionable that the Liberals minimize and discriminate against the very front-line employees who work selflessly every day... These elected officials are not being held accountable to their constituents. Rather, they are trying to lead like dictators.

– Joy Clarke

Mission

*Abbotsford News*

Tue 11 May 2004

When HEU went out on a legal strike, instead of the government using the taxpayers' money in a good stewardly fashion and sit down to negotiate, they gathered together like a bunch of jackals in the legislature.... Bill 37 said that we'd have to return to work immediately, allow contracting out, pay back retroactive monies already worked for, accept a 15-per-cent rollback and the list goes on. Does that sound like a fair offer?

– Carola Bravi (HEU member)

Penticton

*The Daily Courier* (Kelowna)

Thu 13 May 2004

The Liberal government basically said, "We're going to continue taking your jobs away from you and, for daring to stand up to us, you're going to work for less money." It's sort of like the schoolyard bully demanding your lunch money and, when you refuse to hand it over, he gets the principal of the school to come out and back him up with all kinds of threats about what will happen if you don't give him what he wants.... Well, we'd just like to point out the Liberals' own contract with the people of B.C. runs out next May. The way things look right now, that contract may not be renewed....

– Cariboo Press

*Burns Lake Lakes District News* - Opinion

Wed 12 May 2004

In the last 30 years in B.C., women working in the female-dominated health support areas fought to gain pay equity with comparable male-dominated work and managed to come between 11 per cent and full equity. All that work was lost with a stroke of the pen that put into law Bill 29. The "partnership agreement" for the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority between the private multinational corporation, Aramark, and the trade union, IWA, "achieved" wages that have been almost cut in half (\$9.25 to \$11 an hour), no pension, no long term disability plan, no parental leave or guaranteed hours of work. This places the purchasing power of health support workers at what it was in 1968....

– Valoree Baker, Kamloops

Cariboo Press

*Kamloops This Week* - Letters

Wed 12 May 2004

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Throughout the HEU's struggle with the provincial Liberal government, we were seeing [government] ads on TV and in the daily newspapers telling us about the state of health care in B.C. ...I believe that a rough estimate of the costs of putting all of this advertising together and then shoving it down our throats has to be somewhere around \$15-20 million dollars....Let's not forget that when the B.C. Liberals were trying to get elected, they made bold promises that they would not tear up agreements or touch health care. Those promises have gone out the window, and Gordon Campbell is doing the exact opposite of what he promised every person in this province.

– Bill Derbyshire, President, IWA Canada Local 1-425

Cariboo Press

*100 Mile House Free Press* - Letters

Wed 12 May 2004

After waiting 10 months, I was scheduled April 29 for a total hip replacement and that gives me a valid perspective on the current health care crisis. For the cancellation of that operation and my continuing disability, I blame the MLAs of the government caucus, who are, in fact, the principal public employees who have laid the foundation for the current situation for three years. They blindly voted for back to work legislation last week, exacerbating the crisis to unheard of proportions. I do not belong to a union, but I believe none of us would stand for the wage rollback, retroactive provisions, and disempowerment of the collective bargaining process that was imposed on HEU workers. ....When I have my surgery, I don't want service deliverers to be employed by a profit-making business, with all the implications that might have for the level of service provided.

– Ellen Zimmerman, Golden

Cariboo Press

*Invermere Valley Echo* – Letters

Wed 12 May 2004

I didn't and don't like any part of the provincial government's treatment of the HEU in the recent dispute, but what was really off-putting was the demonizing of the so-called "unskilled" workers. The thing is, those unskilled workers didn't steal those wages, and secondly, the HEU includes a wide range of skilled workers. What's the excuse for punishing them? Simply that they belong to a union?

– Diana French

Cariboo Press

*Williams Lake Tribune* - Opinion

Tue 11 May 2004

May 13, 2004