

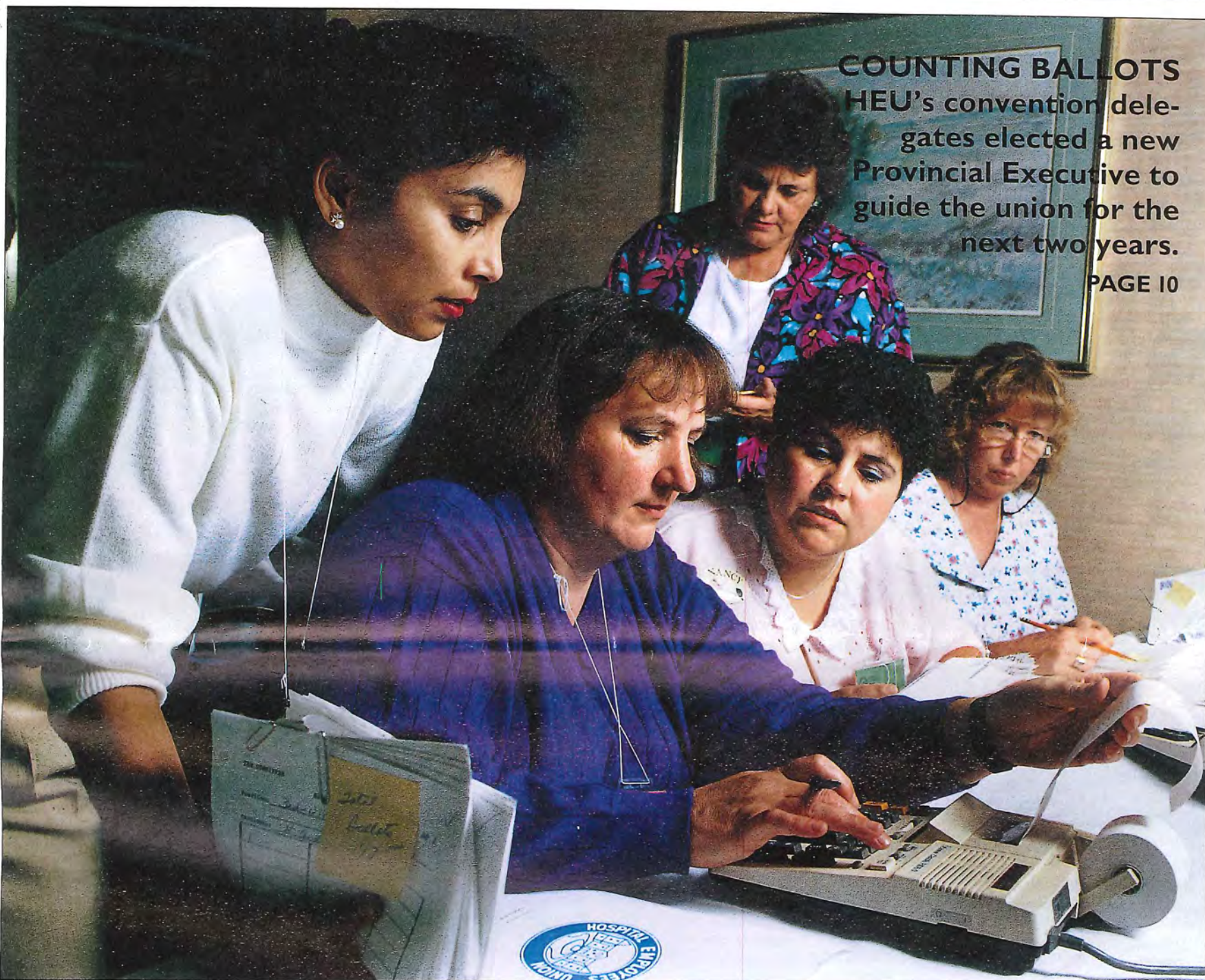
Guardian



VOL. 10 NO. 5

THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1992



COUNTING BALLOTS
HEU's convention delegates elected a new Provincial Executive to guide the union for the next two years.

PAGE 10

KATE WILLIAMS PHOTO

TABULATING RESULTS: Among those counting the votes were (left to right) Lisa Sami, Kathy Dunn, Gery McIntyre, Nancy Harbicht, and Janice Power.



UNKNOWN REFORMER 17

18TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Victoria's tight funding policies are undermining quality care with a province-wide wave of bed closures and layoffs. HEU convention delegates vowed to take action in their locals, their communities and across the province to protect quality care and jobs.

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NEW LABOUR CODE

Tremendous improvements, but problems for HEU.

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HELPING THOSE LAID OFF

HEU's efforts to win aid for those hit by layoffs.

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'CLOSER TO HOME' STRATEGY

Health unions warn Victoria on strategy for change.

PAGE 4

Frontline workers must have a role in reshaping the health care system

HEU delegates from several northern locals were able to sit down Nov. 25 with premier Mike Harcourt and health minister Elizabeth Cull to discuss the funding crisis hitting our northern hospitals.

They told the government how the funding freeze is hurting patients in our health care system. They presented petitions from their communities and appealed for enough funds to maintain services while a transition plan to bring services "closer to home" is implemented.

The dialogue we started that day is an important first step. It's vital for frontline health workers and government leaders to work at solutions together.

Many of the current problems flow from the government's concern about "overutilization" of northern hospitals.

It's true that northern communities use their hospitals a much higher rate



COMMENT

by CARMELA ALLEVATO

than southern communities. But don't blame the patients for that! Don't punish them with bed closures!

Those rates reflect the fact the hospitals are almost the only source of health services in these communities. Bed closures and layoffs which occur before community services are in place amount to a cut in services — it's that simple.

HEU supports the philosophy of moving to a "closer to home" model. To ensure that a new system provides equal or better care for British Columbians, the transition to a new model must be planned.

Health care workers must have a role in that planning process. Mike

Harcourt and Elizabeth Cull said they agree with that view.

The government's continued determination to hold down the deficit at all costs means it won't be easy to protect quality health care. We'll keep pushing Victoria to put the needs of British Columbians first.

But our Nov. 25 meeting proved the possibility of working with Victoria to ensure a better health care system emerges.

With this year-end issue, I want to wish all members, staff and friends of the HEU a happy holiday season and a Happy New Year.

The challenges confronting our union continue to multiply, but our members keep rising to the challenge.

A case in point is the very effective work done by our three main convention committees — the Resolutions Committee, the Constitutional Amendments Committee and the Tabulation Committee. The 18th Biennial Convention set out a heavy agenda. We're fighting to protect our health care system. We're also determined to improve the working lives of our members with action on workload and educational programs on issues like homophobia and violence against women.

Those are big jobs, but HEU members are up to it.

Guardian

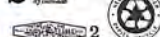
"In humble dedication to all those who toil to live."

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Letters

The Guardian welcomes letters to the editor. Please be brief. Write to 2006 W. 10th Ave., Vancouver V6J 4P5.

Double standard in media coverage?

Watching this dispute between the B.C. Medical Association and the government over Bill 71 has been interesting.

There is nothing very revolutionary about setting a billing cap if B.C. is the seventh province to do so. What I find the most interesting though, is the double standard that seems so prevalent in the editorial content and the public opinions expressed in the media.

In the spring, when the low-wage earning Hospital Employees' Union members were on a legal strike to better their lot, the press ran heart-rending stories every day about people needing operations.

The fact that 625 hospital beds have been closed in the last ten months for lack of funds doesn't seem to matter. And what about the health care workers who have been laid off?

Now this same public opinion is encouraging doctors who do not have the right to strike, and

whose skills we needed so badly in the spring, to withhold their services for as long as it takes, not to negotiate a contract but rather to force legislation to be rescinded and then re-written.

LASLO SOLTESZ,
Kamloops

• Reprinted from the Kamloops News.

Australian health workers seek links

In October, the Health Services Union of Australia was faced with the election of an extremely conservative, anti-union state government.

Their industrial relations policy is probably the most serious attack on our workers' wages and conditions — and the union movement — that we have ever witnessed in this country.

Our ability to fight industrially to protect our members' jobs, wages and conditions will be severely restricted due to some horrendous and positively Dickensian legislation.

I am writing to seek your assistance in providing us with information on your strategy in your recent dispute.

The experience of unions like the HEU will be invaluable to us here in Australia.

JAN ARMSTRONG,
State Secretary,
Victoria, Health
Services Union
of Australia

Don't tell me where to shop

I was an LPN/nurse aide in extended care units for nine years. Like many others, I ended up on long-term disability.

Through the total devastation of losing my job, my income and coping with illness, I was and always will be grateful to the union for the support they gave me. Without the union, none of us would have our disability pension to live on.

Reading *The Guardian*, I see much discontent among the members on several issues, but particularly in regard to our politics and even to cross-border shopping.

The word union to me has always meant freedom. The union has fought long and hard, making many positive advances to allow everyone free

thought and speech, along with a good standard of living.

Some of our funds may go to support women's rights and abortion. There are some who may disagree with this. They have different views, religious or otherwise, yet they can respect the decisions that others make and have to live with.

We all do what is right for our survival. Therefore, I feel we should have the right as responsible adults to think and choose for ourselves.

No one should be telling us what political party we should belong to, how we should vote or where we should be doing our shopping.

Being on disability, I resent the latter in particular. My income is based on a wage I earned five years ago. There are no increases and it will only spread so far. That is why there are so many people falling beneath the poverty line.

I certainly don't feel we need the Union Creed thrown in our faces to make us feel guilty about where we shop.

When we start dictating to others what they

should do, we cease to be a unified support group and become a dictatorship. Haven't we already seen this in our present government? The result will always be rebellion by our people.

At least in *The Guardian* we are free to express what we feel.

P. COOK,
Surrey

• The Union Member's Creed, which concludes with an appeal to buy Canadian, union-made products, appeared in the Letters column in last year's October-December issue.



What we're up to

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

Malaspina members okay new pact

HEU members at Nanaimo's Malaspina Lodge used the threat of a strike vote to beat back employer concession demands and win the Pricare standard agreement in a new contract ratified Oct. 1.

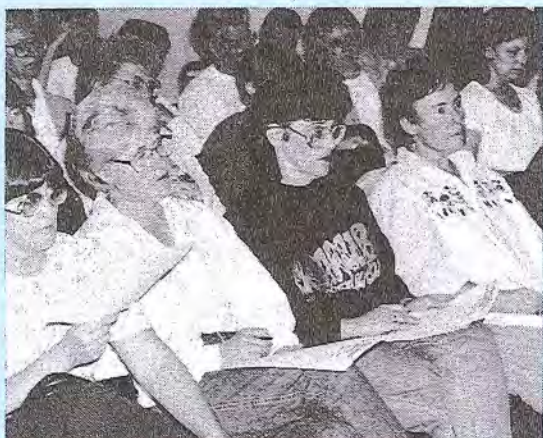
When bargaining began, the employer tabled 64 pages of rollbacks and refused to even consider the Pricare standard. But the threat of job action forced the boss to take a more realistic approach. A new agreement — with three minor variations like the printed size of the contract — was quickly reached.

The new deal marks a long struggle — which included strike action — by lodge workers to win standard industry contract conditions. In 1987, workers were making \$6.64 an hour.

Sechelt's St. Mary's named best by Chatelaine

A lot of HEU Sechelt local members are beaming, says local chairperson Tom Ray, after St. Mary's was recognized as one of the 12 Canadian hospitals that excel in an Oct. Chatelaine magazine article.

Named "small but excellent," the 88-bed facility won top marks for its low-risk obstetrics, psychi-



READY TO RATIFY: HEU Malaspina Lodge local members listen intently to their bargaining committee's recommendation to accept terms of a new agreement. HEU has completed all but a handful of outstanding contracts.

atric day care, diabetes clinic, and geriatric and palliative care programs.

While pointing out the focus of the article was on doctors and administrators, Ray said workers were really happy with the recognition. "It's a small hospital, and people have a sense of ownership," he said.

HEU members at Vancouver's Grace Hospital have reason to be proud too. Also named to the top 12, their hospital was recognized for its innovative maternity care.

More money for some lab clerks

A new benchmark has been developed for clerks who work in the accessioning area of laboratories.

HEU took up the issue as the result of a job review request from

Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. An award in 1991 ordered a new benchmark.

Many accessioning clerks are paid at the clerk III, R5 rate. The new benchmark clarifies the duties and establishes an R7 pay rate.

Affected members should contact their servicing representatives to obtain the upgrade.

Dues decrease effective November

Union financial secretary Mary LaPlante has notified employers of the dues reduction that was approved at convention.

The decrease, from 2.5 to 2.1 per cent of gross salary, should be reflected on members' paycheques for the first full pay period in November.

Cont. on page 4

Ponderosa members strike to defeat concessions

HEU members at Ponderosa Lodge in Kamloops, who've been without a contract since March 31, 1991, took job action Nov. 25 to fight concession demands from their hardline employer and to press for a negotiated contract settlement.

The 140 union members borrowed from the creative job action tactics used so effectively by HEU to win a fair master contract settlement with health employers in the spring. While patient care for the 193 elderly lodge

residents was maintained, members were pulled off the job throughout the day. They also leafletted the homes of lodge board members and in the community.

BCNU members at Ponderosa began strike action at the same time to press their demands for a new agreement.

Union members have vowed to continue their surprise tactics that maintain patient care while putting maximum pressure on the bosses until they win the industry-standard deal.

Ponderosa workers have said an overwhelming no to concessions in two strike votes. But their bosses still press on with rollback de-

mands affecting benefits and the entire classification system that are designed to break the industry-wide pattern of contract settlements.

Lockout notice was served on HEU Nov. 23 — further proof that the employer isn't interested in a negotiated settlement.

The first step in the employer's concessions strategy was to switch bargaining agents, dumping the Health Labour Relations Association and signing on with the Continuing Care Employee Relations before the last contract expired.

The employer now is seeking to ditch long-standing contract clauses negotiated under HLRA.



FRANK TALK: Labour minister Moe Sihota promised HEU convention delegates Bill 19 would be dead with NDP's new labour law, but HEU fears essential service aspects of the law may be worse than the old legislation.

New labour code a 'flawed' step ahead

The New Democrat government in Victoria has made good on its promise to replace Bill 19 with a new labour code that does much to restore fairness in labour relations but may further limit HEU's ability to exert pressure on employers.

The B.C. legislature was called back in late October to deal with the new legislation, which is also known as Bill 84.

"The new labour code takes a modern approach, built on mutual respect and understanding," labour minister Moe Sihota said when Bill 84 was introduced. HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato praised the bill as a big step forward for union organizing, but added that the new code does have some defects.

"The restoration of automatic certification, the new anti-scab law and many other changes are major steps forward," Allevato said.

"These changes go a long way to restore fundamental rights destroyed by the Vander Zalm Social Credit government with Bill 19.

"The anti-scab provisions are very important. Collective bargaining rights are meaningless if employers can simply smash a strike and walk away from their unionized employees by hiring strike-breakers," she added.

Most of the provisions in Bill 84 were agreed to by a committee of three lawyers, including one representing labour and another representing business.

Bill 19, which contained many provisions designed to hobble unions and was boycotted by B.C. organized labour, was drawn up in secret by the Vander Zalm government.

The new labour code will be similar in many respects to the labour code which operated before Bill 19 was passed in 1987. The Industrial Relations Council will again be known as the Labour Relations Board.

Allevato said HEU has two areas of concern with Bill 84. One is the

government's decision not to include sectoral bargaining in the new code. Sectoral bargaining makes it easier for unions in unorganized industries to organize and sign contracts.

"This decision shuts the door on home care workers, daycare workers and many others. We must continue to press for these changes," Allevato said.

The other area where Bill 84 concerns HEU is its provisions covering essential services.

While this part of the law contains some improvements from Bill 19, Bill 84 prohibits strikes until essential services levels are set, and there is no provision to simplify the lengthy, expensive and cumbersome process of setting essential services levels. As well, if a strike does not begin at the end of 72-hour strike notice, the strike notice must be served again.

In the area of organizing, Bill 84 restores automatic union certification where 55 per cent or more of employees sign union cards. Certification votes will take place when between 45 and 55 per cent of employees sign the union cards. A first contract may be imposed by either arbitration or mediation, once employees have taken a strike vote.

Unions will again have the right to negotiate "secondary boycott" provisions in contracts. This will allow protection for members who refuse to cross picket lines or handle strike work.

B.C. will have an anti-scab law for the first time. The law will prevent employers from hiring replacement workers during a strike. At press time, employers' organizations were demanding deletion of this provision.

New essential service rules undermine HEU's job action rights

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TALKING UNION: The autumn round of introductory shop stewards' seminars wound up in Nanaimo late in October with a two-day session for stewards from North Vancouver Island locals. Staff member Karen Dean (right) conducted workshops on contract interpretation and grievance handling.

4

What we're up to

Cont'd from page 3

HEU urges locals to join labour councils

HEU locals still not affiliated to the local labour council should get busy and sign up, says the union's Provincial Executive.

Locals with fewer than 100 members can have their per capita paid by the Provincial Office, noted secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato in a circular to locals Oct. 28.

Labour council support is a big help when it comes to fighting bed closures or cuts in the health care system, and other unions frequently need support of HEU members in their battles for fairness.

Big parking rate boosts add to Royal Inland workers' woes

First HEU members at Kamloops' Royal Inland Hospital had to cope with bed closures, layoffs and increased workloads because of government funding cuts.

Now, in a bid to raise more money, hospital administrators have hit them with massive parking rate boosts that will cost workers up to \$240 more a year.

Local chairperson Donisa Bernardo says the move adds to the hospital's serious staff morale problem.

Free trade video features Maude Barlow

The Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council, which includes several HEU member locals, has produced an important new video on the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Featuring Maude Barlow, of Action Canada Network, the video touches on important issues of the impact of the deal, the consequences of rejecting it and an alternative vision for our country.

Professionally produced, the video is 40 minutes long.

The council promises it will "shock and inspire" your audience. Price is \$16.

Copies may be ordered from Video Wave Productions Inc., 275 Eighth St., Courtenay, B.C., V9N 1N4.

Poverty fighters open Surrey office

Widespread poverty is the dark, flip side to the urban sprawl of Surrey, B.C.'s fastest growing community.

The fact is that Surrey has more poor people per capita than Vancouver.

End Legislated Poverty, a social and economic justice group supported by HEU, has just opened a new Surrey office.

Union to press for fair pay for biomedical technologists

HEU is stepping up efforts to win fair pay for biomedical engineering technologists who make less than a similar HSA position for the exact same work.

Frank Torok, of HEU's Vancouver General local, joined Provincial Office for a two-week period late in October to help with classification analysis and developing revised benchmarks.

The union has also requested that locals forward the names and

ELP will be organizing low-income people and providing community outreach, information and lobbying services. The office is at #7 - 10667, 135A St., Surrey, 583-7363.

Pine Grove workers win industry standard

The union's 50 members at Kamloop's Extendedicare/Pine Grove Lodge also ratified a new, industry-standard contract Oct. 20.

The deal provides for special wage adjustments to bridge the gap with the master agreement.

Workers will receive wage increases of 52 cents per hour in the first year, 31 cents plus one per cent in the second, and a reopener in the third. Pay equity increases follow the industry pattern.

Unlike negotiations at another Kamloops care facility, Ponderosa Lodge, the Pine Grove deal was achieved without a strike vote.

addresses of biomedical technologists, so that they can be directly involved in the classification appeal and development of new benchmarks.

Locals have also been asked to identify any related jobs that involve the set up, maintenance and repair of diagnostic equipment, but which are not officially called biomedical engineering technologists.

For more information, biomed technologists should contact Provincial Office classification secretary Carol Arnold at 734-3431 or toll-free 1-800-663-5813.

Unions warn Victoria on rush to reform

B.C.'s health care unions have called on the NDP government to reconsider the tight money policies which have caused bed closures and layoffs throughout central and northern B.C.

The appeal came in a joint response to the government's proposed strategy paper for reform of the health care system.

In response, HEU joined with other unions in calling for changes in the health care reform process to ensure a voice for health care workers.

The unions emphasized their support for entrenchment of the principles of medicare in provincial legislation, a major recommendation of last year's royal commission.

As well, the brief which HEU, the B.C. Nurses' Union, the Health Sciences Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the United Food and Commercial Workers submitted to health minister Elizabeth Cull urges the government to reconsider its tight money policies.

After the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs delivered its report a year ago, the government

began a review process which included a ministerial advisory committee which had representation from HEU.

A document setting out proposed reforms was going to the B.C. cabinet in November for a decision on health care reform. The union brief calls for improvements on the reform document, which was produced by the Ministry of Health.

"One reform health care workers would like to see as a priority is giving health care providers input into the delivery of quality health care services - both at the ministry level and at the care giving level," the union brief said.

It calls for elected hospital boards, pay equity, collective bargaining rights, restrictions on professional bodies to prevent double jeopardy discipline involving salaried health professionals, and an end to contracting out and medicare premiums.

"We challenge the government to re-examine its fiscal policy and the notion of deficit reduction in a time when much of the province is suffering from recession, affecting the health of communities," the brief said.

Program ready to aid victims of cutbacks

A labour adjustment program to assist laid off health care workers find new work or get retraining is beginning to take shape.

Although talks between health care unions and the provincial government on the program are not yet complete, the Ministry of Health has sent a memorandum to 136 health care workers, including 72 HEU members, who have lost their jobs or been reduced to casual from permanent status, outlining their "options" as part of the labour adjustment program.

Health care workers were served layoff notices as early as May 1992. However, serious consultation between the Ministry of Health, the Health Labour Relations Association and the three health care unions - HEU, the B.C. Nurses' Union and the Health Sciences Association - did not begin until August.

The objective of the program is to maintain jobs for health care workers through options such as early retirement, relocation or retraining, and by ensuring that displaced workers have access to vacancies in health care facilities across the province.

Under the program, health care facilities that are hiring are expected to give preference before outside applicants to qualified workers who have been laid off from other facilities. Hospitals are

required to report to the ministry any vacancies which arise, and displaced workers will be notified of the vacancies.

Training assistance will be made available to displaced workers.

Workers who register in a long-term care aide course, medical office assistant course or any course from an established list will qualify for financial help.

Laid off workers who find work in another geographical location, whether in a hospital or outside the health care field, will be reimbursed for their relocation expenses in line with government guidelines.

Transitional financial assistance will be made available to laid off workers through a Supplementary Unemployment Benefits (SUB) plan. The SUB plan will top-up unemployment insurance benefits to 85 per cent of the worker's wage before layoff for up to 17 weeks.

In order to open up jobs in the acute care sector, the ministry will offer financial incentives to workers aged 58 or 59 in the same hospitals and classifications as workers facing layoff. These workers qualify for an unreduced pension if their retirement results in the recall of a laid off worker.

HEU, BCNU and HSA are continuing to press for a better labour adjustment program.

Labour

Swing a hammer, belt out a poem

By DAN KEETON

WHEN Geoff Goodfellow read his poetry to Australian hospital workers in the desert mining town of Kalgoorlie, he pulled the usual surprise attack.

"I stopped first all the administration staff and hit them with a reading and then I moved from nurses station to nurses station, stopping nurses, doctors, cleaners, anyone that was within listening distance or sight. They just absolutely loved it," the quiet-spoken Aussie relates.

Goodfellow is a poet with a difference. To begin with, he's a guy who didn't read a book between the ages of 15 and 32. Nowadays, he probably reads a lot, and writes even more. And what he writes is poetry about fellow working people in their language, not in the rarefied lingo of the kind of poetry foisted on unwilling students.

Goodfellow's venues are different, too, from those of many colleagues. Most of his performances are at worksites, often through unannounced visits.

"I guess it's often that surprise attack too that can quickly break down the preconceptions people may have about art and about poetry," he explains.

"Working class people often expect poetry to be couched in the same sort of language that Shakespeare and Byron and Keats used, but people don't walk around talking that kind of language. And when they can hear poetry that they can understand, about issues that affect them, then they may grind to a halt and listen."

Goodfellow was in Vancouver last month as a featured artist at the city's Writers and Readers Festival. He wasn't difficult to pick out

among the crowd in the Hotel Vancouver when I went to interview him. Dressed in jeans and denim shirt, with close-cropped, fading red hair, his lean, fit frame made him look every inch the former amateur boxer and building contractor he had been in a previous incarnation.

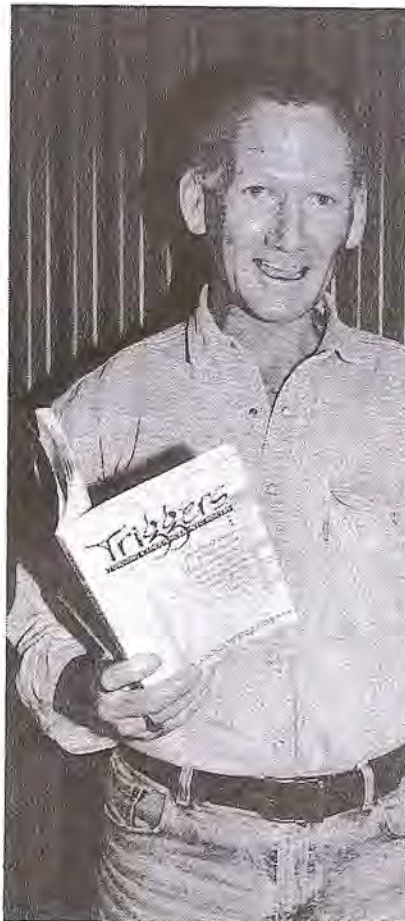
That was before he was sidelined by a back injury in 1982. Told by doctors he wouldn't walk again without an operation, "I basically saw myself out of hospital, went home and crawled around on my hands and knees for about 18 months. It was during that period of time that I picked up a book of poetry that had been left lying on the floor by one of my sons at home, and started reading that."

Goodfellow figured he could do that too, and began doing so.

He found his first audience among the roughnecks who frequented "the toughest bar in South Australia." Goodfellow was working there as a bouncer in 1984, and discovered he could avoid bloodshed and bad feelings by communicating with, rather than whacking, unruly patrons.

"I gained a huge audience of people, so that when I came to work each night as a bouncer they'd say, 'What have you got in your pocket tonight?' Those are blokes that are really heavily tattooed, that are working on building sites, working on labouring jobs in factories, and unemployed blokes, petty drug dealers, a wide range of working-class people."

Goodfellow's connection with the trade union movement came in 1987, when he was reciting at the Semaphore Workers Club in Adelaide. Afterwards, a man came up



GOODFELLOW

and asked for six copies of Goodfellow's latest book.

"Six books!" I says, 'What a' ya gonna do, eat 'em?' And he said, 'No, I'm secretary of the Construction, Mining and Energy Union. Our union has a policy of promoting poetry in our journal occasionally, and our members would love to read that stuff.'"

The members evidently loved it so well, the union made Goodfellow writer-in-residence in 1990. He now has four books of poetry under his belt.

Not that he's achieved that acclaim without opposition. The head of the Chamber of Commerce for South Australia, Lindsay Thompson, termed Goodfellow an international embarrassment for his practice of reciting on worksites. Goodfellow's response was typical. He wrote a poem, *Poetry in the Workplace* (abridged here):

They had their chance

*to learn poetry at school he said
it's a bit late now*

*...& maybe Mister Thompson knows
a sonnet has just fourteen lines
but would Mister Thompson know
the weight of workers'
steel-capped boots*

*or just that weight of coin
required to replace a pair?*

*& would Mister Thompson know
how families deal with death
when a scaffolder takes a dive?*

*would Mister Thompson then respond
to a union call for increased safety?*

*or would Mister Thompson simply say
it's a bit late now.*

As challenging as it is to the established order, Goodfellow's poetry sometimes confronts the attitudes of workers themselves. On worksites labourers hear the visitor's views on the macho attitude and its by-product, domestic violence.

"Sometimes you'll get hecklers. But normally by the time I've finished a poem, the heckler has shut right up. Many of the men I've talked to about domestic violence have come up afterwards and said, 'Yea, there's a major problem and I'm glad that you're talking about it.'"

One rough-looking man told Goodfellow after a reading: "I wasn't going to listen to you today, cause I thought you were going to be some poofter, but that poem on domestic violence was the one that struck me as the strongest piece." He said, 'I work here until four, knock off and go down to the pub, have about six beers. I've got to drive out to Elizabeth (which is about a 25-kilometre drive) through heavy traffic and when I walk into the kitchen, if my tea isn't on the kitchen table, I'd just normally give her a backhand and say - Get it on the table.' And he said, 'Things'll be different tonight, that's really made me think about what I'm doing in my life.'"

Goodfellow figures about 40 per cent of his readings are for college and middle-class audiences. "I don't want to talk to just working-class people. I want to educate those middle-class Australians and ruling-class Australians to the struggles and aspirations and the pain and the suffering that a lot of people endure on a day to day basis."

• Geoff Goodfellow has four books out, published by Australia's Wakefield Press. At least some titles are available at Duthie Books in Vancouver, and a deal is in the works with a Canadian publisher.



SEAN GRIFFIN PHOTO

UNION LOCK-IN: Striking members of the B.C. Nurses' Union and the Vancouver Municipal Employees' Union occupied the Salvation Army's Pender Detox Centre in Vancouver last month during a tough strike to win a new collective agreement. Standing their ground are (left to right) John McElroy and Reg Epp, VMREU; Fran Sutherland, BCNU; and Allan Stewart, VMREU.

NOTEBOOK

How the media saw HEU's strike



By GEOFF MEGGS

BEFORE, during and after HEU's lengthy job action this spring, local executives wrote to the Provincial Office complaining that our message wasn't getting out on television.

The union had committed substantial resources, including a province-wide television advertising campaign, to explain the union's view. It wasn't getting through. Why?

Some of the answers are contained in a fascinating study of television news coverage of the

HEU dispute produced by Simon Fraser University communications student Julius Fisher.

(Fisher is an old friend of HEU. He helped produce our Heart of Health Care theatrical show in 1991.)

Fisher analyzed 40 television news reports broadcast on the three Lower Mainland stations between March 31 and April 25, 1992. His findings show just how right HEU locals were when they complained of media bias.

The HEU dispute received substantial coverage, racking up more than 195 minutes – just over three hours – of news coverage. Doctors, administrators and hospital public relations people dominated.

In the 40 newscasts analyzed, "not a single hospital worker was ever once asked to report on conditions in the hospital."

In the 22 newscasts which reported on the employers' estimate of the impact of the dispute, only three allowed a union rebuttal in the same show.

Eleven of the 40 newscasts focussed on ill patients giving their feelings about the dispute,

one of which concluded with the question "why should human beings have to suffer like this?"

The most incredible finding in the Fisher study involves pay equity, the critical issue in the dispute.

The total elapsed time of the news reports on our dispute was 195 minutes. The amount of time dedicated to pay equity was two minutes, five seconds, or 1.46 per cent.

The total time for personal stories of patients affected by the dispute was 13 minutes, 47 seconds.

What's the solution?

Fisher says we may have to lead reporters by the nose, actually producing sample television pieces of how to make our issues visual.

Not surprisingly, that's what many HEU members have suggested. They asked for tapes of the Heart of Health Care show to give

to friends, neighbours and their local cable channel.

If reporters won't do the job right, we may just have to do it for them.

Our pay equity message kept getting cut by reporters

Three nations join hands in fight against NAFTA

Trade unionists, community activists and politicians from three nations joined hands at the Peace Arch Oct. 18 to protest the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The rally, organized and sponsored by a wide range of groups including the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Washington State Labour Council and the Action Canada



JACKSON

Network, is the first of a continent-wide campaign linking groups in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

"We face a calculated assault on our living standards disguised as free trade," said keynote speaker Rev. Jesse Jackson. "The multinational corporations are seeking a way to maximize profits in the global economy."

"That means cutting wages, privatizing and deregulating whole industries and services, reducing the social safety net, expanding agribusiness at the expense of farmers and abandoning environmental standards."

The solution is solidarity, Jackson said, to raise Mexican and American workers to the standards enjoyed by unionized workers in Canada. He appealed particularly to Canadians to fight to defend our medicare system, which is seen as a beacon of hope south of the 49th parallel.

NDP leader Audrey McLaughlin told the 1,000 demonstrators her party is committed "to abrogate the Free Trade Agreement, say no to NAFTA and to continue to organize and ask Canadians to support us in that goal."

"It's time for the people to take back our countries, to say no to politicians who would sell out our countries in the name of profit and capital."

ON THE JOB



STEPHEN HOWARD PHOTO

FRONTLINE OF CHANGE: HEU Rainbow Gardens members Judy Crewe, Norma Sam, Simone Gallant, Bunt Cranmer, Alice Mitchell, Andy Vallee, Maggie Wrigley, Darlene Amos and daughter Kerry.

bannock are the regular fare, as is a regular schedule of native entertainment. A residents' council has also been formed to deal with any day-to-day problems.

Staff will receive formal training in native culture, to help them understand just "how much we care for our elders," Amos said.

Many Rainbow staff like Amos had worked previously at other facilities. So when problems cropped up with important workplace issues like scheduling, workload and job security, shortly after they were hired in mid-June, they knew it was time to join the health care union, HEU.

The organizing drive that Amos and others were part of resulted in a healthy discussion about the need to join a union. "Before we had a union, we didn't have time for proper breaks," Amos said.

Staff voted to join HEU at the beginning of August. By early October, they won the CCERA standard agreement as their first contract. Native views on aging were also part of bargaining, with the local pressing for expanded coverage for compassionate leave to fit their own cultural definition of family.

The commitment to native care is also reflected in the design and construction of the facility. Perched on a wooded hillside off the highway

to Tofino, Rainbow was designed like a native big house – wood construction, wide open spaces, and an emphasis on common areas.

The idea behind Rainbow Gardens dates back to the mid-1970's, when the native community first broached the idea of a special home for elders.

Now that the facility is meeting elders' care needs, Amos said Rainbow Gardens is serving as a model for use by tribal councils from across B.C.

New local members offer unique service

By STEPHEN HOWARD

WITH a first contract in hand, members of one of HEU's newest locals are in the forefront of cultural change in how native people care for their elders.

Rainbow Gardens, which opened in July – 18 years after local native leaders first began raising money – is a 30 bed multi-level care facility in Port Alberni designed especially to meet the long-term care needs of native elders in the surrounding community.

HEU steward Bunt Cranmer, who was hired in 1987 to coordinate the planning stages of the project, says the facility is a sign of how broader social and economic changes are affecting native families. Elders command much respect within both immediate and extended families. They're cared for in the home, she said, with compassion to maintain their dignity.

When it's time for an elder to die, members of their extended family are with them around the clock.

But Cranmer, a care aide, says economic pressures faced by many native families make it difficult – if not impossible – to continue the custom of home care.

The change will be slow and uneasy, Cranmer acknowledges. It will take time for native people to feel truly comfortable with placing elders in the facility.

It will also take time for elder residents to adjust to new surroundings. To date, five elders – from as far away as Bella Bella and the Queen Charlottes – reside in the facility.

Native culture and beliefs on aging are reflected in the type of care residents receive at Rainbow, says Darlene Amos, a care aide and the union's local chairperson. Rainbow's 35 HEU members, half native and half non-native, provide both extended and intermediate care in a different way.

Native meals like seafood and

New facility caters to the special needs of elders

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE!

UNION SOLIDARITY

CUPE president
Judy Darcy,
calls for united
action to defend
medicare.



9

LINKS WITH MEXICO

A Mexican
nurse tells
how free trade
is hurting
her people.



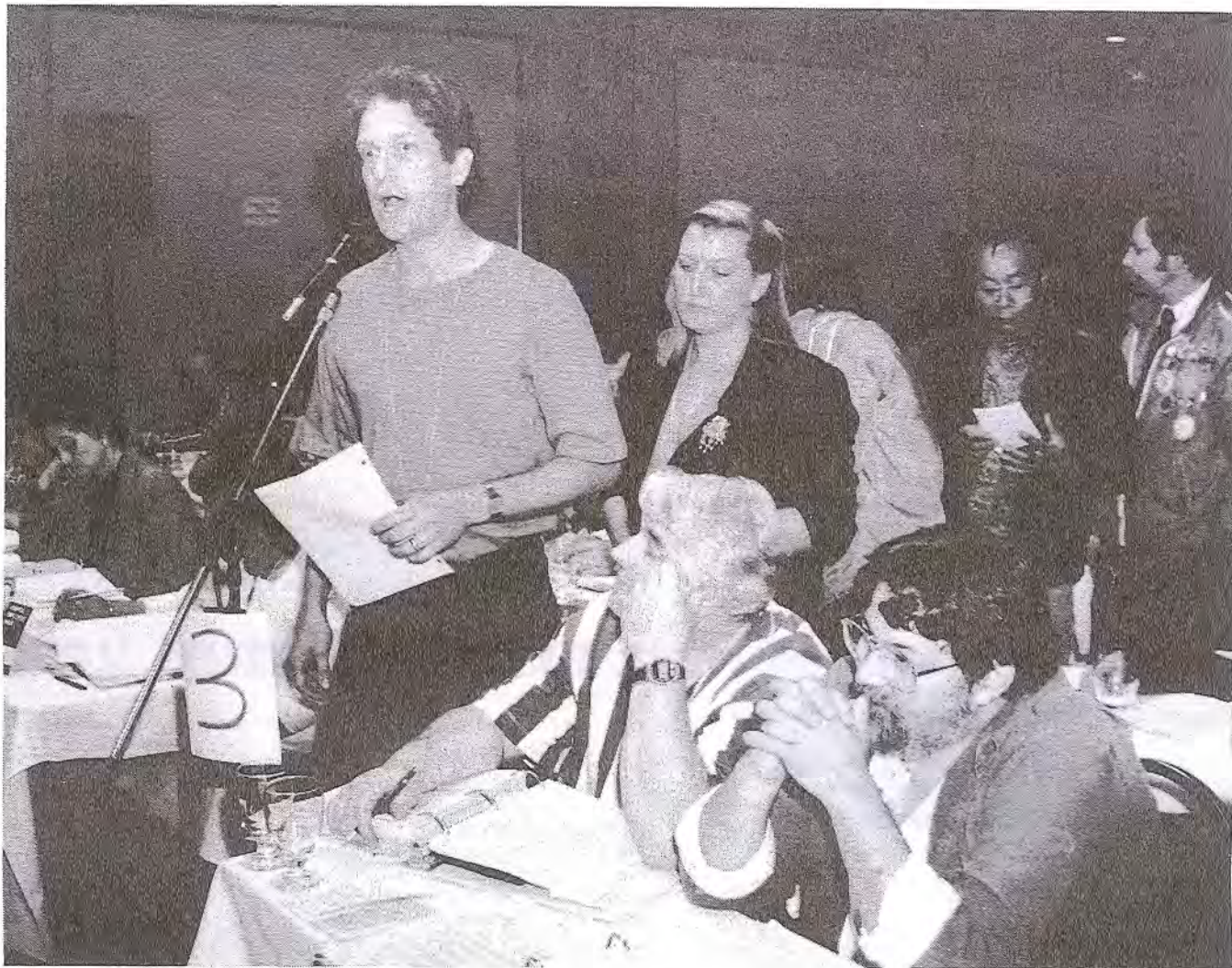
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CONVENTION '92 • THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

'This is our future'

Action on bed closures and layoffs

**'We have to be ready
to do what it takes.'
Delegates Mike Barker,
Vancouver General,
and Vicki Bertram,
Nanaimo, urge action
to protect quality care
and jobs during health
care restructuring.**



AN ACTION plan to protect health care and workers' rights during the current restructuring of B.C.'s health care system was at the top of the agenda at HEU's 18th biennial convention.

The motion passed after emotional debate in which delegates from locals already facing layoffs and bed closures warned a hushed convention hall that every HEU local will sooner or later face the problems of declining quality of care, bed closures and layoffs.

The delegates also passed a resolution committing HEU to work with other unions and community groups in actions, including job actions, to defend the principles of medicare, especially at the next federal election.

Delegates at first considered deleting the reference to job action, then voted overwhelmingly to reinstate it, recalling the vital role of job action during Operation Solidarity and the fight against Bill 19.

"This is perhaps the most important resolution to come to the floor," Shaughnessy delegate Blair Thomas said during debate on the resolution to deal with provincial health restructuring. "This is our future."

Shaughnessy hospital went through several sets of bed closures which were unopposed, Thomas said, but now the local has stood up to fight.

Delegates from other locals feeling the bite of restructuring, particularly locals in northern

B.C., also stood up and told their stories.

"We're in the fight of our lives in the North," said Colleen Fitzpatrick of the Prince Rupert local, listing the cuts that have hit her hospital this year. "What this does to a community is devastate it."

Elaine Pigeau of the Terrace local told how a community petition drive in the northwest coast town got 14,000 signatures to defend their hospital against bed closures last year, forcing the Socreds to back down.

"We stopped logging trucks, and we boarded fish boats to get signatures for our petition."

This spring, Mills Memorial Hospital is again under attack. As a result of this year's budget, beds have closed, HEU members lost their jobs and more than 500 people showed up at a rally to fight the cuts.

"I do not trust that this NDP government will provide proper funding to any hospital in the province."

Prince George delegate Nancy Lang had a blunt warning: "It's coming to you. This is just the tip of the iceberg."

Children's Hospital delegate Louise Hutchison said the Royal Commission on Health and Costs has called for the closure of 2,000 hospital beds, and warned that the health ministry supports this recommendation.

HEU's convention delegates pledged the union's resources to defend quality care and workers' jobs

HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato said the resolution, "gives the Provincial Executive direction over the next two years to challenge the provincial government."

The community campaigns in northwestern B.C. and elsewhere, which HEU has supported, are the model from which future campaigns will be developed, she added.

"This has been something those of us in the front line have been waiting for years," said Vernon delegate Tony Wildeman.

During debate on the resolution calling for action to defend the Canadian medicare principles of uni-

versality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration, delegates criticized both provincial and federal governments.

Lady Minto delegate Melanie Iverson, who sits on the B.C. ministerial advisory committee reviewing the Royal Commission, said the provincial government will not put the principles of medicare in provincial legislation.

Much of the debate concerned whether the resolution should include job action as a tactic to fight for medicare, but delegates favoured its inclusion.

"There may be times when we have to stare down the boss and the government," Allevato said.

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE!

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CONVENTION '92 • THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN B.C. HOSPITALS

"The provincial government can just walk in to any community they want and start slashing health care and not even have a single second thought about what they're doing."

ELAINE PIGEAU
MILLS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
TERRACE

"I can't tell you how ashamed and appalled I am when I come in to work in the morning and there's five or six or seven beds in the lobby and those people just aren't being looked after."

BARB WILKINSON
PENTICTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL

"If we at Shaughnessy want to maintain a hospital we're going to have to do a hell of a lot more and we're going to have to put our jobs on the line."

BLAIR THOMAS
SHAUGHNESSY HOSPITAL
VANCOUVER

"We're in a fight for our lives, we're in a fight for our jobs, and we're in a fight for our medical services."

CINDY RUSSELL
KITIMAT GENERAL HOSPITAL

"[The hospital] is discharging patients as soon as they get out of surgery – a lot of them could hardly walk out the door. A lot of those patients ended up coming back through emergency because they've no one to look after them and no home care."

MARY PAT WILEY
PRINCE GEORGE REGIONAL HOSPITAL

HEU 'up to challenge'

Although HEU members are seeing change everywhere from their own union to the workplace as a result of provincial and international forces, HEU president Bill Macdonald told convention delegates Oct. 6 that he is confident HEU members can meet the challenge.

"The rank and file membership of this union has proven again and again that there's more leadership ability in the smallest HEU local than there is in a dozen hospital boardrooms.

"When health employers told Victoria this spring that HEU rank and file members had no stomach for a battle, no ability to strike and no wish to fight for fairness, it was the grassroots members of this union who taught them a hard, hard lesson," Macdonald said.

"The collective agreement achieved by our union this year is much less than our membership deserves – but it is far, far more than health bosses thought they would have to pay."

The new NDP government is making major changes, including a new labour code, and reform of the health care system, which Macdonald said is taking place "in a way that is somewhat surprising and often unacceptable to us."

Macdonald recalled NDP leader Mike Harcourt's pledges to the last HEU convention to bring in a new labour code, take action on team nursing and make an all-out effort to defend medicare.

"I don't recall him saying anything about layoffs, cutbacks and underfunding," Macdonald said, "but I remember very well what I told him

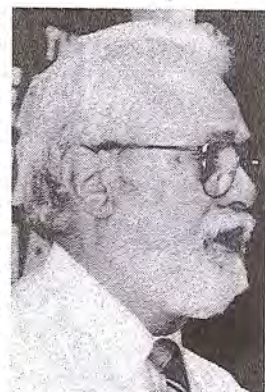
about our union and our independent attitude to political parties: I reminded him of our determination to participate in the political arena to advance our own union agenda." HEU faces trends such as the push for larger unions and bargaining agents. But these problems also include opportunities for organizing and having a voice in changes being made by the provincial government, he said.

On the national level, the Tory government in Ottawa is slashing contributions to health care.

"This is a direct result of the corporate pressure to cut social spending, reduce taxes and integrate our economy with the United States.

"It's part of the reason we face layoffs right across the province. The Tories must not be allowed to shirk their responsibilities for health care. Cuts to the funding formula must be restored – indeed the government must be changed," Macdonald said.

Macdonald, who has served as president for eight years, announced after he was re-elected that he will step down when his current term ends in 1994.



MACDONALD

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Union finances in good shape, LaPlante tells convention



LAPLANTE

Our long-term debt is being reduced and we have a healthy strike fund."

The good news carried over to convention deliberations, which featured a constitutional amendment reducing HEU's dues from 2.5 to 2.1 per cent of gross pay effective in the first November pay period.

"Believe it or not, it is felt that we can reduce

Although financial questions took a prominent place as usual at the 1992 HEU biennial convention, the news was more positive than in recent years.

"We are in a good financial position at year's end," which is how financial secretary Mary LaPlante summed up HEU's audited financial statements.

"Our cash account is no longer overdrawn.

the dues being paid by our members and still be able to offer the services, education and campaigns which our members want," LaPlante said in her report to convention.

The strike fund has a balance of \$5.8 million, and the debt which has been accruing to the strike fund since 1983 was repaid with interest earlier this year, LaPlante said.

This happened in spite of the great expense of bargaining in 1991 and 1992 under very difficult conditions, and the cost of this spring's job actions.

"It's time to say thanks to the membership for their support and one way of doing it is to reduce dues to a realistic level that we can live with and still maintain services."

LaPlante said that the new structure will allow the strike fund to continue to grow, while allowing the union

to pay for campaigns to defend the membership and for better education, communications and servicing for the members.

HEU's new organizing policy has helped the union continue to grow. HEU now has 234 locals with more than 33,000 members, she said.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT



FLOOR DEBATE: Queen's Park local delegate Phil McLeod (right) and St. Paul's Hospital local delegate Phyllis McDiarmid wait their turn as St. Paul's delegate Tom Knowles makes his point.

Convention cuts dues, increases rebates

THE issue of dues was at the top of HEU's convention agenda Oct. 5, but delegates voted to discuss the issue dead last.

They agreed with Victoria delegate Stan Hambley, who argued that the debate on dues should be postponed until the convention had resolved all matters with a serious cost implication.

So it was late in the day Oct. 9 before convention received the Provincial Executive's recommendation to reduce dues to 2 per cent of gross income from the current rate of 2.5 per cent.

Under the union's constitution, 25 per cent of dues income (or .5 per cent of each members' gross income) had been channelled into HEU's strike fund.

With that fund now holding more than \$6 million and the union's outstanding debts cleared off, delegates agreed a reduction was in order.

But the need to mount a major effort in defence of quality care and members' jobs during health care restructuring had dominated convention discussion.

In the end, delegates decided to reduce dues to 2.1 per cent of gross salary with .1 per cent of gross salary allocated to the strike fund.

That will leave the remainder to fund the many new HEU programs established by convention.

Notice of the dues change was sent to employers later that month.

The convention also voted to increase local rebates. This means that union locals will receive a larger share of dues income to finance their local activities.

Locals with 99 members or less will receive \$170 a month, up from \$150. Locals with 100 members and over will receive \$1.70 per member per month, up from \$1.50.

Members key to HEU success

HEU will continue to work together with other health care unions and with communities to fight bed closures, HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato told convention delegates.

Even if it means taking on the New Democrat provincial government, HEU will not flinch, Allevato said in her report, which was delivered on behalf of the Provincial Executive.

"It is unacceptable that decisions are being made about cutbacks behind closed doors," she said, "and it's only because HEU is there that communities are even hearing about them, and getting a chance to fight to preserve services."

While the new government has provided HEU with several disappointments, particularly its fiscal policy, Allevato said she can't imagine what problems HEU would face today if the Socreds or the Liberals had won last year's election.

In a wide-ranging report, Allevato said HEU will also face major changes with the disappearance of the anti-labour provisions of Bill 19 and the work of the Korbman Commission, which will examine HEU's call for a single bargaining agent in health care.

As HEU nears its 50th anniversary in 1994, she said the union is strong because it is democratic and bases its work on the needs and hopes of its members. This was most apparent in the most recent round of bargaining.

"The strategy adopted by the union wasn't adopted behind closed doors, detached from the

membership. It was based on the daily experiences of our membership in the workplace and it was carried out in a manner that reflected

the level of confidence and respect the leadership of this un-

SECRETARY-BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT



ALLEVATO

ion has for its members."

Allevato said HEU will continue to work hard to make sure the terms of collective agreements are respected. Many areas, such as pay equity, are still being negotiated by committees established under the Master Collective Agreement.

Allevato's appointment as secretary-business manager was ratified by convention delegates in a secret ballot.

'Make medicare an election issue'

Canada's medicare system is in mortal danger, says the president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and health care workers must be in the battle to save it.

Judy Darcy told HEU convention delegates that her union's spring campaign about the threat to medicare — which was supported by HEU in B.C. — sparked a strong response among Canadians, especially those in older generations who remember the hardships of life without universal access to care.

(HEU is affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress as the result of a special relationship with CUPE, which represents health workers in most other provinces.)

"Saving medicare must be the key issue in the election," Darcy said. "We must judge politicians by their stands."



MOUNTAIN MOVERS: CUPE president Judy Darcy urged closer ties between her union and HEU.

"In dealing with the North American Free Trade Agreement, we must show Canadians what free trade means for social programs and promote our progressive agenda for health care."

At the same time, issues like pay equity and violence in the workplace must be kept on the front burner.

She called for closer ties between HEU and CUPE. "We could move mountains together."

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE!

HEU ELECTS NEW PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE



Bill Macdonald
President



Mary LaPlante
Financial
Secretary



Carmela Allevato
Secretary-Business
Manager



Fred Muzin
1st Vice-
President



Ruby Hardwick
2nd Vice-
President



Tom Knowles
3rd Vice-
President



Maurice Smith
4th Vice-
President



David Ridley
5th Vice-
President



Colleen
Fitzpatrick
Senior Trustee

CONVENTION '92 • THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE



CONVENTION GAVEL was awarded to UBC local for its solidarity during last spring's job action.

Few decisions are as difficult for the HEU's Provincial Executive as the determination of which local should be awarded the convention gavel. At the end of each convention, the gavel is presented to delegates from the local which has best epitomized HEU's traditions of solidarity and militancy.

NOTE BOOK

This year, the gavel went to the UBC local, which had to strike three times while the rest of the union struck once. UBC took action first in support of striking CUPE workers employed in the facility. Then the local participated in the province-wide job action. Then, when the Munroe award failed to give the local full protection of the master collective agreement, UBC struck again to win that long-sought goal.

Health Sciences Association president Jackie Henwood brought her union's greetings to the HEU's convention Oct. 5. HEU and HSA have been working closely on many fronts, including organizing on Vancouver Island.

John Fitzpatrick, secretary of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, brought greetings to the convention and urged all locals to affiliate to their local labour councils. Labour councils provide a vital service on a regional basis, Fitzpatrick said. In Vancouver's case, educational programs, conferences and local picket line solidarity are all coordinated by the labour council. HEU assists smaller locals to affiliate by covering their affiliation costs.

The long struggle of Canada's First Nations for recognition of their rights took centre stage Oct. 8 with a joint appearance by Chief Ed John and Chief Wendy Grant, of the B.C. First Nations Task Force. HEU First Nations delegates held their first caucus during the convention to consider establishing a network for native Indian members.



Mexico: health care crisis

Health care workers in Mexico are facing worsening conditions and mounting workloads as a result of government policies which include free trade with the U.S. and Canada.

Margarita Domingues Marrufo, a registered nurse who is active in the National Union of Hospital, Health and Social Security Workers in the state of Morelos in Mexico, told HEU convention delegates that the average hospital worker in Mexico earns about \$1.90 an hour.

"Nurses and doctors earn somewhat more, but it's not sufficient."

Marrufo said control of many unions by the ruling political party in Mexico, along with wage controls and attacks on collective agreements, give the employers power over workers.

"We face diminishing bene-

MEXICAN NURSE Margarita Domingues Marrufo told of the plight of health workers in her country.

fits, work schedules that can be changed daily, and ever-lessening job security. All of these are part of the arbitrary power of the employer," she said.

"The deterioration of working conditions means hospital workers have an overload of work in high-pressure, stressful situations. To illustrate, last Friday I was working the night shift in the intensive care unit. There were no gloves to use for changing the patients, and no linen for changing the beds."

Even though health care is officially guaranteed in Mexico, the government is moving health care into the private sector, causing more people to rely on U.S.-style private insurance for health care, she said.

Out of 87 million people in Mexico, Marrufo said 42 million live in poverty. The buying power of wages has been cut in half in the last decade.

The Mexican government is turning to free trade as the solution for its economic problems, even though it has not worked well for Canada.

"The winners will be the owners of the 6,000 multinational corporations and the 2,000 maquiladora factories that have been functioning in Mexico as the springboards for free trade for the past 25 years," Marrufo said.

Her union is taking an active part in the Mexican Network Against the Free Trade Agreement, she added.



GEORGETTI

B.C. Fed welcomes NDP initiatives

Labour shouldn't lose sight of the gains achieved under the NDP government, says B.C. Federation of Labour president Ken Georgetti.

Improvements to the minimum wage, funding of abortion clinics, changes to the Human Rights Code and community input to many government boards would never have occurred under Social Credit, he said.

"It's easy to forget how bizarre and unpredictable that government was."

At the same time, he said, while the NDP and labour share a common vision, "our views on how to reach our goals and our priorities may be radically different."



MCPHERSON

BCNU welcomes new solidarity

The growing solidarity between HEU and the B.C. Nurses' Union has been a major achievement of the past two years, BCNU president Debra McPherson told HEU convention delegates.

In a brief address McPherson paid tribute to HEU members for their dogged determination during last spring's job action.

HEU's tactics went a long way to building support and understanding among BCNU's members, McPherson said.

That solidarity would be needed, she predicted, in the coming campaign to save the health care system from an arbitrary and unplanned conversion to a "closer to home" model.



SIHOTA

Delegates grill Sihota on issues

Labour minister Moe Sihota says that although the New Democrat government is moving ahead with reforms in labour law and health care, fiscal questions and other problems mean that the government faces more tough decisions.

"We understand that there's a lot of concern about what's happening," Sihota told HEU convention delegates. "We are not through the difficult times."

After a speech which dealt with constitutional issues, the new labour code and changes to workers' compensation such as regulations covering farmworkers, Sihota took questions from delegates who were unhappy with some of the government's actions.

Kitimat delegate Cindy Russ-

ell said that although the NDP has made some overdue improvements in government, there are several major problem areas, including pay equity, fiscal issues, and health reform.

Sihota acknowledged the government is behind on certain matters, but said it is moving ahead on pay equity with a discussion paper. He said the government is still "struggling" with the question of elected hospital boards.



Melanie Iverson
Senior Trustee
Elect



Della McLeod
Trustee



Sheryl Rankin
Member at
Large #1



Cindy Russell
Member at
Large #2



Margie Wayne
Regional
Vice-President
Fraser Valley



Marilyn
McKerracher
Regional
Vice-President
Kootenay Region



Kathie Anderson
Regional
Vice-President
Lower Mainland
Coastal



Don Allen
Regional
Vice-President
Lower Mainland
Centennial



Blair Thomas
Regional
Vice-President
Lower Mainland
Central



Mary Pat Wiley
Regional
Vice-President
Northern Region



Barb Wilkinson
Regional
Vice-President
Okanagan Region



Linda Hargreaves
Regional
Vice-President
Vancouver
Island

CONVENTION '92 • THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

DEMOCRATIC FREE-FOR-ALL: HEU election contests are a hard-fought affair, with 10, 11 or 12 candidates for some positions. Here, nominees for the position of fourth vice-president are introduced to delegates by union president Bill Macdonald.



HEU moves on job-sharing

HEU's longstanding policy against job sharing in any form was ended Oct. 8 by convention delegates who voted in favour of a policy permitting voluntary job sharing under strict guidelines.

The policy change came after spirited debate in which delegates spoke of the strong demand for job sharing while others raised concerns about employer attacks on full-time jobs.

In the end, delegates agreed that the issue was one of fairness to women, who need the job-sharing option to enable them to carry out childcare and homemaking responsibilities.

Strict guidelines will ensure union goals are met

The resolution passed by convention calls for the Provincial Executive to draw up a policy that would permit job sharing "within strict guidelines which preserve full-time work where a shared job would return to a full-time job should one of the employees vacate the shared job."

Such a policy must not lead to the elimination of full-time jobs and must be different from job spreading, the technique used by employers to replace full-time jobs with part-time jobs.

Many delegates said the policy change is necessary because job sharing is already becoming a fact of life.

"Job sharing is going on whether we like it or not," said Kathy Moffat of the Squamish local.

Loni Mezzaroba of the Cancer Control local said the employer has had control of the job sharing issue, making 'sweetheart deals' with workers.

Many workers, particularly women, want to share jobs so they can have more time with their children, said Mike Barker of the Vancouver General local.

"Bogus" job sharing is already going on because workers will quit rather than continue full-time work, he said. "Would it not be better if we controlled job sharing?"

Donna Vye of Comox said older workers want to keep working, but not full time. "I know a lot of people who have left because they were too tired to do a full-time job."

But David Patterson of Nanaimo said job sharing means problems for many workers and can create difficulty with pensions and bumping. "We want benefits for our members. This is not the way to go."

Peter Marcus of Shaughnessy said job sharing means sharing poverty. "Job sharing is about getting into bed with the boss."

Ed Cortez of the Vancouver General local said employers could exploit precedents set by job sharing.

HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato said HEU has taken control of similar issues such as extended hours and employee assistance programs.

"Under strict union-controlled rules, we should give job sharing a chance. It affects every single one of us. It affects women on the job, and it affects men on the job," Allevato said.

New delegates enjoy rough and tumble of debate

FOR first-time delegates Doreen Fraser and Bev Saggar, both of Vancouver's Grace Hospital local, HEU's biennial convention was a week of intensive learning and building new friendships.

But by the end of five-day meeting in Richmond, both declared themselves delighted to have been elected.

"I'd tell people in my local not to be afraid to go out and experience these new things," said Fraser, a licensed practical nurse.



SAGGAR

"We got a lot out of it and seeing the reaction of the members and the way they debated was really educational for us."

Both Fraser and Saggar, a cashier at Grace, headed out to Richmond the evening before the convention for a crash course in the rules of order by union president Bill Macdonald.

Then it was onto the floor and into the debate. With the help of more experienced delegates, both women soon found them-



FRASER

selves "working through the muddle of 'whereases' and 'therefores.'"

Saggar was astonished at the blunt way delegates demanded information from the leadership, right down to details of their salaries. And she was impressed by speaker Margarita Domingues Marrufo, who told of conditions in Mexican hospitals.

Although neither delegate took the opportunity to speak, they closely followed the debate.

By week's end, Fraser said, both had "developed a lot of friendships from around the province" and benefitted from discussion both on and off the floor.



NEW DELEGATES: Grace Hospital local delegates Bev Saggar (left) and Doreen Fraser found their first HEU convention an overwhelming but inspiring experience.

Education programs to be improved

HEU's ambitious education programs need still more work, said convention delegates, with more emphasis on new members.

The convention overwhelmingly approved a proposal from the Victoria Jubilee local for an orientation video for new members on the union's policies, structure and history.

They also approved a resolution calling for the appointment of a full-time staff education officer to ensure educational work continues year-round.

Orientation videos are long-overdue, said Willowhaven delegate Della McLeod, and would be especially useful in small locals.

To general laughter she proposed videos on union history, convention procedure and even "a mystery video on what becomes of our grievances."

The delegates also supported continuation of the union's unique residential summer school program, which brings about 200 members a year for up to two weeks of instruction.



"My relationship with God is very real and very personal."

KELLY COOK

CONVENTION '92 • THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

A question of freedom



SPEAKING OUT: Yaletown local delegate Richard Dennis appeals for union support in the fight against homophobia.

Defending the rights of lesbians and gay men

Last summer, HEU's Provincial Executive advised locals that the union would sponsor two delegates from every region to attend OU-Trights, a national conference on gay and lesbian rights.

"We posted those notices," Royal Jubilee delegate David Ridley told convention delegates. "The effect was incredible and instantaneous."

"Homophobia came out of the closet. Those notices came down so quickly that we had to repost them."

"People stopped me in the corridors, we had discussions, we had arguments. We have an educational job to do."

Those discussions carried onto HEU's convention floor with a resolution committing the union to combatting discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the legal system, immigration system, education system and in the media.

The resolution, which was carried unanimously, was amended by delegates to call for an HEU campaign "to combat homophobia in the workplace." No one spoke against the resolution.

Homophobia — an unreasoning fear or prejudice against lesbians or gay men because of their sexual orientation — is a reality in our society and in our health care system.

One gay male delegate brought that home to delegates with the story of his battle against fear and hatred in a small, rural local. Rumours circulated that he was dying of AIDS and one fellow worker refused to work alongside him, forcing him to find someone else to help lift patients.

"Homophobia is a big problem," he said, "and it's not just in the media, it's in the workplace as well."

Here are excerpts from the comments of two men who spoke on this important resolution. One is a gay man, who spoke with emotion and gentle humour. The other is a born-again Christian who spoke with equally compelling honesty.

A gay man's view

RICHARD DENNIS, YALETOWN HOUSE

THIS is a very emotional issue for us. I'm a somewhat opinionated person. I do what I can to make this a better world. That's why I'm here.

I believe in all the causes you believe in, all the struggles that we're engaged in and I'm proud of what I believe in, I'm proud of who I am, I think I'm a good man. And brothers and sisters, I will be judged for my beliefs, I don't mind that.

HEU's gay/lesbian caucus

By EDWARD DENSLEY and GWENDA PECK

THURSDAY, Oct. 7, 5.50 p.m., just before adjournment at the HEU's 18th Biennial Convention, an announcement: "Immediately after adjournment today there will be a lesbian and gay caucus."

Silence initially, then an audible discomfort.

In the hall full of 500 brothers and sisters there were whispers, lewd gestures, laughter and sarcastic comments. Meeting adjourned.

Shortly thereafter, an historic event. It was/is a beginning of a new chapter in HEU, one that is long overdue. The lesbian and gay caucus met.

We all sat and shared stories of harassment

and discrimination, directly attributed to homophobia in the workplace.

How many untold or unheard stories are out there? How many have given up, quit their jobs, run away and/or committed suicide?

How can we as lesbian and gay union members win the battle of homophobia in the workplace?

We can't, but as individuals in a minority group, we can begin to educate our brothers and sisters, and together we can win this battle.

We all know people who tolerate us, but tolerance isn't enough!

From this caucus we formed the first HEU lesbian and gay committee with Gwenda Peck and Edward Densley as co-chairs.

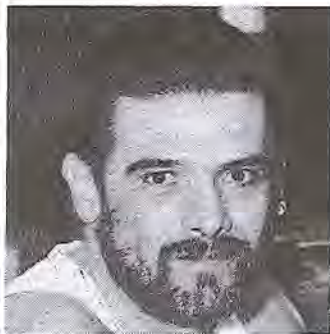
The committee would like "all" to come forward and join in a united voice to fight homophobia in the workplace. We invite you to write and place your name on a mailing list for a newsletter so that we can share with you our victories on the issue of homophobia.

Write to Edward Densley, 106-2328 Cambridge St., Vancouver, V5L 1E7.

Friday, Oct. 8. It was unanimously resolved that HEU would "implement a campaign to combat homophobia in the workplace."

Another historic event. HEU is now not only verbally committed to fighting homophobia but financially as well. It takes education to fight any wrong and education costs money.

We thank all of our brothers and sisters across the province and particularly those who at the end of the day rose, unanimously, in support of what is right and just.



"Until we are free, nobody is free."

RICHARD DENNIS

CONVENTION '92 • THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

But I will not be judged for who I choose to sleep with.

I came out in 1972. That's when I met my Frank, my beautiful, beautiful man.

I want to tell you something about Frank. There is nobody in this room that loves anybody more than I love him. We've been together 20 years this spring.

Frank and I are similar thinkers in social consciousness and we're both involved in things like unions, and we also got involved in the gay movement — it was at its early beginnings. And what we found was that we couldn't really relate to a lot of the things that were going on in the gay movement...

So what we decided to do was to stay involved fighting for other issues that we believed in for social justice and make the people aware, the people that we contacted through that involvement, make them aware of our issues.

And that's what we chose to do and that's part of the reason why I'm here today and why I'm up speaking.

I know that a majority of you in here are heterosexuals and I know that there has been a lot of studies to find out, you know, what causes

that and there's no definite conclusions. (Laughter)

I want you to know that I don't hold it against you in any way at all. Just, please, don't flaunt it, okay, I mean I'm open-minded.

I remember one job I had I was working with quite a young girl and she looked at me straight in the eye really innocent and she said, "How come you're a queer, anyway?"

I said, "I don't know, I guess my mother dropped me on my head when I was a baby or something and I don't know."

The point I'm trying to get at is that we need your support. We need real support and I don't want you to feel, well, maybe I do, maybe I do actually, I mean you owe it to me. You owe it to me.

But that's not why I really want you to do it. That's not why I really want you to support us, I want you to support us because it's the right thing to do.

You ought to realize, you must realize that until we are free, nobody is free. The same forces that oppress us are the same forces that oppress racial minorities and women, everybody else who's oppressed. There will never be freedom until we are free.

A born-again Christian's view

KELLY COOK, HARDY VIEW LODGE

I WOULD like to stand in agreement with the committee's concurrence but I would like to explain why.

This is a little bit difficult for me. Since HEU summer school I have had to deal with a lot of issues in my life and homophobia is one of them.

I would like to point out that in order for us to really deal with homophobia, we're going to have to look at the second paragraph (which says "HEU is committed to the principles of human rights and equality")

Once we get that right, the rest is going to fall into the line. This is not a condemnation of my brothers and sisters who attended this week, but I am a born again Christian, a small 'c' conservative.

My relationship with God is very real to me and very personal but several times this week I heard brothers and sisters using the words "Goddamn" and "Jesus" and "Christ" and no one said a thing. Yet another brother whispers under his breath "shit" and the whole crowd was (indignant). What do you do to my rights as a Christian? What do you do to my respect for God? You put it lower than your respect for human excrement.

Brothers and sisters, unless we are sensitive to everyone of us in this room we will never be sensitive to the people who are gay and lesbian.

I have two girls. When they grow up if they choose to be lesbian women that is their choice and I want their rights preserved.

But I can guarantee that's never going to happen until all of us in this room take this issue and put it right here, right in your heart.

This a country, Canada is a country that is pluralistic. My rights are equal to your rights. You know, back in World War II, I can't quote this exactly, but it kind of goes like this: "When they came for the Jews, I stood there and watched them. When they came for the Catholics, I stood there and watched them, and so on and so forth, and when they came for me I was all alone, there was no one left."

Brothers and sisters, if we don't band together now, in this country of Canada, the extremists are going to take over and we're not going to have a say in anything. We need to have our rights preserved.

I believe this (resolution) does it and I wholeheartedly support the committee's recommendation of concurrence.



OUTRIGHTS GROUP: HEU's delegates to the PanCanadian Conference on Lesbian and Gay Rights included: (top row, left to right) Edward Densley, Louise Hutchinson, June Boyce, Bonnie Nielsen, Robert MacDonald, Robert Reid; (bottom) Doreen Davidson, Gwenda Peck, Kevin O'Neil.

Gay/lesbian conference offers national network

By DOREEN DAVIDSON

OUtrights, a national conference on lesbian and gay rights, was a chance to find out what is happening at the grass roots level in gay/lesbian rights across Canada — where progress is being made, where there is a need to regroup and restructure.

Eleven HEU members joined with over 500 lesbians, gay men and human rights activists in Vancouver Oct. 9 to 11 at OUTrights/les droits VISIBLES, the second Pan-Canadian Conference on lesbian and gay rights.

Chaired by Barbara Findlay, Rose-Marie Kennedy, Ian Pringle and Ken Smith, the conference was organized by Vancouver lesbians and gay men with program development from across the country. The 53 workshops that were offered over the three days reflected the diversity of lesbian and gay interests and issues.

Delegates participated in workshops led by activists and professionals from across the country. Panel and group discussions, film and other mediums were organized into seven streams.

Throughout most workshops was the underlying theme of "coming out," a process which continues throughout life. At the moment, the visibility of homosexuals is most often dependent upon the circumstances surrounding their living and working conditions in their community.

Prejudice against gay and lesbian individuals is real. It can take the form of job loss, unfair benefit packages; refused accommodation, difficulty in the education system, and/or violence. Prejudice can touch every aspect of a lesbian or gay man's life.

"Coming out," (at least to some

extent) which is necessary in order to fight for gay rights, can be outweighed by the greater risk that exposure may bring.

"What we are doing is challenging heterosexism in mainstream institutions," said Diana Smith, a lesbian feminist activist with PSAC.

"What we are working towards is a world where there is no risk to coming out at all," said Barbara Findlay, lesbian feminist lawyer and co-chair of the conference.

Unions have always been seen to be on the edge of social justice and change. However, the invisibility of lesbians and gays in the trade union movement is indicative of the fact progressive social justice is slow.

While non-discrimination and sexual harassment clauses are negotiated more frequently to include lesbian and gay rights, medical and dental benefits extended to same sex-partners and their families are still rare. Other economic benefits such as special leaves and pension survivor benefits remain a battle.

OUTrights/les droits VISIBLES presented an opportunity for lesbian and gay HEU members to network with each other and with brothers and sisters from other unions across Canada. By sharing information and strategies, HEU will be continuing its forward move towards its commitment to non-discrimination and equality.

All members of HEU should be proud of the stand our union has taken towards equality for lesbian and gay workers. Their commitment to the fight for lesbian and gay rights has not gone unnoticed. The British Columbia Hospital Employees' Union is progressive in terms of social justice and their stand is being picked up by other unions across Canada. Way to go, HEU!



Soap flowers

A mother's life seems to end

A SHORT STORY BY DAVID WRIGHT

Tom held the soap to his nose and sniffed. It smelled like pansies.

"Is that for your mother?" Lea, his wife, asked.

"I always get her soaps. She loves them," Tom said.

"Didn't you get her exactly the same thing last year?"

"No." Tom stuffed the soap back into its box. "It was a yellow daisy soap last year."

The phone rang. As Lea went to get it, Tom wrapped the Happy Mother's Day paper around the little box. Tom was never very good at taping corners so he twisted the excess paper into a pony tail at the top and secured it with one long piece of tape.

Lea poked her head around the corner. "Tom, your mother. She's fallen again."

They caught the 6:30 ferry that evening. When they got to the Nanaimo General Hospital, Tom's sister, Esther, and her husband were sitting by mom's bed.

"She's been asleep," whispered Esther. "We thought she broke her hip because of the way she fell. She landed on her side and she had a lot of pain up around here." Esther pointed vaguely to her rear end. "But the doctor says it's just a bad bruise. Thank the good Lord it wasn't her hip because the way she fell."

"Tommy," mom said as she tried to sit up.

Tom stepped forward. "No, don't sit up, mom. You've had a bad fall."

"Don't sit up, mother," Esther said. "For goodness sake, don't sit up."

"It's nice to see you, Tommy," mom said. Her eyes were wide and alive. "And how are you doing? LeumLea?"

"She's right here." Tom stepped out of the way. "How are you feeling, Mrs. Sheridan? Are you in much pain?"

"Not as long as I don't sit up," mom said.

"Mother, you can't stay at that big old house all by yourself anymore," Esther interrupted.

"I thought the doctor said it's just a bruise," Tom said.

"Yes, but what if she falls again? What if Ted and I are up in Ladysmith visiting our kids and mother

can't get to the phone? She could be lying there for hours or days. We can't be there all the time."

"Maybe mom could move in with one of us for a while," Tom said.

"We can't take care of her," Ted stood up. "We only have a small house and we're not home all the time."

"We can't be there all the time," repeated Esther.

The nurse walked in. "I'm afraid visiting hours are over, people."

"Oh, okay," Tom said. "Lea, the presents."

"They're right here. Mrs. Sheridan, these were for Mother's Day but we thought we'd give them to you now to cheer you up."

"Oh, thank you," Mom said. When mom saw the little box with the wrapping paper ponytail she smiled and looked up at Tom.

Lea and Tom spent the next couple days, while mom was in the hospital, packing her things into boxes for the move. It was an impossible task. Mom had been filling that old house full of things for 60 years. A lifetime as long as that doesn't fit in just one box. By the time Tom had filled his tenth Okanagan orange crate, his careful system of organization had been reduced to dumping whole drawers, unsorted, into the cardboard containers. Lea was just about finished in the bedroom so Tom proceeded to the bathroom.

It always smelled like mom in there. On the bathtub ledge was the same half empty bottle of Johnson's Baby Shampoo. In the medicine cabinet was the same assortment of home remedies that she always had on hand...Bayer Aspirin, Vaseline Intensive Care and Alka Seltzer. The yellow daisy soap Tom had bought her last year was by the sink, still unused. Tom dropped the items in the box and opened the cabinet drawers. He should have put the towels in before the bottles but at this point he couldn't have cared less. By the time he'd emptied the first three drawers, the box was already full. He opened the last drawer. It was filled with soaps. Some Tom

recognized. Some he didn't. He stirred his hand through the waxy colours...flowers, hearts, stars, bunnies, ducks, little girls, little boys. His mind jumped back 20 years - playing in the front yard in the sunshine. The ball landed in among the flowers of mom's garden. A million different colours - the smell so thick it clogged his nostrils and made him sneeze.

"Gesundheit," yelled Lea from the other room.

There was one brown soap at the bottom of the drawer. Tom pulled it out. There were dents and marks from the other soaps and the ties were worn down, but it was definitely the football - the soap football Tom had bought for mom when he was six.

Tom remembered going with dad to the drug-store and picking it out himself. He remembered wrapping it, twisting the paper and taping it with a long piece of see-through tape. He remembered mom's face when she opened it - the smile, the happy, almost mischievous look in her eyes as if, hidden in the soap, there were actually diamonds or gold that only she and Tom knew about.

"Tom," Lea was standing over him. "What's wrong?"

She looked blurry through his wet eyes. "Nothing," Tom laughed. "It's just these soaps. My hay fever."

"You know, your mom's never going to have time to sort through all this stuff. Why don't we put all the disposable items in one set of boxes? What have you got there?"

"A football. A funny thing to give my mother," Tom laughed again as he wiped the tears from his eyes. "Lea, I was thinking...if I remodelled that spare bedroom downstairs and maybe..."

Lea's face was blank.

"I mean we have a pretty big house," Tom continued. "And two full bathrooms."

Lea still didn't answer.

"Well, what do you think?"

"Tom, I like your mother very much. I mean, she's a wonderful person but - she's always into everything. She arranges my drawers and sorts my tupperware and tells me how to cook. I don't cook my vegetables long enough and Tommy always likes his eggs turned."

"I do," Tom said.

"That's not the point," Lea picked up one of the empty boxes. "It's not her job anymore. It's mine. Sometimes after your mother has been over I almost go insane. And that time she was over for two weeks, I swear I almost had a nervous breakdown. Maybe it's me. I don't know. Besides Tom, if you get that sales rep job, we might be moving around a lot."

"Yeah, I know," Tom spun the football on the floor.

Lea held out the box in front of her. "Do you think your mother is going to need all those soaps?"

Tom looked at the soaps for a second. "I guess

not." Pulling out the drawer, Tom dumped it into Lea's box. He picked up the football. It was battered and old. He threw it in.

A week later Tom and Lea picked up mother from the hospital and followed Ted and Esther out to Cedar Grove Manor. It was a nice place to look at – lots of trees and grass. The inside was just as nice. The rooms were well furnished. The halls were carpeted and the staff seemed pleasant enough.

"Mother, what do you think?" Esther said as she looked around the room.

Mom's head was turning from side to side. "Where's the kitchen?"

"The cafeteria is just down the hall," the hostess said with a smile. "Meal-times are at 8:00, 12:00 and 4:30 every day. A nurse will assist you if you need help."

"Isn't that great, mother?" Esther asked. "No more slaving over a hot stove. And there's lots of people your age. It'll be better for you. You can make friends. And the nurses are right here. All you have to do is ring the bell and they'll come and help you."

"I don't need any help walking," mom mumbled as she turned to look out the window. There was a moment of silence.

"Well, mother," Esther repeated, "What do you think?"

Mom didn't answer.

"Mother," Esther's voice rose.

"It's nice," mom said finally.

"Who will be making the arrangements?" the hostess asked.

"I will," Esther said as she followed the hostess down the hall.

Mom was standing by the window. "They don't have any bedding plants – just trees and bushes – no flowers."

"Mom," Tom said, "We've already packed up most of your stuff."

"What's that?" mom turned around.

"We've packed your belongings," Lea said, "but we can't bring it all here."

"What's going to happen to my house and my garden?"

"You can keep some of your things in a safety box but you're going to have to sell the house. Ted and Esther said they'd take care of that for you," Tom said.

Mom sat down on the edge of the bed. Tom thought she was going to cry.

"Mom," Tom touched her shoulder. "Mom, are you all right?"

Tears started to roll down her face. She pulled a bundle of Kleenex out of her sweater pocket.

"Mom, if you don't want us to sell the house, we don't have to."

Mom tried to laugh. "Tommy, don't worry. It's just a big change. I'll be fine."

"Mom, you don't have to live here. We could...there's other places."

Mom touched Tom's hand. "You've always been careful, haven't you, Tommy. Even when you used to play next to my garden. I don't think you ever stepped on my flowers." She wiped her eyes and looked up at Tom. She was smiling. "You do what you think is best, Tommy. You always knew what I would like best."

Esther appeared in the doorway. "Okay, everything's taken care of. Mother, you'll be staying here tonight. And don't worry about the house. Ted's already made arrangements with the real estate company. Good-bye mother. Come on, Tom. We have to set up the open house."

"I'll just be a minute," Tom stood in the doorway for a few seconds but he didn't know what to say.

Mom was standing by the window. "I left the cuttings on the sill." She took a Kleenex out of her pocket. "Remember that first May when Tommy came out to help me plant geraniums.

The dirt under his fingernails and in his ears. The stains on the knees of his jeans. I scrubbed them for a week and they still wouldn't come out. I remember that. I remember," she spoke softly to no one.

Tom shook his head and walked down the hall. Esther was gone but Lea was leaning against the wall.

"She doesn't like it here, does she?" Lea asked as she walked along beside Tom.

"No, but I think she'll get used to it." Tom pushed open the right side of a set of double doors and walked in. He was in a big room filled with chairs and people – old people. Some of them looked at him. Some of them looked off into space but nobody said a word.

"Tom, I think we made a wrong turn. The car is this way," Lea said.

Tom was looking at a wrinkled man with spit on his chin. He wanted to wipe the man's face.

"Tom," Lea said again. The man was looking right at Tom with half closed, unblinking eyes, but Tom knew the man couldn't see him.

Tom's pace was beginning to quicken and he didn't know why. He opened the double doors. He was out of breath. His eyes rapidly panned the room full of vacant faces. Finally, he saw her.

"Tom," Lea shook Tom's shoulder. "What's wrong with you? It's this way."

Tom followed her out, closing the door behind him.

Several months later, Tom reached into his Williams Lake post box and pulled out a white envelope. It was from Esther. Tom ripped it open.

Lea laughed. "I've never seen you this excited about getting mail before. Usually I have to beg you to read it."

"Yeah, well Esther's had this box number for over a week. She should have written before now," Tom mumbled as he skimmed the letter. "Blah, blah, blah...Nothing."

"What?" Lea grabbed the letter from his hands.

"She didn't say a thing about mom. Not a word."

Lea looked through the letter. "Yes there is."

"Where?" Tom grabbed back the letter.

"Right here. See. It says 'Mother is doing fine'."

"Mom's doing fine? Well that's not good enough for me. And why hasn't she written herself? She always used to write me."

"You never wrote her back," Lea folded the letter, put it back in the ripped envelope and walked towards the car.

"What do you say we visit her next weekend?"

Lea stopped. "What about Hawaii?"

"We can go to Hawaii after we visit her – from Vancouver. Come on. It's only two days out of a whole week. It'd make me feel a lot better."



They arrived at Esther's on Saturday night. She wasn't home. The neighbour said she and Ted had gone up to Ladysmith to visit her kids.

"I guess we'll have to stay in a hotel, honey," Tom said as he pulled out from Esther's driveway.

"What else is new?" Lea shook her head. "Hey, where are you going? The Manor is that way, isn't it?"

"Yeah, I know. I just wanted to drive by the house. It's only a couple of blocks from here."

Tom stopped in front of where his house used to be. The owners hadn't moved into the new house yet. The landscaper's bobcat was still parked on a mound of dirt in the front yard. It was hard to believe that brown dirt was once a garden with every blooming flower a different colour.

"I didn't know they were going to tear it down," Tom looked at Lea.

She looked down. "It was an old house."

When they arrived at Cedar Grove Manor, most of the lights were out. They walked through the front doors. A nurse approached them with her finger over her mouth. "Can I help you?"

"Yes, thank you. We're looking for Mrs. Sheridan," Lea said.

"No, it's all right. I remember where my mom's room is," Tom walked down the hallway. When he got to the room the door was closed. He knocked and slowly opened the door. "Mom, guess who?"

The room was empty. Tom opened the door the rest of the way and walked in. It still looked the same as it did the day mom moved in – spotless and impersonal like a hospital room.

Tom turned to Lea. "Maybe mom moved into a different room."

Lea walked to the dresser. "No, look. Our presents are still here." They had not been unwrapped. "Maybe she's in the lounge."

Tom picked up the presents off the dresser and walked down the hall.

Lea called after him, "I'm sure she's all right."

Tom's pace was beginning to quicken and he didn't know why. He opened the double doors. He was out of breath. His eyes rapidly panned the room full of vacant faces. Finally, he saw her. She was sitting in a chair all by herself, facing the window. Tom breathed.

"Mom," Tom said as he weaved his way through the chairs towards her. "Mom?" he said again as he stopped in front of her. "How are you doing?"

"What?" she asked.

"I said how are you doing? Didn't Ted move your stuff in? Your room is so empty and you didn't open your presents yet." He put the gifts on her lap.

"No, no," she reached down with her thick fingers and began to unwind the tape.

"Mom," Tom bent down to look in her eyes.

"Aren't you glad to see me?"

"No, no. I don't know you. Leave me alone."

Tom put his hands on her shoulders. "Mom, it's me, Tom."

She began to shake her head. "No, I don't know you. Leave me alone."

"I'm your son, Tom. Look at me." Tom shook her shoulders to look in her eyes but she tossed her head from side to side and began to scream.

Tom could see the nurse in the corner of his eye. He screamed back at the old woman. "I'm your son. Don't you remember me? Your son, Tom." He let the woman go. She stopped screaming as the nurse helped her into a wheelchair.

Tom looked at Lea. She was crying. She tried to speak but couldn't get the words out. Tom knew what she wanted to say. He would have hated her if he could. He felt a blind hatred against everybody and everything – his mother, his family, himself. He wanted to break the chairs into pieces and lash out at the old people in them, the nurses and the smiling hostess.

Tom watched as they wheeled his mom away. She was still unwrapping her gift. He watched as she opened the box, took out the pansy-shaped soap, held it to her nose and sniffed. As they wheeled his mom out the door, he thought he heard her say, "Tommy."

• David Wright based this story on the experiences of his wife Laura, an HEU member at Central Park Lodge, Burnaby.

HEU delegates take union issues to NDP

The B.C. New Democratic Party has called on the government to establish community services, and labour adjustment and retraining programs for health care workers, before the B.C. health care system is changed.

The positions are now party policy as a result of a resolution which passed at the NDP's convention in Vancouver in November with the strong support of party delegates who belong to HEU.

Although the government is not bound by party policy, most of the resolutions that passed at the convention did so only with the sup-

port of affected cabinet ministers.

HEU, which is not affiliated to the NDP, supported the party in the last provincial election. Fourteen HEU members and staff who were delegates at the convention met regularly to discuss matters of concern to health care workers.

The resolution on labour adjustment program in health care was passed despite objections from former health minister Dennis Cocke, who complained it would "hogtie" the minister of health.

But health minister Elizabeth Cull spoke in favour of the resolution, which then passed.

"Before we lay off any more workers, before we send any more patients home, before any more patients are kept out of hospital, we must have a system in place in the community," Victoria delegate and HEU fifth vice-president David Ridley told the convention.

HEU has called for a labour adjustment program before hospital workers are laid off as care is shifted into homes and into community-based models of care delivery.

The convention also passed a resolution calling on the government to establish a health policy for women, including recognition of

caregivers, and a resolution supporting the medicare principles of universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability, and public administration.

Both resolutions passed after HEU delegates spoke in favour of them.

The convention did not pass a resolution which would have weakened the NDP's policy in favour of fully elected hospital boards.

At the end of the three-day meeting, which was the first since the NDP took power in 1991, the delegates met for more than an hour with Cull.

Protest continues against northern health cuts

More than 125 Prince Rupert health care workers and concerned citizens took to the streets Nov. 14 to protest proposals to close one-third of Prince Rupert Regional Hospital beds to balance the cash-strapped facility's budget.

Flanked by local motorcycle club members, the demonstrators marched through the city to NDP MLA Dan Miller's office, where Hospital Employees' Union leaders, community officials, and native elders pledged to gear up the fight to maintain quality health care in Prince Rupert.

The closure recommendations were outlined in an internal Ministry of Health review of the hospital's \$800,000 deficit. The report recommends the closure of 24 of PRRH's 77 beds, and laying off 25 to 30 caregivers.

While blaming the hospital's problems on administrative waste and "overutilization" of services, the review also acknowledged that the health care needs of Prince Rupert and area residents weren't being met by the existing level of acute care and community-based services.

The review claimed that additional hospital and community services could be provided despite the bed closers and layoffs and without any

additional government funding.

HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato termed the recommendations "dangerous and unacceptable" because the review doesn't map out a transition plan to make the changes, and doesn't provide enough concrete recommendations to combat administrative waste and incompetent bosses.

"There should be a moratorium on all bed closures and layoffs until a proper plan is in place," Allevato said. "Without a plan, and without the community services in place, quality health care will suffer. Administrators will cut caregivers instead of eliminating waste. Prince Rupert residents will pay the price."

Hospital officials say they must act on the closure and layoff recommendations by Dec. 7 to balance the budget by March 31. Yet health minister Elizabeth Cull claimed that the review recommendations were not finalized, and the ministry had made it clear to the hospital board the deficit did not have to be eliminated before the end of the current fiscal year.

HEU local activists are again on the frontline of the community's health care campaign. They pushed for and won support from civic politicians, and have mounted a pe-

Prince Rupert review admits more services needed



WHAT ABOUT US?: Residents and health care workers show their concern about the future of health services in Prince Rupert after a report called for major bed closures.

tition campaign. HEU activist and health care action committee chairperson Kim Horbach presented health minister Cull in Victoria

Nov. 25 with the 1,750 petition signatures backing the moratorium on bed closures obtained in the first few days of the signature blitz.

Funding curbs are cutting services, not waste HEU activists tell politicians in Victoria

Fifty health care workers from northern B.C. pressed the NDP government to provide sufficient funding to maintain hospital services until a plan is in place for an orderly transition to a "closer to home" health care model.

In meetings with premier Harcourt, cabinet ministers and MLAs in Victoria Nov. 25, HEU activists told MLAs they support the "closer to home" theme to provide better, more efficient health care. But they made clear the impact of government funding curbs on their communities and the problems caused by cutting hospital services without the necessary community services being available.

Northern hospitals were hard hit by budget

curbs, bed closures and service cuts this year. Almost 25 per cent of all acute care services in northwestern B.C. communities were eliminated because of budget shortfalls.

The HEU delegation demanded that the government freeze bed closures until a proper transition plan is in place, and all possible savings — especially reduced administrative waste and improved health and safety — have been realized.

While the politicians were reluctant to make immediate commitments, HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato said the lobby effort was constructive. "It was important for health care workers from the North to relay con-

cerns from their communities directly to premier Harcourt," she said.

The union's demands received strong community support at a Prince George public forum the night before the Victoria lobby. An overflow crowd of more than 200 heard heartbreaking stories from residents chronicling the declining quality of care in Prince George and surrounding communities.

The union delegation to Victoria included representatives from HEU locals in Prince Rupert, Terrace, Kitimat, McKenzie, Prince George, Williams Lake, Quesnel, 100 Mile House, Fort St. James, Vanderhoof, Hazelton, Smithers, Dawson Creek and Ft. St. John.

The unknown reformer

Helena Gutteridge: women's organizer

By TRISH WEBB

WHEN young Helena Gutteridge moved from her London birthplace to Vancouver in 1911, she was a woman with a mission.

Although only 32, she was already a veteran of Britain's Woman Suffrage movement, which was dedicated to winning women the right to vote. She was determined to bring that fight to Canada.

Her life not only benefitted HEU members, it stands as an inspiration. Until now, it has been ignored.

The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge the Unknown Reformer, by Irene Howard, is the story of Gutteridge's life and her struggle to win the vote for women. But there are other struggles recorded here, too, and Gutteridge had a hand in all of them.

With painstaking research and an obvious love of her subject, Howard recounts 50 years of activism in B.C. Gutteridge is present as a participant, organizer or leader in the major social democratic initiatives of her day.

Born in a dirt-poor London working class family, she had earned her living as a department store sewer and then as a tailor. She left home at the age of 14 and became swept up in the turbulent political struggles of London at the turn of the century.

Her emigration to Canada stemmed from a desire to help spread the fight for Woman Suffrage to this country. In 1917, Canadian women won that battle.

But Gutteridge was already deep in new work, this time for Vancouver's working women.

In August, 1918, she organized workers in the Vancouver laundry industry. In September she led them out on strike for better wages, collective bargaining rights and a closed shop.

During the strike the newly-formed Minimum Wage Board met to set wages for various sectors of the economy.

With her forceful, well-reasoned arguments Gutteridge helped win a minimum wage for laundry workers that exceeded their bargaining demands.

Gutteridge's position at the bargaining table mirrors HEU's in many ways.

She successfully argued that wages should reflect the cost of living, and that women's wages were not just pin money.

She fought hard to eliminate pay increments intended to keep women's wages down, and to strike down age discrimination.

Gutteridge won recognition from the Minimum



Wage Board that society should not subsidize industrial profits with wages that did not meet the cost of living.

Incidents of class struggle are common in this biography. Gutteridge was definitely class conscious, having been born poor in a London suburb.

Her orientation left her on the outside of the British suffrage movement.

Many British suffragists sought the vote for women with property only, and single women at that. Married women whose husband's owned property would get double representation, they argued.

Gutteridge fought for voting rights for women and men of all classes.

In Canada she formed her own Evening Work Committee to allow working women to participate in the fight for woman suffrage.

Defining herself as a social democrat, Gutteridge found support for her beliefs in the Common Wealth Co-opera-

tive Federation (CCF) which she joined right after its formation in 1932.

Gutteridge was born into the working class and would remain there all her life. She owned property for only two brief periods in her life, once just to gain eligibility in an Vancouver aldermanic contest.

When the CCF decided to run aldermanic can-

LABOUR ORGANIZER and political activist, Helena Gutteridge helped laundry workers launch a successful strike in 1911.

didates in Vancouver in 1936, Gutteridge was nominated, but she could not run.

Although her house-mate Edith Sneves made Gutteridge co-owner of her Triumph Street house, she was two hours shy of the required six months of property ownership in the city. The setback was only temporary, however.

In 1937, Helena Gutteridge became the first woman elected to Vancouver City Council.

It was a fitting prize for a woman who fought so hard to win suffrage for women 20 years earlier.

The book encapsulates 50 years of Vancouver labour history through the life story of one woman.

It is valuable beyond that because it celebrates the life of a strong, self-confident woman whose driving passion was justice. Such stories are far too often forgotten or ignored.

Justice for women, for working people, for visible minorities, and for the poor. Many of the issues facing progressives in Gutteridge's time are still debated at bargaining tables and in legislatures today.

Irene Howard's biography of Gutteridge is an important step toward changing history's prejudices. It is also an inspiration to women and men who hunger for justice.

• Webb is a Vancouver journalist currently working on a history of the HEU.



A STEREOTYPICAL MALE view of Gutteridge's impact on city council.

Coffee Break



Arbitrators rule Wicca a religion

When a Toronto community college professor, a member of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union, tried to take paid religious holidays guaranteed in his contract, his boss turned him down.

Why? Because Charles Arnold, a clerk, is a witch, a second-degree priest of Wicca.

Arbitrators upheld Arnold's grievance, ruling that "Wicca is the modern survival of the ancient pagan religions of Western Europe which were suppressed following the conversion in Roman times to Christianity."

Not-so-miraculous work practices in Japan

Japanese medical specialists have coined the word "karoshi" to describe a new occupational hazard: working yourself to death.

The government refuses to recognize it and insurance claims filed by families who say a member died from overwork are turned down.

But last year, a Japanese court ordered the labour ministry to pay \$210,000 to the family of a post office manager who died of a brain haemorrhage after putting in several months of overtime.

40 pages a day and no stretching

Word processing operators at the Queen Street Mental Health

I don't know why your hand is inflamed, so let's call it "idiopathic". And let's call you an idiot!



CALM SOURCEBOOK

Centre in Toronto must achieve a daily rate of 10,000 words — about 40 pages — or else.

They must also log everything they do, including trips to the toilet, and provide the information to their supervisor in a memo.

To ensure that they have time for all this, management issued a list of acceptable and unacceptable work interruptions. Stretching is strictly forbidden.

Not so easy walk for charity

When her husband announced he was walking from England to Scotland on behalf of disabled youth, Mrs. Jason Wheel was unenthusiastic. "I was quite relieved to have a lot to do around the house," she told the British press. "However, as Jason took the first stride of his 1,000-mile walk, he fell over the starting sign and broke his leg."

"Perhaps it is just as well. On a previous walk he got sunstroke and was in the hospital for five days."

Airline safety note of the week

When the American Airline Pilots' Association complained to Boeing about the inherent dangers of flying two-engined jets over the Pacific, they received this reply from Frank Fickeisen, Boeing's chief engineer:

"When you have two engines, you have two engines that can fall to bits. When you have four, you have four that can fall to bits. The less engines you have, the safer you are."

Buy union and help yourself

Undertaking some home renovations? The following products are on the "Do Buy" list of the Canadian Labour Congress because they are built by union labour: American Standard for bathroom fixtures; Reynolds Aluminum for siding and shutters; Teledyne Stillman for stove tops and heaters.

Community rallies to defend future of Shaughnessy

Government and hospital officials got an earful at a packed public meeting from HEU members, doctors, registered nurses and community people about the clouds hanging over the future of Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver.

The hospital, which is now run by University Hospital together with the UBC site, is closing wards and is slated for further downsizing, according to leaked documents from the Greater Vancouver Regional Hospital District.

Members of the HEU Shaughnessy local have lobbied hospital management and politicians in Victoria and at the regional hospital district for a voice in the future of the hospital.

Along with other unionized workers and people in the community, the Shaughnessy local helped form the Save Our Shaughnessy coalition, which held a public meeting Sept. 17 at the hospital. More than 200 people showed up at the standing-room-only meeting.

Vancouver Councillor Libby Davies summed up the feelings of many people when she said, "I have one question: 'Does anyone know what's going on?' We are dealing with 17 years of confusion and a lack of hospital planning."

Coalition co-chair Jan Johnstone told the meeting that the hospital has been funded for 343 acute care beds, but the hospital administration plans to make Shaughnessy a 250-bed facility offering mainly ambulatory and short-stay surgery.

"We see the hospital being dismantled before our eyes," Johnstone said. "What we as health

care workers have been told so far, and what we have seen happening, are two different things."

Millions are being spent to renovate wards that are later closed, said Johnstone, who demanded that the bed closures and layoffs be rescinded until the hospital's future is set in an open process.

Assistant deputy health ministers Steve Kenny and Peter Cameron told the meeting about the government's plans for health reform, and advanced education minister Tom Perry, the MLA for the area, defended the government's tight money policies.

When HEU member John MacKenzie asked University Hospital president Dr. Lionel MacLeod why hospital workers have been kept in the dark, MacLeod said: "We have a vision, but we don't have a detailed plan yet."

Several hospital workers and physicians criticized the secretive decision-making at University Hospital, and veterans asked about the future of veterans who have lived in the hospital for years and now are being forced to move to other facilities.

A few days after the meeting, the Shaughnessy local was granted a meeting with the board of University Hospital.

"We are dismayed by the hospital board and administration's insensitivity toward health care workers, especially those of us who have received a layoff notice," the Shaughnessy local brief said.

The local called for an open decision-making process at Shaughnessy, but the board has yet to respond to this demand.

HEU urges changes to 'freedom of info' law

Proposed B.C. Freedom of Information legislation developed by the NDP government is a "major advance," says the HEU, but will have to be tightened to ensure health employers comply.

In particular, the union is concerned about a clause in the law which would allow the head of any public body to keep information secret if he believed it "could reasonably be expected to harm the financial or economic interests of a public body or the government or the government's ability to manage the economy."

This exemption could be used to withhold almost anything, the HEU says.

The new law now is being circulated for discussion by NDP Burnaby North MLA Barry Jones. It would require a vast amount of government information to be available for public review.

The law would also open up hospital society activities to greater public scrutiny.

But the HEU advised Jones Oct. 21 that the new law will have to include tough penalties for non-compliance if it is to be effective.

The government will have to educate employers about the law, the union warned.

When HEU has sought salary information under existing laws, some hospital administrators have defied the rules and suffered no consequences.

The cost of access should not be borne by individual applicants, HEU said, and a plain language guide is needed to help people determine where information is located.

The public consultation on the bill was to conclude in November and an amended law is expected during the spring.



"I'M SORRY... BUT ALL OUR RECORDED MESSAGES ARE BUSY. YOU'LL HAVE TO SPEAK TO A HUMAN BEING."

PUZZLE



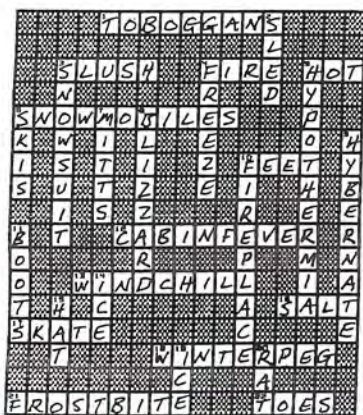
The Winter Crossword

Across

1. Sit-down vehicles for winter hills
3. Warm snow
4. Put another log on it
5. Kids love this chocolate
6. Go-karts on skis
10. How they measure snow in Montreal



Solution



12. Staying indoors all winter causes this (2 words)
13. Weather reports give this factor
16. Snow melter
17. Shoe with blade
18. Winnipeg nickname
21. Frozen skin
22. Hard part to warm

Down

2. Dog
3. Kids' attire
4. Below zero
5. Falling body temperature; get warm quick
6. You need these to go down or cross
7. Warmer than gloves
8. Severe snowstorm
9. Winter sleep
10. Best spot to warm toes
11. Winter footwear
14. Slippery H₂O
15. Heat warmer
19. Can't skate without it
20. Hockey rink worker

HEU people

Suggitt vindicates Guardian

Eyebrows were raised in the Kootenays last month by *The Guardian's* announcement that HEU staff representative Heather Suggitt had won the NDP federal nomination in Nelson-Creston.

In fact, the nomination meeting was still several weeks away.

At the nominating convention, however, Suggitt did win and prove our report correct.

Two HEU staff seek broader horizons

HEU's Provincial Office bade a sad farewell Oct. 30 to two members leaving to explore new challenges.

Carla Foulger-Edington, a pillar of the union's mailroom, resigned to try her hand at some new projects.

David Tarasoff, a staff rep, began a one-year



FIGHTING NAFTA: HEU members from Vancouver and Fraser Valley locals joined trade unionists from around the Lower Mainland and Washington State at the Peace Arch Oct. 18 to protest the North American Free Trade Agreement.

leave to article with a Vancouver labour law firm. Tarasoff completed law school three years ago and is taking the next step toward bar admission.

Gay Burdison named to board of Riverview

The provincial government has named

HEU director Gay Burdison to sit on the newly-appointed community board of the B.C. Mental Health Society.

Burdison's union responsibilities include bargaining with CCERA and Pricare as well as directing HEU's organizational work.

The BCMHS is responsible for Riverview hospital.

CALENDAR

The *Guardian* welcomes insertions for Calendar. Mail to 2006 West 10th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 4P5 or phone 734-3431.

HEU notices will get priority in the space

NOV./DEC.

available.

30 - 4

MONDAY to FRIDAY, B.C. Federation of Labour annual convention, Trade and Convention Centre, Vancouver.

10 - 11

THURSDAY and FRIDAY, HEU Provincial Executive meeting.

JAN./FEB.

24 - 19

SUNDAY to FRIDAY, Canadian Labour Congress Pacific Regional Winter School, Harrison Hot Springs Hotel.

FEBRUARY

26, 27

SATURDAY and SUNDAY, Quesnel Labour Council Weekend Seminar.

MARCH

6, 7

SATURDAY and SUNDAY, Peace River Labour Council Weekend Seminar.

13, 14

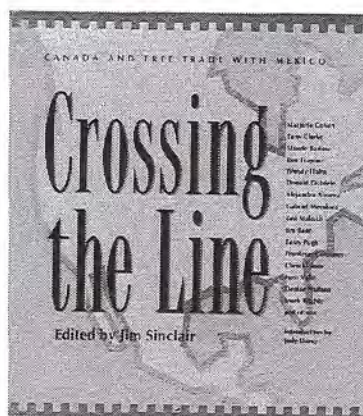
SATURDAY and SUNDAY, North/South Okanagan Labour Councils Weekend Seminar.

20, 21

SATURDAY and SUNDAY, Prince George Labour Council Weekend Seminar.

27, 28

SATURDAY and SUNDAY, Campbell River and Victoria Labour Councils Weekend Seminars.



Saying no to NAFTA

With contributions from Canada, Mexico and the U.S., *Crossing the Line* is the resource on the NAFTA.

'An essential read for Canadian workers and trade union activists,' KEN LUCKHARDT, Education Department, Canadian Auto Workers

CROSSING THE LINE
CANADA AND FREE
TRADE WITH MEXICO
Edited by **Jim Sinclair**

188 pages
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New labour code

The NDP's new labour code is a dramatic improvement over the Socred version, but it falls short of HEU's hopes.

PAGE 3

The fight of our lives

HEU's 18th Biennial Convention put the fight to protect quality health services and jobs at the top of the union's agenda.

PAGE 7

Gay and lesbian rights

HEU convention delegates debate the union's response to "an issue of freedom."

PAGE 12

Soap flowers

A short story by David Wright examines one family's response to a mother's growing infirmity.

PAGE 14



This community clinic in Canton San Jose, Guatemala, serves a network of communities in a rural region. HEU convention delegates, at the

THE SPIRIT OF SHARING

urging of HEU members who fled Guatemala to escape death squad execution, donated U.S. \$3,380 to help the clinic continue its work.

The spirit of solidarity in action



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