

Welcome DELEGATES  
1<sup>ST</sup> BIENNIAL CONVENTION  
HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION  
N.U.P.E. - C.U.P.E.  
JUNE 5-6-7-8



# Commemorating 60 years

On the eve of  
HEU's 24th biennial  
convention, the Guardian  
looks back at some of the key struggles  
and achievements that have shaped our  
60-year history. PAGE 8

# GUARDIAN



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# Restoring Justice

While the Campbell government continues to dismantle public services and gut hard won gains for health care workers, HEU delegates are assembling in Richmond with a critical agenda of their own:

- how to recover lost ground
- rejuvenate the union, and
- hold BC's politicians to account on May 17, 2005.

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Assisted Living: No panacea for senior's care PAGE 7



HEU delegates have been meeting under the 'big top' at the Richmond Inn since 1994 – our 19th biennial convention.



KATE WILLIAMS PHOTO

# Charting the future

## After two tumultuous years, HEU delegates debate measures to strengthen the union and restore justice for its members

**M**ore than 500 delegates representing about 185 HEU locals from across BC are heading to Richmond for what could well be a watershed convention for the union.

After all, union members have been at ground zero in an unprecedented government assault on public health care and free collective bargaining.

Privatization has robbed 8,000 union members of their livelihoods. Most of the rest saw their pay cheques slashed by 15 per cent as a result of Bill 37.

The union's response to these attacks and its role in the resolution to last spring's job action has generated scores of proposals from HEU locals on ways to strengthen the union and recover lost ground for members.

And a consistent theme underlying more than 200 proposed resolutions and constitutional amend-

ments up for debate is a desire to reform union structures and policies in order to improve accountability, communication and representation.

There are proposals to restructure union governance by changing the duties, composition and size of the Provincial Executive.

Other proposals are focused on how the union negotiates collective agreements – and especially on how to represent various occupational interests in setting demands and at the bargaining table.

These include a constitutional amendment from the PE for a component-based bargaining structure based on the major job families and sectors represented by the union.

But not all the business of the union will be focused internally – delegates will also be discussing plans to hold politicians to account in the next provincial election and beyond.

Another important task for delegates will be to elect a new PE who will be charged with implementing decisions made on the convention floor.

It's an ambitious agenda that comes at a critical time for union members who continue to stand up against Campbell's cuts, closures and privatization.

And they're looking for a program that will renew HEU's unity of purpose and recover lost ground.

Watch for full coverage of the union's 24th biennial convention in the Guardian's winter edition.

**A consistent theme underlying the proposed resolutions and amendments is a desire to improve accountability, communication and representation**



ZORICA BOSANCIC

## Make every member count

Sixty years ago, two groups of workers at Vancouver General Hospital made the now historic decision to join together to collectively fight for better living and working conditions. The result was a strong, united union that was able to make incredible gains for its members in the years to come.

And with those gains, each successive generation of HEU members was not only better equipped to provide the quality health care services that many take for granted today, they were better able to provide a good standard of living for their families and contribute to the economic health of their communities.

When I reflect on what it took to win those early battles – and even more importantly, to carry on when struggles didn't bring an immediate victory – I am reminded of how I first experienced the union when I was hired by VGH in 1974.

I was a new immigrant to Canada and it was the best job I ever had. Good wages and sick benefits. Four weeks of vacation. Extended health benefits and disability coverage. But the truth is, that while I was grateful for all of it, I just didn't think about how those benefits came to be. In fact it was five years before I had any real inkling about the role my union played in my work life.

While times have changed, I don't think my experience 30 years ago is so very different from

how many members relate to the union today.

As we look ahead to the next six months and beyond, delegates to our 24th biennial convention will be discussing strategic and structural initiatives that can help our union move forward. And while those debates are critical, it is easy to forget about members who are not active, who do not identify with the union and who feel themselves to be unaffected by the work we do.

We need to take the time to seek those members out. To get their input. To encourage their attendance at local meetings.

**It was five years before I had any inkling about the role my union played in my work life**

And most importantly, we need to be willing to listen to their ideas, opinions, and suggestions.

If we don't make that a top priority following convention, we will miss a crucial opportunity to strengthen the core of our union, which can only come from an informed, involved and united membership.

On our 60th anniversary we can take great pride in our collective achievements. And by committing ourselves to reaching out to our co-workers, we can rebuild our capacity to tackle the challenges ahead – and win.

• *Zorica Bosancic is HEU's acting secretary-business manager*

## voice.mail

### Public doesn't see the consequences

I'm writing about the latest government ads.

I don't think most of the general public cares. No one thinks of the consequences that have been caused by the number of employees that have already been laid off, or those who are about to be, or those that have taken a pay cut. Many families have taken a 30-per-cent pay cut as both husband and wife are HEU members!

Not only this, but to add insult to injury, Bob Smith (CEO, Fraser Health Authority), decides to pay for a day at Playland to improve staff morale. Personally, I did not find this acceptable. If Mr. Smith wants to improve staff morale, then pay us what we deserve.

I have invited the upper management to observe my

day at Ridge Meadows Hospital, Creekside Manor, caring for our elderly. To present, I have received no takers.

We front line caregivers are not only there to provide personal care but to help to maintain and try to improve the quality of life for our extended family members, as much as we can, until the day of their passing.

I would challenge Mr. Smith, Mr. Hansen and Mr. Campbell to put themselves in our shoes for one week! Then tell us how much they think our jobs are worth.

As for the longer hours, I'm confused about this issue. It has been proven in studies that working longer hours, more days, overtime and shift work will cause more mistakes, more injuries and more sick time due to workload, burnout and stress. How can they say this will

save money? This will cause further expense to the health care system.

**CLAIRE ROLLINS**  
*Ridge Meadows Hospital*

### Member sets the record straight

I am an HEU member suffering with a 15-per-cent pay cut and I want to set the record straight on a lot of misinformation that is being reported.

The nurses are being applauded for not going on strike like the HEU members did. The reality of the situation is that they received a 23-per-cent increase in the last contract. Why should they go on strike? The HEU members at that time received zero per cent. Now we are faced with a 15-per-cent pay cut while the nurses remain the same.

The CUPE-BC members just received a two-per-cent increase per year while the HEU, also part of CUPE, received a 15-per-cent pay cut. The HSA settled their contract also for zero per cent.

The Campbell government told us our wage reduction was necessary as there is "no money" yet clearly there is money for a select few.

If the cutbacks were across the board with all unions proposing a wage rollback of two per cent, we could understand and the hardship would be more bearable. Yet the HEU was targeted to take the brunt

of the government cuts to make up for its failed tax cut fiasco. On the heels of our cutbacks, we are again slapped in the face with the news that the health authority's executive get an 18-per-cent increase for a job well done.

Meanwhile, I must carry on providing patient care with the knowledge that my work is not appreciated and is worth 15-per-cent less. My income goes down 15 per cent while the cost of living and the cost of utilities goes up exponentially.

The HEU members – predominately women – get one of the lowest wages of all the wages within the civil service and yet we have the greatest responsibilities. Why is it that liquor store employees (BCGEU and mostly men) get paid up to \$23 per hour, and yet the HEU employees have enormous responsibilities with patient lives at stake and we only get paid \$18 per hour?

Why do ferry workers earn more money than an LPN or dental assistant or pharmacy technician? People taking blood, doing vital signs, preparing medication and chemotherapy, doing diagnostic tests, processing orders, providing clerical support and providing emotional support are providing important

patient care along with the nurses, yet they are only paid half as much.

We have education and professional affiliations similar to nurses. The health care system is made up of more than just nurses and doctors. We are LPNs, care aides, pharmacy technicians, cardiology technicians, unit coordinators and medical secretaries who are college educated, working professionals. We carry on with our duties because we are professionals. People need to know the facts before they vote.

**SORAYA SPIER**  
*Fraser Valley Cancer Centre*

### Thank you for the bursary award

I was ever so pleased and surprised to receive a major bursary (\$500) from HEU and the Prince George local. It will go towards my education in becoming an LPN again.

With my wife and I both being members of HEU, our last paycuts sure hurt us financially. But I cannot thank you enough for your generous bursary.

Only in HEU do we look after ourselves this well. That's another reason to stay in HEU during these difficult times.

Thank you.

**BO VOLPERT**  
*Prince Rupert*





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# Labour launches action strategy

**F**or HEU member Carol Bunch, the May 17, 2005 provincial election is critical. "The ordinary person has to be heard. Things are so one-sided in government. There has to be balance. Years and years of gains have been swept away by the stroke of a pen. This is what you get when it's a one-man show," says Bunch.

In three, short years, Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals have used their lop-sided majority to roll back decades of hard won wages and working conditions for working people and cut programs and services that have devastated communities around the province.

Heather Compton, an HEU member in Nelson, can testify to that. "Being from rural BC, I can tell you, there's not one person who hasn't been negatively affected by this government."

BC Federation of Labour provincial campaign coordinator Janet Routledge says that this is why the organization has developed a different kind of political action campaign based on building capacity – capacity to champion issues, influence government

and hold elected officials accountable at election time and after.

"It's more like an organizing campaign than a political one," says Routledge. "It's about being mobilized.

We want to create a political action movement and it's bigger than any one election.

"We want to engage people, one by one, in meaningful discussions on issues that are important to them. We want union members to feel

that they are part of something, and that it's worth their while to come out and support programs and policies that are good for working people," she says.

Routledge emphasizes that this is labour's campaign. "This isn't about political parties but about working people being at the table."

**We want to create a political action movement and it's bigger than any one election**



PATTY GIBSON PHOTO

**HEU members Jaqueline Zilkie and Lorraine Saliken from the west Kootenays were among the 24 participants who learned facilitation skills at the union's recent four-day training session in popular education techniques. The pilot project was developed to give members the training they need to facilitate one-day Union Activism workshops throughout the regions.**

That's exactly why, for the first time, Bunch is throwing her hat into the political arena. She's running for the NDP nomination in Alberni-Qualicum on Vancouver Island.

Bunch talks about a return to real democracy where participation is encouraged and many voices are heard.

"Democracy is about people, not money," she says. "The Liberals have reduced everything to dollars and cents. They've made it about money."

Like Bunch, Compton believes that working people have a crucial role to play in the political process. She's anxious to get started on the province's

2005 election campaign.

A veteran activist and currently the recording secretary for the Nelson-Creston NDP constituency association, Compton does credit the BC Liberals for one thing, particularly when it comes to HEU members in the Kootenays.

"This government has been our greatest ally in politicizing our membership."

She notes that the springtime job action – and the government's treatment of health care workers – has created incredible organizers and lifelong activists.

Whether coordinating picket lines, scheduling essential services, talking to reporters or rallying public support, HEU members came forward and handled it all.

"People just shone. They realized – hey, I can do this," Compton says. "And these very same skills are transferable to political campaigns."

That's what a political action campaign is all about. Working people learning that they make a difference, exercising democracy and using their strength to advance progressive positions for the common good.

As the BC Federation of Labour slogan says, "What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all."

**MARGI BLAMEY** • HEU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

## First Ministers' deal weak on accountability

Canada's First Ministers' Meeting on health care in mid-September concluded with an agreement that will transfer \$239.5 billion to the provinces and territories over the next 10 years.

Although talks began with two days of open, televised discussions – where the federal and provincial governments engaged in public relations' pitches to their respective electorates – Canada's First Ministers reverted to behind closed doors debate for the hard bargaining that took place on day three.

Predictably, money was the major item on the table. Accountability and conditionality for the future transfers came a sad second in the list of priorities.

And "stemming the tide of privatization" as promised by federal Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh was never put on the table. Federal government

election promises to strengthen public health didn't go beyond providing additional money.

But while money may be the top issue for governments, money with accountability and conditions are the issues for Canadians who remain passionate about keeping health care publicly funded and delivered.

Unfortunately, the federal government has placed few conditions on the use of the new funds and no real enforcement mechanisms should the provinces not use those funds as intended.

Prime Minister Martin is on record as saying that the provincial governments will have to face their electorate if they don't.

• For a full analysis of the deal see [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca).



## COFFEE BREAK

In honour of our 60th anniversary, *Coffee Break* takes a look at some of the bargaining demands and issues that surfaced in our early years.

### The way it was

- Consideration for a place to change during inclement weather is required for the hospital's two watchmen. (September 1948)
- Agreed that if nurses aides' jobs are obtained through a posting, the applicant would receive the training needed at the expense of the Royal Columbian Hospital. (November 1948)
- Management at Chilliwack Hospital agree to give employees the five and one-half day work week, with the exception of the nurses' aides who are working a six-day week. The matron claims she is unable to get the required help to put the new schedule in place. (April 1949)
- Nurses' aides will be required to launder their own caps, but it is agreed the caps will be replaced when they are worn out. (April 1949)
- At the monthly meeting of the North Vancouver employees, representatives of the London Life Insurance company quoted that an indemnity of \$15 per week for male and \$10 per week for female employees would be paid owing to sickness and accident. (May 1949)
- Reported that Royal Columbian nurses' aides on the afternoon shift – 3 p.m. till 11 p.m. – would like to have a stated tea time. (May 1949)
- Agreed that the union will make representation to the Dominion Government, through the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, to have hospital employees covered by the *Unemployment Insurance Act*. (February 1950)
- Reported that the increase to 10 cents per cup of coffee at Vancouver General Hospital was agreed upon, but the union hoped the standard of the coffee served in the cafeteria might be improved. (May 1954)

## Interim agreement reached for MSA Sodexho local

HEU's bargaining committee has reached an interim agreement with Sodexho covering the union's new members at Abbotsford's MSA General and Mission Memorial hospitals.

The agreement outlines a process to deal with work-related disputes while HEU and Sodexho continue to negotiate the terms and conditions of a new collective agreement. It also gives HEU members the right to be represented by a union shop steward and

allows workers to take a leave of absence to conduct union business.

"It's definitely a step in right direction," says HEU bargaining committee member Kris Eriksen, who chairs the MSA Sodexho local. "The interim agreement gives workers something they desperately need, which is a process to resolve grievances in the workplace."

The bargaining committee is working hard to conclude negotiations for

a first collective agreement with Sodexho. "We are hopeful that we will be able to continue meeting with this employer and negotiate in good faith so we can achieve a fair and just contract for our members," says Eriksen.

He adds that while monetary issues are definitely important to people, "things like workload, fairness, respect and health and safety training are extremely critical for every staff member at this time."

## Private companies continue to block workers' rights and choices

As the *Guardian* goes to press close to 3,000 contract workers at more than 50 health care facilities are poised to join HEU.

And while they have all had an opportunity to vote, ballot boxes remain sealed pending a series of hearings being held at BC's Labour Relations Board.

That's because the Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada (IWA), along with the three major private contractors in health care support services – Aramark, Compass Group and Sodexho – have filed objections to HEU's certification applications at the LRB that must be heard before these workers can have their wishes respected.

Hearings are now underway and will continue in October.

"We are working hard to conclude these matters as soon as possible," says HEU's legal counsel David Tarasoff.

HEU's acting secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic says, "It's astounding that these companies are continuing to block their employees'

right to choose the union they believe can best represent their interests."

All three companies signed "sweet-heart deals" with the IWA – before the workers had been hired – that drove contracted health care workers' wages down to \$10 an hour and effectively denied them any say in the terms of their collective agreement.

"These workers have been forced to wait an extraordinarily long time to have their voices heard, their choices respected and their right to open, free collective bargaining recognized," says Bosancic.

For all these reasons, HEU is continuing – hearing by hearing – to fight for the ballot boxes to be opened up as quickly as possible.

A significant breakthrough occurred in May, when the LRB ruled the "partnership agreement" between Aramark and the IWA null and void. Then on June 3 the LRB ruled that the Sodexho-IWA partnership at MSA General Hospital in Abbotsford was also invalid.

Those rulings, however, did not stop Compass Group from continuing to block HEU's certification applications on similar grounds.

And it did not stop Aramark, Sodexho or Compass Group, from continuing their resistance with yet another objection: that HEU and the BCGEU are inappropriate bargaining units because they objected to the Campbell Liberal's contracting-breaking legislation – Bill 29.

In the three hospitals where the ballots were counted last spring – MSA General, Eagle

Ridge and Mission Memorial – HEU was the overwhelming choice for the newly privatized workers who voted 34-1, 24-0 and 14-0 respectively.

In recent weeks the IWA completed a merger with the United Steelworkers of America.

Bosancic says HEU is hopeful that with that merger, "we will be able to work with the steelworkers' union to find solutions that will respect health workers rights and choices."

**Close to 3,000 contract workers at more than 50 health care facilities are poised to join HEU**

## <<newsbites>>

### Workplace stress is impacting patients

A report by BC's Auditor General issued this summer confirms what HEU members already know: the provincial government and its health authorities are failing to provide healthy work environments for their employees, which in turn affects patient care.

"If the health authorities are to fulfill government's expectations of 'putting patients first,' they must ensure that the work environment supports health care workers in their efforts to provide the best patient care possible," concluded Auditor General Wayne Strelieff.

The audit was conducted to find out how well BC's health authorities are doing when it comes to creating healthy work environments for their employees.

"Our findings concern me deeply," wrote Strelieff, who criticized health authority leaders for lacking the funding, focus and information needed to improve conditions in our hospitals and care facilities.

"Management's inadequate attention to work environment issues during a time of restructuring and downsizing has resulted in health care workers – and even their patients and families – feeling the effects of workplace stress," he said.



Forty seniors from all regions of the province came together for a one-day planning session in mid-September. Their goal? To make sure seniors' health is a major issue in the upcoming provincial election. Over the past three years seniors have been on the receiving end of numerous cutbacks and policy changes that are putting their health, dignity, and in some cases, their lives at risk. Their plan? To make sure candidates and voters know what needs to change.

MARCY COHEN PHOTO



JOHN LEACH PHOTO

# HEU graduates get Dogwood diplomas

**W**hen the class of 2004 gathered for last June's graduation ceremony at Victoria's SJ Willis school, 25 HEU members were among the throng of teenagers who stepped up to the stage to receive their Grade 12 "Dogwood" diplomas.

For all of them, it was a proud moment – one that affirmed their abilities and self worth – after more than two years of government attacks on their jobs, dignity, and value to the health care team.

Alongside two other student valedictorians, Thomas Anderson – a laid-off housekeeper from Royal Jubilee – addressed the assembly on behalf of his HEU colleagues and thanked the entire teaching staff for their "compassion, sensitivity and support."

"We are the HEU students, refugees from the health care wars," he said. "We came to this school shattered and feeling defeated – most of us middle aged."

He said that although it was difficult and tiring to work during the day and then attend classes in the evening, "we sought an opportunity to help ourselves by getting more education, to gain our diploma, to find the courage to move ahead, and to accept this wonderful opportunity to finish our high school."

Principal Dave Scott – who had responded to HEU's search for a school partner that would tailor a

program for union members on the Island – had high praise for the HEU students and the union.

In addressing the crowded auditorium Scott talked about the difficult, stressful circumstances facing many of the HEU students and their courage for taking on such an intensive program. He also commended HEU for helping its members access important educational opportunities.

Besides creating a nine-week, intensive curriculum that provided students with enough credits to gradu-

**"We had a lot of encouragement from the teachers, the union, and from each other."**

ate, the program also included career planning and tutor support to help ensure each student's success.

"The support was wonderful," says Surinder Mann, who worked her last shift at Royal Jubilee in October, after 23 years on the job. "We had a lot of encouragement from the teachers, the union, and from each other."

She says everyone was going through the same "rough, tough times" and although it was hard work, "the teachers supported us in so many ways. I can't say enough about that. They talked to you as a person, they made you feel special instead of degraded and useless, and you could e-mail or call them whenever you needed."

On graduation day Mann's entire family – including her husband, children, mother and other relatives – came from near and far to celebrate her achievement.

"Going back to school and getting your diploma is a great opportunity," says Mann, when asked if she would recommend the program to other members. "If you put your mind to it, you can do it. Just take

it one day at a time and stick with it."

Island members wanting information about future courses should call HEU's Victoria office at 250-480-0533.

**PATTY GIBSON** • HEU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

## Union training programs support laid-off workers

HEU's partnership with the Burnaby School District is continuing to help members who have been laid-off to access tuition-free courses in career planning and high school equivalency (GED) programs.

Participants in career planning courses are supported to put together an effective training and job search plan that focuses on health care related job opportunities. The course also helps people apply for the HRDC funding required for entry into such prerequisite courses as Biology, English, and Math.

Members on employment insurance who decide to enroll in the high school equivalency program (GED) attend school in the evening hours to maintain job availability during the day. HEU provides students with the required text-books, workbooks and manuals. The only cost is the exam fee at the end of the program.

For more information about courses in the Lower Mainland call the HEU Provincial Office at 604-438-5000. Ask for Sharryn Modder in the Education Department.

## Secretary-business manager Allnutt to leave HEU

**The Provincial Executive of the Hospital Employees' Union has decided not to reappoint secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt when his term expires at end of the union's biennial convention.**

**In the meantime, Allnutt is on a leave of absence and HEU's assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic has assumed his responsibilities.**

**Under HEU's constitution the secretary-business manager is the chief administrative officer and spokesperson for the union and sits as a member of the union's Provincial Executive.**

**Delegates to the biennial convention must ratify a decision of the Provincial Executive appointing the secretary-business manager.**

**Allnutt has worked for the HEU**

**since 1989 and was appointed to the position of secretary-business manager in 1996.**

**"Chris has provided dedicated and able leadership through some of our union's most challenging and difficult years," says HEU president Fred Muzin.**

**"Convention delegates and the new Provincial Executive they elect will chart the future of our union."**

## Fifty Tilbury workers lose jobs to privatization

Fifty workers at the publicly-owned and operated Tilbury Regional Hospital Laundry lost their jobs to contracting-out when the Fraser Health Authority awarded a \$50 million, 10-year laundry contract to two private companies.

The Tilbury Laundry – recognized for its efficiency, cost-effectiveness and high quality standards – falls under the jurisdiction of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. Hospital laundry in the FHA makes up about 50 per cent of Tilbury's production.

"By ending its relationship with the Tilbury laundry, the FHA's private

laundry deal is negatively impacting the viability of an outstanding public facility and the livelihoods of workers in another health authority," says HEU's acting secretary-business manager, Zorica Bosancic.

## Report condemns abuse of BC's farmworkers

A BC Federation of Labour report details ongoing worker abuse in the agricultural sector and points to "New Era" changes in employment standards as the chief culprit.

"Abuses that have long been part of doing business in the fields are increasing under Liberal policy," said the report's author Graeme Moore,

a former Employment Standards Branch Program advisor. "The living and working conditions that this mainly Indo-Canadian workforce endures are comparable to those in the Third World."

"Working and living conditions in the fields would be unrecognizable to the average person in British Columbia," says Canadian Farmworkers' Union representative Charan Gill. "Workers have no access to sanitation and no right to minimum wages, overtime, statutory holidays or vacation pay."

The BC Fed has forwarded the 49-page report to the Minister of Labour, asking for an immediate a meeting.

## Hamilton water back in public hands

A decade-long fight against water privatization has ended in a major victory for the citizens of Hamilton, Ontario. The municipal council has voted to take back the operation and maintenance of the city's water and wastewater treatment plants, ending an era of secrecy, spilled sewage, malfunctioning equipment and a revolving door of corporate owners. CUPE says it was a strong community campaign by city workers and local Council of Canadians' activists that was key in the push to bring water back in house. See <www.cupe.ca>.

*continued on page 6*



## Renewing our vision

FRED MUZIN

HEU's 24th biennial convention will be an important time to reflect on and celebrate our accomplishments over the past 60 years, review the struggles and difficult decisions taken during the last four years of the BC Liberal government and set a clear direction for the newly elected Provincial Executive.

The constitutional amendments and resolutions submitted indicate a strong desire to re-evaluate how we operate as a union. The issues are extremely fundamental. HEU has a proud history as a union committed to building a better society – we do more than just negotiate and enforce workers' rights.

By our actions HEU, since its inception, has embraced the concept that what we desire for ourselves, we want for all. Our delegates must now decide what kind of union best represents them – one committed to political action and social justice, or one that only focuses internally.

The communities in which we live and work are important. We advocate for seniors' rights and women's rights, we join with anti-poverty groups to press for decent housing and welfare levels, we stand side-by-side with students and youth in demanding access to education for all, and we defend quality public services such as medicare and transit.

After a gut wrenching, traumatic debate at our 1996 convention, we established four equity standing committees to highlight and allocate additional resources for the First Nations, People of Ethnic Diversity, Lesbians and Gay Men and People with disAbilities.

Over the years, HEU has been acknowledged as a leader in all these areas and has both received and sponsored awards. Submissions this year call on us to reassess this initiative.

And because free collective bargaining has virtually been eliminated by the BC Liberals – who are ideologically obsessed with privatization – a structural and strategic review is timely. Is component bargaining more effective in promoting the varied occupations in HEU? How do we integrate our strength as a collective, industrial union with the legitimate aspirations of particular disciplines, especially given market demand and increasing educational qualifications?

The newly-elected Provincial Executive will have the responsibility of deciding the best way to administer convention's vision. They will also select a secretary-business manager with whom they will work closely.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Brother Chris Allnutt who served us well by being calm and articulate under extreme media and government provocation. The PE's decision not to recommend renewal of his contract to convention is no reflection on his dedication, skills or effort.

In closing, I welcome respectful but passionate debate on the convention floor and am confident that HEU will again demonstrate what democracy should be all about.

## Severance payout stalls over plan to expand contracting out

**H**EU and health employers have worked out the details on how to distribute \$25 million in enhanced severance payments to laid-off workers, but the plan has been delayed by an employer attempt to inflate contracting out job losses beyond the cap established last spring.

Both the severance fund and the cap are part of the May 2 memorandum that ended Bill 37-related job action by union members. The agreement caps lay offs caused by contracting out between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2006 to 600 full-time equivalent positions.

But employers want to exclude from those numbers any workers from areas contracted out before April 1 but who didn't receive their layoff notice until after that date because they've been on a leave for LTD or

WCB claims or for other reasons.

The issue has been referred to arbitrator Vince Ready and a hearing has been scheduled for late October.

"Laid-off members are in urgent need of these severance payments so we are moving to resolve this matter as quickly as possible," says HEU's acting secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic. "At the same time, the union is insisting on a strict application of the contracting out cap in order to preserve the maximum number of union jobs."

"Clearly, the cap is frustrating efforts of health employers to expand privatization but we're determined to use the memorandum to preserve public health care and decent jobs."

The memorandum's \$25 million enhanced severance fund is in addition to and separate from regular severance provisions contained in the facilities subsector contract.

## Union secures retroactive pay equity from hold-out employers

In resolution to a grievance filed by the Hospital Employees' Union and its union bargaining partners, health employers that signed so-called "local agreements" last year will provide more than 1,700 members with a month's worth of retroactive pay equity adjustments by the end of October.

The Health Employers Association of B.C. had taken the position that pay equity adjustments scheduled for April 1 did not apply to local agreements. They argued that the adjustments were effective April 28 with the imposition of new contract terms contained in Bill 37.

But under an agreement reached by the union with HEABC in late

September, the affected local employers must make up the difference within two pay periods – or sooner. The lump sum payments will be made to eligible employees based on paid hours over the 28-day period.

The target benchmarks for the two-year pay equity plan can be found at [www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org) linked to a June 8 newsletter on the subject.

As a result of the resolution, the union has agreed not to proceed with a scheduled arbitration hearing on the issue.

HEU and its bargaining partners signed 35 local agreements last fall that temporarily modified contract terms and saved thousands of jobs from contracting out.

Instead, it put the ball squarely into Parliament's court.

"The judge has sent a clear message by referring this matter back to Parliament," said CUPE National president Paul Moist. "Now it's time for accurate reporting and active enforcement. The next annual reports on the *Canadian Health Act* must be comprehensive and accurate – no holes and no excuses."

Successive auditors general have highlighted the stunning gaps in reports to Parliament by health ministers concerning the administration of the CHA. As in previous years, huge swaths of data – needed to track

monies spent on private care – were missing from the most recent report (2002-03). For

many of the provinces, the totals spent on private health care were listed as "not available".

The groups are considering their options and discussing whether to appeal. The decision can be viewed at [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca).

### Stop horsing around, keep health care public

The Ontario Health Coalition and the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions



have come up with a unique campaign to champion the importance of keeping health care public.

Using a model of the Trojan Horse from Greek mythology, they're touring communities across Ontario to raise awareness about the dangers of hospital privatization. Standing well over 14 feet tall, the Trojan horse symbolizes the false gift of private health care.

To date the Trojan horse has visited more than 100 communities. Organizers say it's generated tremendous publicity and public discussion on the dangers of privatization.

*continued from page 5*

### Monitoring *Canada Health Act* in Parliament's court

According to the Federal Court, a legal challenge criticizing the minister of health's failure to monitor, enforce and report under the *Canada Health Act* (CHA) has raised important public policy questions which should be taken up in Parliament.

Although the 27-page decision by the Federal Court's Mr. Justice Mosley rejected the challenge, launched in November 2002 by a coalition of public health care defenders, it did not dismiss their arguments.

In the summer edition of the *Guardian*, we kicked off a feature series on seniors' care. In this issue we look behind government's glitzy promotion of assisted living to the deteriorating state of patient care.

## PART TWO: CLOSING BEDS CUTTING CARE



PATTY GIBSON PHOTO

Jack and Verna, who recently celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary, are fortunate to be able to live at home together. But as thousands of long-term care beds are replaced by assisted living units, increasing numbers of BC seniors are paying the price for growing corporate ownership of their health care services.

# the predictable results

**O**f all the stories of personal hardship that have surfaced in three years of BC Liberal rule, some of the more outrageous have come from the long-term care sector. Remember the elderly married couple that was separated when the husband was forced to leave the nursing home where he'd been living with his wife of 54 years? In June 2002, 85-year-old William Haymond was "reassessed" by the health ministry and told he would have to leave Noric House in Vernon – and his wife – because he wasn't "sick enough" to stay there anymore.

The resulting backlash prompted the government to reverse its decision. By this time, however, many British Columbians had already grown cynical about the Liberal agenda for long-term care.

"This government is desperate to kick old people out of nursing homes to save money. Period," wrote *Province* columnist Michael Smyth.

Two years later, the government has steadily reduced access for thousands of elderly people. In all, between 6,000 and 8,000 frail seniors are no longer eligible for publicly-funded long-term care. And in terms of per capita numbers, with the exception of New Brunswick, British Columbia now places dead last of all the provinces.

### So what's wrong with assisted living?

The new BC Liberal policy on seniors care has its roots in the 1991 Seaton Commission Report. Consistent with the report's call for "closer to home" health care, the Campbell administration's "Independent Living BC" program was conceived as a positive alternative to institution-based care. The new policy has two components:

- Supportive housing: government-supported housing that provides limited support for seniors such as one meal a day and limited laundry and housekeeping services. Nursing or other professional care is delivered by outside agencies;
- Assisted living: similar to supportive housing, but it includes personal care services.

Although government passed the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* in November 2002, the legislation did not come into effect until May 2004. Supporters of assisted living say the new system provides more options for seniors and prevents people from being forced into long-term care homes unnecessarily. In assisted living residences, seniors may have some help with medications – and their meals and laundry are taken care of – but they are considered capable of directing their own care. Most people would agree that this can be a positive solu-

tion for people with limited care needs. But health care advocates warn that assisted living is inappropriate for people with dementia, or those who have trouble dealing with the basic daily living tasks of dressing, cleaning or eating. And they point to other concerns raised by the new policy:

- Government's plan to introduce 3,300 assisted living units is less than half of what's needed and few of those places are affordable for medium- or low-income seniors.
- Money for assisted living development comes from housing funds. Using this money for health care needs takes away from the increasing numbers of people who need housing support.

Advocates are also concerned about standards of care and basic protection issues for seniors in assisted living arrangements. The legislation fails to address such critical issues as basic residents' rights, eviction protection, accommodation standards or any form of consumer protection against increased costs, and extra or hidden charges.

In April, a report by a Simon Fraser University gerontology researcher concluded that the BC government is failing to protect seniors in assisted living units because residents are forced to live by the company's rules. Seniors are vulnerable, argued Charmaine Spencer, because – unlike long-term care facilities – assisted living is not licensed or regulated.

### The impact on residents ...

Community campaigns to save BC's publicly-funded long-term care homes have been exhaustive and heroic. But in just a couple of years, the roster of closed or privatized nursing homes in this province reads like a list of battle scenes from a lost war: Cedarview, Kiwanis Care Centre, Sunset Lodge, Willingdon Park, Parkholm Lodge, Moberly Manor ... and so on.

Behind the government's glitzy promotion of assisted living is the negative effect of privatization on elderly residents and the front-line workers who

care for them. For seniors, being forced to move from a facility scheduled for closure can be traumatic – especially for the frail elderly. And for some people, the sudden need to adapt to an unfamiliar environment can even be fatal.

When Parkholm Lodge ended its residential program, Marg Faulds told a CBC TV reporter that her mother fell into a coma three days after being moved from Parkholm to another facility. Faulds said it was the stress of relocation that killed her.

### ... and the people who care for them.

The government's approach to long-term care not only treats senior citizens as expensive liabilities; it devalues the work of the people who care for them.

At Esquimalt's Sunset Lodge, many of the 60 unionized employees who were fired in July 2003 had worked at the 108-bed care home since its inception 24 years earlier. To senior residents, these workers were more than front-line care workers – they were like family. They were the eyes and ears of the care setting, the ones who knew the residents and their families, understood the residents' needs and could anticipate problems before they occurred.

Having their care staff suddenly disappear was bad enough. But having them replaced by a revolving door of strangers was even worse. New contracted employees are now working for half the wages their HEU predecessors earned and with twice the workload. The stability that once characterized Sunset Lodge's workforce is gone.

The same was true at Willingdon Park in Burnaby. News of the firing of 35 HEU care aides in the spring of 2003 was greeted by many of the facility's 95 elderly residents with confusion, anxiety, anger and sadness.

"We have a relationship with residents and family members," said one of the fired care aides, who had worked at Willingdon Park for 17 years. "If they cry, we cry; if they laugh, we laugh; if they sing, we sing. That's our family and now it's breaking apart."

Joyce Jones, who co-chairs Seniors Network BC, is deeply concerned about the current and future state of long-term care in the province.

"When it comes to seniors' care, this government has lost its way," she says. "This government must be held to account for their lack of planning, and for the anxiety they've caused the frail elderly, their families and people with disabilities."

DANIEL GAWTHROP



“The seeds of what was to become the Hospital Employees’ Union were sown in quiet hallway conversations, secretive meetings and around lunchroom tables, well away from the prying eyes of supervisors.”

*excerpt from The Heart of Health Care: The Story of the Hospital Employees’ Union*

# 60 years at the h

**THIS SNAPSHOT** of HEU’s World War II roots isn’t that different from the situation facing the union today as it organizes workers in privatized health care services where poor wages and working condition are the norm.

And the challenges facing all HEU members in today’s workplaces – crushing workloads, declining standards, falling wages and lack of job security – though daunting, are not unfamiliar.

In fact it’s those conditions that motivated working women and men to build a union that could stand up for equality in the workplace, advocate for social justice and fight for the best public health care possible.

**BUILDING THE UNION** In the years leading to its formation in 1944, HEU was organized as an “industrial union” which crossed traditional craft and occupational lines. It included orderlies, cleaners, kitchen, “household” and laundry workers, maintenance workers, “storemen,” painters, ward assistants, “tuberculosis unit” and “powerhouse” workers.

Nursing team members also formed an important part of the union from its earliest days and through HEU won a shorter work week and improved wages and benefits.

Membership in the new union grew rapidly, and in 1968 HEU used this strength to bargain the first province-wide master agreement. By 1971, HEU represented workers at 69 facilities – mostly acute care hospitals.

But the long-term care sector was largely unorganized – and it showed. The conditions in the sector – especially in privately-run facilities – were terrible both for workers and residents. Organizers were faced with obstacles such as high staff turnover, a climate of fear and intimidation and language barriers.

But after a decade-long campaign HEU represented 77 worksites in a sector that by 1983 was 70 per cent organized.

One union organizer commented that “the overwhelming reason these workers sought to join the union ultimately didn’t have anything to do with wages. It had to do with the conditions of patient



**VALUING THE NURSING TEAM**  
This WWII photo captures a rosy picture of LPNs’ working lives. But it belies the decades-long struggle for better training, a secure place in the nursing team and fair wages that recognize the value of LPNs’ work.



**IN THE BEGINNING ...**  
Low wages and sweatshop conditions led to the founding of the HEU in 1944 when two separate unions representing men and women united at Vancouver General Hospital.



**SECURING PAY EQUITY**

In 1992, HEU members went on strike for pay equity – and won. That victory established a process to end gender-based wage discrimination.



**WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**  
Non-traditional models of care brought new members – like this community health support worker – into the union’s ranks in the 90s and beyond.



care and it had to do with the sense of unfairness.”

It was that same sense of unfairness – especially the lack of parity with other health care workers doing similar work – that led to successful organizing efforts in the 80s and 90s in the community health and social services sectors. And it’s the struggle for fairness and respect that’s attracted more than 3,000 contract workers to HEU today.

**ENDING WAGE DISCRIMINATION** Though founded in 1944 by the merger of separate unions for men and women, it took decades for HEU to embrace the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. And it was 50 years before pay equity was entrenched in the union’s province-wide master agreement.

But by 1970, the union had embraced the fight to end gender-based wage discrimination. By filing a successful human rights complaint on behalf of 10 radiology attendants working at Vancouver General Hospital, the union won big wage hikes for the workers.

Another complaint, filed on behalf of practical nurses in Kimberly in 1973, yielded similar results which led to a major equal pay campaign that included the filing of more than 600 human rights cases. The NDP government of the day finally negotiated an agreement with HEU that saw 8,400 of its members receive “anti-discrimination” pay adjustments.

Though progress continued to be made through the job review process in the 80s women were still concentrated in the lowest paid occupations. And, in a female-dominated sector, both men and women were underpaid in comparison with other industries.

That’s why the union put pay equity at the top of its bargaining agenda and through job action in 1992, won pay equity language in the province-wide master. This resulted in the establishment of pay equity targets and annual adjustments worth hundreds of millions of dollars to members.

Although the Campbell Liberals have undermined these gains, the principle of pay equity won in 1992 remains untouched in Bill 37.

**FIGHTING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CARE** Along with the historic gains it’s made for working women and men, the HEU is widely regarded as a leading defender of public health care. It’s a reputation rooted in the union’s earliest battles for better standards of care in the 30s and 40s when hospitals were funded by tiny city government grants to care for the “indigent,” and by the fees it could squeeze out of patients.

Public pressure forced government to fund an expanded public health care system in the post-war period. Union members quickly grasped that their working conditions were inextricably linked to the care they could deliver. And they understood they had a critical role to play as stewards of public health care.

It’s why union members fought for better hospital insurance and then for medicare. It’s why HEU advocated for extended care facilities in the 50s and opposes long-term care closures today. And it’s why the union bargained contracting out provisions more than 30 years ago and continues to fight for quality, publicly delivered care in the face of a massive privatization drive by the current provincial government.

# heart of health care



**A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE** Members march for peace in the 80s but as early as 1956, HEU’s convention called for the control of atomic weapons – establishing the union as a leading advocate for peace and social justice.



**QUALITY CARE, FAIR CONTRACTS** Long-term care members striking Trizec Corporation in 1979 helped establish fair contracts for workers and quality care for seniors.



**FIGHTING PRIVATIZATION** With the new millennium comes a corporate-friendly government with a privatization agenda. HEU members fight to protect their jobs and the public health care services they deliver.



**ONE BIG UNION** HEU’s founders organized workers across traditional occupational and trades lines to create an inclusive, democratic union.



**DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS** Delegates to this year’s 24th biennial convention share a deeply-rooted democratic tradition with these delegates to the union’s 1st biennial convention in 1956.

## The blood behind the games

Behind the pomp and splendor of the Greek Olympic games this summer lay the tragic deaths of at least 14 construction workers who were killed, and hundreds more who were injured, in the two years leading up to the opening ceremonies.

And that's just the official estimate. Unions and human rights groups think the number of workers killed could be as high as 40 or more, because the statistics don't include workers who died following their injuries.

At a memorial service for the dead and injured workers held in mid-August, Greek Construction Workers Union head Andreas Zaxopoulos told a gathering of 2,000, "We have paid for the Olympic games in blood."

Companies have been accused of seriously compromising safety standards by bringing in thousands of low-waged workers from Eastern Europe and the Middle East to work illegally – without permits, insurance, proper training, protective equipment or proper supervision

Most of the dead were not Greek.

## Million Workers March

As the *Guardian* goes to press, hundreds of thousands of American workers are mobilizing a massive march on Washington, DC to protest the policies of President George Bush. The "Million Workers March" – set for October 17 – is demanding a universal health care program, a living wage, an end to free trade agreements, and an end to privatization and contracting out.

## Venezuelan women: a force for change

WWW.NETWORK-VENEZUELA PHOTO

**E**lectoral democracy in Venezuela survived yet another test on August 16, when voters backed their president Hugo Chavez by almost 60 per cent in a national referendum meant to defeat him.

This wasn't the first time the progressive president overcame attempts by right-wing opposition forces to overthrow his government. Despite being elected twice by large majorities, Chavez survived a military coup in 2002 and an employer-organized general strike several months later.

Not surprisingly, those same opposition forces refuse to accept the referendum results, even though a team of international observers, including former US president Jimmy Carter, confirmed Chavez' victory.

One of those observers was Selma James, a coordinator of the Global Women's Strike organization. The following is an excerpt from an article she wrote for the British newspaper – the *Guardian* – on the eve of the referendum. It offers an interesting perspective on the role of women in defending Chavez and the social reforms he has introduced to combat poverty in Venezuela.

### From *An Antidote for Apathy*:

"Chavez has understood the potential power of women as primary carers. Four months of continuous lobbying got women the constitution they wanted. Among its anti-sexist, anti-racist provisions, it recognizes



women's unwaged caring work as economically productive, entitling housewives to social security. No surprise then that in 2002 women of African and indigenous descent led the millions who descended from the hills to reverse the coup (by a mainly white elite and the CIA), thereby saving their constitution, their president, their democracy, their revolution.

In a country where 65 per cent of households are headed by women, it is they who are the majority in the land, water and health committees which sort out how the millions of people who built homes on squatted land can be given ownership, how water supplies are to be improved, and what health care is needed.

Despite oil, 80 per cent of Venezuelan people are poor, and the Women's Development Bank (Banmujer) is

needed to move the bottom up.

Unlike other micro-credit banks, such as the Grameen in Bangladesh, its interest rates are government-subsidized. Banmujer, 'the different bank', is based on developing cooperation among women. Credits can only be obtained if women get together to work out a project which is both viable and what the local community wants and needs.

As Banmujer president Nora Castaneda explains, 'We are building an economy at the service of human beings, not human beings at the service of the economy. And since 70 per cent of the world's poor are women, women must be central to economic change to eliminate poverty.'

• The complete article can be viewed at <[www.globalwomenstrike.net](http://www.globalwomenstrike.net)>.



**Is BC the best place on earth to work? That depends entirely on your perspective**

## Looking for truth in advertising

**Is BC the best place on earth to work?** That depends entirely on your perspective.

If you're a corporate executive hot on the trail of a lucrative hospital cleaning contract, our province must look pretty darn good.

Ditto, if you've just opened up a private surgical clinic.

But if you've just had your wages cut by 15 per cent – or lost your job altogether – the "best place on earth to work" claim made in the Campbell government's thinly-disguised crop of pre-election ads must be hard to stomach.

And if you work on an understaffed hospital ward, in a passed-over shipyard or in front of an overcrowded classroom, those claims must seem just a bit cruel.

After all, this government's policies have thrown the working lives of British Columbians into chaos by gutting their collective agreements, contracting out their work and stripping their rights.

And if you're thinking that the rosy statistics in those ads don't reflect reality in your community, you'd be right.

The average hourly wage in BC hasn't kept pace with inflation since Campbell's election. And BC has the widest wealth gap between the rich and poor of any province.

But with judgement day at the ballot box looming, the Campbell Liberals will continue to spend your tax dollars to drown out that side of the debate.

In the face of this advertising juggernaut, HEU members must use every forum at their disposal – the letters page in the local paper, talk radio and community meetings – to detail the negative impact of government policies on their workplaces, families and communities.

And to speak out on the record of broken promises – like this Gordon Campbell commitment made in a year 2000 interview with the *Guardian*: "...we are going to end government feel-good advertising."

MIKE OLD • HEU COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

# Wal-Mart continues to thwart workers' rights

CALM GRAPHIC

The Wal-Mart wars are heating up, with serious drives taking place across the country to organize the world's most successful – and union resistant – retailer. Recently, workers at a Wal-Mart store in Jonquiere, Quebec, certified their bargaining unit with the UFCW, making it the only certified Wal-Mart bargaining unit in North America.

Wal-Mart employees in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are also fighting for recognition of their right to bargain collectively.

But the Jonquiere Wal-Mart is not the first to become organized. That distinction belongs to the Wal-Mart workers in Windsor, Ontario. At the Windsor store, the Steelworkers applied for certification in 1997, but lost the vote after Wal-Mart officials warned employees of dire consequences if they joined a trade union.

The Ontario Labour Board heard allegations of intimidation and coercion by Wal-Mart managers and determined the company's actions meant the vote did not necessarily represent what the employees actually wanted. The board then certified the union despite the results of the vote.

Wal-Mart, however, was unhappy with the board's decision and found a sympathetic ear in the Ontario Tory government. In the now infamous "Wal-Mart Bill," the board's authority to certify a union where the actions of the employer had rendered the vote meaningless was repealed. It was like issuing a carte blanche to employers who were willing to break the law to keep out a union.

In the Jonquiere drive, the union took advantage of another kind of automatic certification (auto-cert) provision in the Quebec *Labour Code*. By filing membership evidence indicating majority support, the union was able to certify without a vote. This avoids the possibility that an employer could use intimidation to

change the results of a vote as Wal-Mart did in Windsor.

Since the Jonquiere certification, Wal-Mart has stated Quebec and other provinces should repeal auto-cert protections, just like Ontario. They say they are interested in democracy.

In Saskatchewan, Wal-Mart has gone to court to argue that it has a Charter right to communicate to employees as it sees fit during an organizing drive. They have found some support in that court but there's no doubt of further litigation on this issue.

Democracy and free speech are hard things to argue against. But Wal-Mart's position has two fundamental flaws. The first is that it is inconsistent with the basic principle that employees have the right to decide to bargain collectively. The employer's views, by definition, oppose these interests. The



employer has nothing of value to add to the discussion, although it has enormous coercive power. A democratic choice by the employees should be the employees' choice unencumbered by the employer's.

The second flaw is that there are always limits to free speech, and where it thwarts a legal right or democratic process, it can and should be restricted. For instance, no one would question that sexually harassing speech in the workplace should be restricted.

So is Wal-Mart really after democracy as they say? In Windsor, Wal-Mart broke the law. Wal-Mart frustrated and defeated the democratic rights of its employees. Now they want the laws that protect workers' rights changed across the country.

TIM GLEASON • CALM

• *Tim Gleason practices law with Sack Goldblatt Mitchell in Toronto. For more information on labour law issues, visit <www.sgmlaw.com>.*

## Fast facts about Wal-Mart

- It is the world's largest company.
- In 2002, it had an \$8 billion profit.
- Wal-Mart sells four times what the number-two retailer Home Depot sells in a year and does more business than Target, Sears, KMart, JC Penney, Safeway, and Kroger combined.
- Wal-Mart employs 60,000 people at more than 250 stores in Canada and 1.5 million people worldwide.
- Since coming to Canada in 1994,

Wal-Mart has opened the equivalent of a new store every 16 days.

- Wal-Mart, by pushing out competition, eliminates three jobs for every two jobs it creates.
- Wal-Mart employees earn an average hourly wage of \$7.50 and \$18,000 annually.
- Wal-Mart says 70 per cent of its workers are full-time, but "full-time" is 28 hours a week, meaning they

gross less than \$11,000 a year.

- Only 38 per cent of Wal-Mart employees are covered by the company health care plan because most cannot afford the high premiums.
  - Of the 10 richest people in the world, five are Waltons – the ruling family of the Wal-Mart empire. S. Robson Walton is ranked by London's "Rich List 2001" as the wealthiest human on the planet.
- from CALM/www.wal-town.com/Wal-Town



## Where did BC's monster surplus come from?

**W**asn't it only seven months ago that finance minister Gary Collins tabled his first balanced budget, after three sky-high deficits? Why the sudden \$1.2 billion surplus?

The minister, of course, credits a healthier provincial economy, supposedly a result of his government's tax cuts, deregulation and privatization program.

And it's a story that might make sense, if it were true.

But the government's projection for economic (real GDP) growth for 2004 was only raised by a tiny amount in the updated forecast – from 2.8 per cent to 2.9 per cent – hardly enough to cause such a shift in the budget's bottom line. And while the economy has definitely recovered from the 2001 recession, this miniscule growth is not spectacular by any kind of historical benchmark.

So, where did the big money come from?

The budget's bottom line got a huge boost from rising commodity prices (lumber, natural gas, energy, minerals)

which account for about 60 per cent of the extra money. Higher revenues have also come from increased federal transfers for health care (up \$166 million) and BC's post-secondary students, who chipped in \$95 million more than what was expected from tuition fee hikes by budget time.

What has not changed, however, are the \$350 million in spending cuts slated for this year. Since 2001/02, ministries outside health care and education have borne a total spending cut of \$1.9 billion. With a surplus of \$1.2 billion, it is clear that even with the lost revenues from tax cuts, government could have spared BC two-thirds of these cutbacks and still been able to balance the budget this year.

No one has to tell HEU members that much of today's surplus is because spending cuts were far too deep. Shouldn't those who have carried the pain have first dibs on the surplus?

MARC LEE • ECONOMIST, CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES-BC WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA

**While the economy has recovered from 2001, this miniscule growth is not spectacular by any historical benchmark**

## Day at Playland sparks public outrage

It seems like the Fraser Health Authority just can't seem to get it right. On the one hand, it's busy closing hospital beds, firing staff, and cutting critical health services in the name of cost efficiency. But on the other, it just blew more than \$300,000 on a free day at Playland for its employees. Why? To boost staff morale of course.

Armed with balloons and leaflets, HEU members greeted cars entering Playland's parking lot on the day of the event, September 19, to let people know how the health authority was spending public dollars.



Members also wrote letters to community papers and spoke with the media, all of which helped make sure FHA's latest gaffe got the public attention it

deserved. This isn't the first time the FHA has engaged in corporate style waste. Over the last two years they've been taken to task for squandering precious health care dollars on such things as a new logo for PR "branding" purposes, rich severance packages, and pay raises for top management and consultants.

## Bring back the LTD supplement

HEU's People with Disabilities Committee has launched a campaign calling on HEABC and the provincial government to reinstate the LTD supplement for members who started receiving benefits prior to 1998.

The supplement, which was axed by Bill 37, has been gone since July 1.

Prior to 1998, LTD wages were not indexed with inflation, meaning that pre-1998 LTD recipients had their wages frozen at the time of their disability. They received, and continue to receive to this day, approximately 66.6 per cent of their pre-injury wage, which has caused significant financial hardship.

The People with Disabilities Committee is currently focusing on a letter writing and education campaign.

For further information call the People with Disabilities hotline at 1-800-663-5813 ext. 7192 or 604-456-7192.

## Skydivers raise funds for AIDS Walk 2004

HEU's Lesbian and Gay Standing Committee raised \$1,300 to support this year's AIDS Walk at their exciting "The Sky is the Limit" fundraiser, held in Abbotsford.

Although the event had to be rescheduled twice, the sun finally broke through on September 19 for the nine skydivers who successfully made the 10,000-foot jump.

All jumps are made in tan-



dem with a certified expert instructor. This year's jumpers included HEU's president Fred Muzin and financial secretary Mary LaPlante.

## Bursary program supports education

Thanks to several HEU locals and the Provincial Office, our post-secondary bursary awards program helped support 24 members and their families this academic year.

The bursaries ranged between \$300 and \$1,000

## BALANCING IT ALL

PATTY GIBSON

Retired member **ALBERTA DORVAL** talks about her years as a union activist and encourages members to stay proud and united in these very tough times.

## STILL FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

At the point when retired member Alberta Dorval first decided to get involved with HEU, she was no fan of unions. Her husband was an activist with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Union, and of course there were friends and relatives who were proud trade unionists; but Dorval was busy raising eight children and she'd just get tired of hearing about all the politics.

She also resented how much time her husband spent on union matters.

However, when her youngest child reached school age, Dorval went back to work at the age of 45. Before long, she was hired into the housekeeping department of the Fort St. John Hospital where she quickly learned the value of a union and the importance of union activism.

"Management just wasn't living up to its collective agreement. I suddenly became aware of what unions were actually doing for their members and what they are up against," recalls Dorval. "So I had to get interested, I had to get involved with my co-workers to make a difference."

Little did she realize in those early days that her first steps into union activism would eventually lead her into several vice-president positions on the HEU Provincial Executive.

"That was something I came to be very proud of,"

she says. "I always used to say that it was really something that a housekeeper from a small, rural local like Fort St. John could be elected to the executive."

Dorval, like so many of her retired sisters and brothers, put countless hours into strengthening a union that was focused on achieving justice for all its members and improving the health care system.

Given the intense struggles of the past two years, I wanted to know what words, if any, she had for HEU members today, in this, the union's 60th anniversary year.

**We stood up for what we believed in. And it wasn't easy ... even inside the union it was hard for some people to understand and accept the fight for equality.**

"It's very tough right now. Very tough. And it's terrible what this government is doing to people," she says, "But it's been tough before. The struggle just never, ever stops. It's never over."

Remembering her days on the bargaining committee that initiated the fight for pay equity, Dorval says, "We stood up for what we believed in. And it wasn't easy. We had to fight like hell, and even inside the union it was hard for some people to understand and accept the fight for equality."

"Everybody in this union should be damn proud of themselves," she adds. "It's a wonderful union. Don't let this government get the better of you. Stay united and pull together."

Dorval retired in 1991 after 20 years of service at Fort St. John Hospital. She was first elected to the Provincial Executive in 1978.

But being retired doesn't mean she isn't still busy

BUTCH DERKSON PHOTO



**Dorval reflects on historical struggles and future challenges.**

fighting the good fight. "I try to make it to most rallies," she says, "because I want to give my support to the younger activists."

During the health care strike last spring, Dorval made her own sign – "HEU retired supporter" – and walked picket lines at Lion's Manor, Rosewood and Richmond Hospital.

As a senior, Dorval says she's disgusted with the current state of deterioration in our hospitals and the corners that are being cut on care.

"I have a friend in a long-term care home, and she tells me how bad the food is now that it's contracted out. I take her meals from time to time, but I'm very concerned. After all, when you're 80 years old, food is so important. It helps to keep you going," she says.

Now in her late seventies, Dorval says she's grateful to be reasonably healthy. That's because, with all the cutbacks, closures and privatization, the very last thing she wants is to end up in the health care system.

and were awarded in all regions of the province.

Participating locals included Burnaby, Evergreen, Glacier, Lions Gate, Maple Ridge, Prince George, Richmond, Royal Columbian, Royal Jubilee, Surrey, St. Paul's, UBC, Vernon General, and Victoria General.

### Aboriginal services workers ratify contract

Workers providing services to the aboriginal community in the areas of child protection, guardianship and family counseling have ratified a two-year contract which provides stability and continuity of service for both workers and aboriginal families.

The agreement is similar to those already ratified by nearly 15,000 community social services workers in community living and general services. It covers 20 workers at Métis Family Services in Surrey and 80 workers at Vancouver Aboriginal Family and Children's Services.

### Union workshops build skills, solidarity and leadership

Recent two-day workshops, held in all regions of the province, brought more than 100 members together to find better ways to build solidarity within the union and push back the provincial government's attack on working people.

In addition to getting

historical background on the labour movement and HEU's pay equity history, participants explored current challenges and ways to maintain solidarity in these troubled times.

The union's efforts to develop and deliver a strong education program for members will continue in coming months. Upcoming workshops include shop-steward training and a Future Leaders conference in November.

A new one-day course in union activism is also up and running. Geared to new members and those who want to become more active in the union, it will be held in all five regions in coming weeks.

For more information on how to become involved in in

the union's training programs call HEU's Provincial Office and ask to speak to someone in the education department.

### Pensioners group takes on premium increases

The Campbell Liberals' cuts to MSP coverage and their doubling of MSP premiums have strained public sector pension plans. And rising drug costs are compounding the situation.

Many of the plans including the Municipal Pension Plan which covers retirees and future retirees have responded to these increased costs by reducing coverage of extended health and dental benefits for pensioners.

That means most HEU

retirees must now pay for 25 per cent of the premium costs of extended health and dental benefits a cost previously covered by the plan.

But with the formation of the Municipal Pension Retirees' Association, retired health care workers can join with retired firefighters, civic workers, registered nurses and other workers in speaking out for their interests.

Formed last year, the MPRA is open to all those receiving a municipal pension along with their spouses or partners.

Find out more about the MPRA and the campaign by contacting Jean Cookson, provincial secretary, at [jean-cookson@shaw.ca](mailto:jean-cookson@shaw.ca) or 250.768.7108.

*continued on page 14*

## >> factfile

HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES FROM ALLYSON POLLOCK, WHICH SHOW HOW ONE FORM OF PRIVATIZATION, PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (P3'S), ARE FAILING BRITISH TAXPAYERS AND PATIENTS

In the UK, public private partnerships are associated with huge numbers of hospital bed reductions, caused by the high cost of private financing

From 1997 to 2003, more than 10,000 public beds were lost in England – the use of P3's has resulted in the largest hospital closure and bed reduction program in UK history

The first wave of public private hospitals resulted in regional bed losses averaging 30 per cent

Higher financing and administrative costs also means there's less money to spend on patients and employees

Staff numbers were cut up to 25 per cent in some facilities

As more work was demanded of fewer workers, staff turnover increased

As staff turnover increased, patients suffered with inferior care and reduced services

## REVIEWS

RICHARD NEAL

British health expert **ALLYSON POLLOCK'S** new book details how corporate exploitation is destroying public health care in Britain.

## THE HIGH COST OF PRIVATIZATION

**W**hat will happen when publicly owned, nonprofit health services are privatized? What will happen when publicly paid, publicly accountable health systems are sold off to private sector operators? What will happen when market solutions for health care delivery are adopted across the province and across the country?

Allyson Pollock provides the answers. She's the head of a British public health research team at University College London, where they've been debunking the myths and supposed benefits of private health care delivery for years. And now she's written a meticulously detailed book about the effects of privatization for the public health system across the UK. In *NHS plc*, Pollock shows how Britain's once universal, comprehensive, and free National Health Service (NHS) has been dismantled by market forces where public health services have been replaced with private sector provision.

If this all sounds familiar, it's because you already know that Canadian public health care is also under pressure to adopt the same type of 'reforms' found in the UK: public-private partnerships; market incentives; contracted out cleaning, catering and laundering; slashed wages, benefits, and staff; and privatizing long-term care.

It's all been tried in Britain's NHS, and Pollock shows how such shortsighted moves led to the frag-

mentation and decline of the public health system. Far from solving problems, privatization just creates additional ones. That's because a for-profit 'business model' diverts scarce tax dollars from community health services and good quality patient care.

Pollock and her team have conducted meticulous research on this topic, and they repeatedly illustrate that the real consequences of privatization are mainly higher costs and reduced services for the majority of patients.

Due to constant underfunding, Britain's public health system was never perfect. But for more than 50 years it delivered high quality care to the majority of people who needed it, when they needed it. Now it's slowly being destroyed despite the ever-increasing amounts of money provided by British taxpayers.

If you ask folks like Gordon Campbell, Ralph Klein, or Senator Michael Kirby, they'll tell you that the Canadian public health system is unaffordable and suffering an inevitable decline. Maybe you'll hear that the only way to reverse this trend is to introduce private sector 'innovations' and 'efficiencies'.

They'll be so persistent with their soundbites, you may be tempted to believe them. But before Canadians get seduced by slick marketing, we should look at other countries where these free market experiments are failing patients and taxpayers alike. If we want fair and cost-effective health care, Allyson Pollock shows us that the last thing to do is to abandon our public service to the private sector.

### BOOK

**NHS plc: the privatisation of our health care**  
by Allyson Pollock

continued from page 13

## Equity conference plans strategy

HEU's fightback heading into the next provincial election topped the agenda at this year's Equity Conference, held in mid-July, where more than 80 union members gathered from across the province to discuss action strategies aimed at holding the Campbell government to account.

The two-day conference brought together the union's four equity caucuses: First Nations, Ethnic Diversity, People with Disabilities, and Lesbians and Gays to create action plans for the next two years

and elect members to the four standing committees.

The equity caucuses were first formed in 1994, and were entrenched as standing committees at HEU's 1996 biennial convention.

Anyone wanting more information about the work of the caucuses or how to become involved should call the equity hotlines (see page 15) or Sharryn Modder at Provincial Office.

## LPN lobby working

LPNs won't be moving to a different bargaining unit according to the deputy minister of skills development and labour despite a proposal by the LPN Association of BC and the BC Nurses' Union to merge

the province's licensed practical nurses with registered nurses.

In a September 24 letter to a licensed practical nurse, deputy minister Rick Connolly wrote, "... government is not considering a change to the bargaining units under the *Health Authorities Act*."

That's good news for LPNs and the union's nursing team sub-committee, who have been lobbying intensely to remain in the health services and support-facilities subsector since the proposal to shift the bargaining unit first came to light in July.

Sub-committee members and LPN activists have contacted more than 3,000 of their colleagues around

the province since August, to talk about professional issues and concerns and to discuss the advantages – employment security, bumping provisions and return-to-work accommodations of being in their current bargaining unit.

## Better hospital food?

The quality and nutrition of the food provided in hospitals and residential care facilities are among people's most frequent concerns. In Britain, it's one of the top two public issues – along with cleanliness – voiced in public surveys regarding the National Health Service.

As health authorities continue to privatize and con-

tract out food services, complaints in BC are reflecting the same concerns.

Recently at Peace Arch Hospital in White Rock, HEU local chairperson Megan Korol took a taste of hospital fare to local MLA Gordon Hogg, who has good reason to ensure that healthy, appealing food is provided. The menu called the offering egg salad, but the product was less obvious.

Hogg's reaction is unknown but the hospital didn't appreciate the sharing.

Korol has had a letter of discipline for the "unauthorized removal of hospital property" placed on her personnel file. She's grieving the letter and asking for its authorized removal from her record.

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

### OCTOBER 21

United Nations Day

### NOVEMBER 11

Remembrance Day, HEU offices closed

### NOVEMBER 12

First day of Diwali – Festival of Lights

### NOV. 29 – DEC. 3

BC Federation of Labour convention

### DECEMBER 1

World AIDS Day

### DECEMBER 6

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

### DECEMBER 7

Hanukkah begins at sundown

### DECEMBER 10

UN Human Rights Day

### DECEMBER 25/26

Christmas Day/Boxing Day, HEU offices closed Dec. 27 and 28

### JANUARY 1

New Year's Day, HEU offices closed Jan. 3

## Festival celebrates extraordinary lives

Artists with disabilities who came to Vancouver from around BC and across Canada, England and Australia, kicked up a fuss in September at the *KickstART2 Festival – Extraordinary Lives, Extraordinary Art*. All kinds of artists with all kinds of disabilities – physical, mental, intellectual – were represented. Audiences of all abilities enjoyed music, dance, comedy, theatre and visual art, and participated in workshops on singing, storytelling, doll-making, and more.

The first KickstART festival held in Vancouver in 2001 broke ground. The disability arts movement is new, and KickstART was the first international festival of disability arts in Canada. At that time, the fledgling Society for Disability Arts and Culture (S4DAC), under the leadership of artistic director Geoff McMurchy and supported by an energetic board of directors that included such people as filmmaker Bonnie Klein and local labour activist Joan Meister, dared to believe that such a festival was possible. And then they made it happen.

KickstART2 was hardly resting on the laurels of the first festival, mind you. An energetic focus on local talent brought out some fantastic acts (among them singers Jennie Emery and Moreen Meriden, writer Kagan Goh, performer James Sanders, mixed abilities choirs and bands), to complement shows from the likes of US performer David Roche and UK's Nasty Girls.

For many, the three days culminated perfectly with Ontario activist Catherine Frazee's keynote address, where she pointed out the power of culture in the disability movement, a power that is only recently being unleashed to move people with disabilities beyond issues of accessibility to the power of community.

"We've seen the future and it's NASTY" read the fluorescent stickers from the Nasty Girls sported by many festival goers. The Nasty Girls' serious irreverence raised guffaws of recognition from people with disabilities, while new storytellers gave us moments of grace, and roving musician Stewart Brinton's saxophone provided an ongoing soundtrack.

The setting at the Roundhouse put all of this against a background of remarkable visual art. The exhibit 'Extraordinary Lives' brought together 21 artists from around Western Canada,

with art that addressed their lives as people with disabilities. The images these artists chose ranged from three dimensional portraits to a giant domino game about poverty (the dominant reality for people with disabilities) to a lighthearted look at the limbic system and Imelda Mermaid, a woman with no feet contemplating her shoes.

Will there be a KickstART3? Most definitely, say organizers. The only question is whether next year is too soon. Although, if the energy at this year's event is any indication, there will be even more to choose from in 2005.

• For more information on S4DAC and the KickstART festivals, go to <http://www.s4dac.org>.

### ARTS FESTIVAL

#### KickstART2 International Festival of Disability Arts and Culture

reviewed by Emma Kivisild

• Emma Kivisild is an artist and writer with Multiple Sclerosis living in Vancouver.



Toronto dancer and "roll" model Spirit Synott has been performing across Canada on two wheels since 1999.

## IN MEMORIAM

### Member loses long fight with cancer

After a long fight with cancer **Silvia Celina Cihelka** passed away April 15, 2004 in Maple Ridge, BC.

Silva was born in Mexico City and worked in the food and nutrition department at Ridge Meadows Hospital.



**CIHELKA**

For a time she also worked at Creekside Manor as an activity worker where she entertained the elderly residents and taught Spanish at Alouette Manor.

Remembered as a fun loving person among her co-workers, Silva could always be counted on to tell a joke, cheer up those around her, and wear a smile.

She is sadly missed by all those who were touched by her happy-go-lucky ways.

### Evergreen activist dies unexpectedly

**Marilynne Ann Fidler**, housekeeping aide and union activist from the Evergreen local in White Rock, died unexpectedly this past spring in her 57th year.

Marilynne was instrumental during the HEU organizing drive at Evergreen Baptist Home in 1986 and worked as a member of the executive in many different capacities.

For 10 years, during her 27 years of service to the employer, Marilynne opened her home and made pies by the hundreds to support the Evergreen Local's annual bake and garage sale, which raised almost \$2,000 annually for Alzheimer disease research and equipment for Evergreen Baptist Home.

When Evergreen announced in 2003 that it was contracting out all health care support staff, Marilynne worked tirelessly to raise community awareness and convince the employer to reconsider its decision, to no avail. And it was Marilynne who orchestrated the candle-light vigil in front of the facility to mourn the last shift.

Sadly, Marilynne died one year to the day the last HEU support service worker left Evergreen.

### Retired member passes on

Retired HEU member **Sarah Patricia "Pat" Davies** passed away in late April at the age of 74.

Pat worked at Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops for more than 20 years.

Originally from Wales, where she trained as a nurse's aide, Pat immigrated to Canada in the early 50's.

She was chair of her local and will be remembered as a strong union activist who was a tenacious advocate for her many co-workers.

Pat is deeply missed by all her friends, family and former colleagues.

## RECENT RETIREMENTS

### Barb Higgins

Congratulations to **Barb Higgins**, community support worker and psych aide, who retired from the Salmon Arm branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association this summer.

A committed member of the HEU for about 12 years, Barb was a shop steward in her local and a member of the occupational health and safety committee. Her plans are to travel RV style and enjoy her retirement.

### Audrey Hodson

Care aide **Audrey Hodson** worked her last shift in May after 20 years on the job at Summerland Lodge. During that time she held the local offices of chair, warden, trustee and conductor.

Co-workers says she never missed a colleague's birthday and will be remembered by everyone for her thoughtfulness and kindness to all. She plans to spend time traveling, gardening, and spending more time with her four grandchildren.



**FIDLER**

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# GUARDIAN

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

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Lower Mainland 604.456.7192

### PRESS 1



### First Nations

First Nations members would like to hear from you! Please call if you would like to help educate our union brothers and sisters on issues that affect First Nations people.

### PRESS 2

### Ethnic Diversity



One union, many colours! Working across our differences! To participate, please call and leave us your name!

### PRESS 3



### People with disabilities

If you are on WCB, LTD, or if invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.

[www.alberni.net/PeopleWithDisAbilities](http://www.alberni.net/PeopleWithDisAbilities)

### PRESS 3



### Lesbians and Gays

For support: afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination.

[www.pridepages.org](http://www.pridepages.org)

ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

## Talk to us Toll-Free!

You can call any HEU office toll-free to deal with a problem or get information. It's fast, easy and free.

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• 1-800-663-5813

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• Prince George  
1-800-663-6539

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**Vancouver Island Offices**

• Victoria Site

1-800-742-8001

• Comox Site

1-800-624-9940

**Kootenay Office**

• Nelson  
1-800-437-9877



# DECEIVE BC

PROMISES MADE. PROMISES BROKEN.

## What they SAID ... What they DID:

**Before the last election Gordon Campbell said,** “I’m not tearing up any agreements.”

... **BUT WITH BILL 29**, he ripped up health care agreements in what the *Globe and Mail* described as “an act of legislative vandalism.”

**Gordon Campbell also said,** “I am for free, open, collective bargaining.”

... **BUT WITH BILL 37** he imposed a contract on health care workers and legislated a 15 per cent wage rollback.

**Campbell promised that** his government would “recognize the value” of HEU members’ work, and stated their work would be “more rewarding and fulfilling.”

... **THEN, HIS HEALTH AUTHORITIES** fired more than 8,000 health care workers, contracted out their work at half the wages, and imposed wage rollbacks on the rest.

**Campbell also promised that,** “We are going to end government feel-good advertising.”

... **BUT FROM THE BC BUDGET** to the Olympics, from health care to education, the Campbell Liberals have saturated the airwaves with feel-good ads. With their latest campaign, “Achieve BC”, they’ve proven they won’t hesitate to spend your money on their re-election campaign.

*To be continued in the next Guardian*

## May 17, 2005: Hold them to account!

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