

Guardian



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THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2000

DALE FULLER PHOTO



ANGELA DAVIS,
champion of the
disenfranchised,
speaks to a
Vancouver audience.
PAGE 13

MEDICARE ALERT

Two HEU activists and
a paramedic from
CUPE 873 were Alberta
bound after touring B.C.
in an ambulance. PAGE 3

Don't forget to mail your
NO WAY Ralph Klein
postcard to Allan Rock!

GLENN OLSEN PHOTO



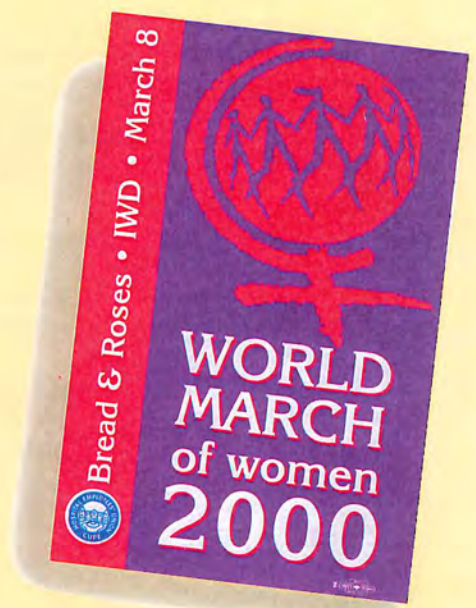
DEBRA ROONEY GRAPHIC

WORKLOAD

A new HEU poll confirms that
we're working harder and
hurting more. PAGE 8



This photo is the
winner in the
HEU at Work contest.
Congratulations to
Jeanette Standley.
See page 14



Winning Ways

COMMENT

We'll work together for new agreement

by Chris Allnutt

HEU members are not ones to rest on their laurels. Although we made significant gains in the last round of bargaining for our collective agreements, there are still many serious challenges ahead for health care workers in this province. Only by working together can we achieve our goals in the year 2001 and overcome any obstacles which we may encounter in the future.

Now is the time for our members to start thinking of what we want to see in our next contract. The union has already mapped out a blueprint for the bargaining process. We're planning to begin talks with the Health Employers Association of B.C. in January of next year, and we want to be in a position to have an agreement in hand by March 31, 2001.

That's the plan, but everything starts with you, the members. It will be your ideas and the priorities you set that the bargaining committee will fight for at the negotiating table.

There will be many opportunities between now and October, when the union's Wage Policy Conference is held, for you to put your ideas forward. That can happen in a variety of ways, and they all mean we have to talk to each other and work together. You can hold discussions between two or three co-workers or speak out at your local meetings. This ensures that your ideas reach the people who will actually be sitting at the table.



You may even want to become a delegate to the Wage Policy Conference or stand for election to the bargaining committee.

But right now you have to ask yourself and each other, "What is important to us? How do we need to see our workplace change?"

As frontline caregivers you know that better working conditions also make good caring conditions. You're the experts with the concrete ideas we need to deliver better health care services.

To help give us a preliminary idea of some of the issues which concern you, HEU recently conducted a membership poll.

Over the last few years we have won a large measure of employment security for our members, and according to the polls, you are anxious to preserve that.

Workload is a matter of vital concern, and you think this problem must be addressed in the next round of collective bargaining. Addressed and resolved.

You overwhelmingly want to work in a public system and want Medicare protected from privatization.

Eighty per cent of you say you live from pay cheque to pay cheque, making a wage increase and pay equity important items in this next round of bargaining for you.

You've also told us that you are prepared to fight to get comparability and levelling money now before the next round of bargaining. Tell us more!

In these uncertain political and workplace climates, with change always in the air, it is important to remember that only by working together and talking with each other can we achieve our goals.

'As frontline caregivers you're the experts with the concrete ideas'

voice/mail

THE GUARDIAN WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK. SEND LETTERS TO 2006 WEST 10TH AVE., VANCOUVER V6J 4P5 OR PHONE 1-800-909-4994. PLEASE BE BRIEF.

Seniors need home care – and LPNs

• This letter was sent out to MLAs and the Smithers newspaper.

I am concerned with the cancellation of home care to seniors in our community. Seniors deserve better treatment. In order to stay in their own homes they need the assistance that home care servers provide. It is too easy to say families can help when many are already working two jobs.

My mother-in-law is 83-years-old. She is in fairly good health but has high blood pressure, arthritis in her back and joints. She needs help with vacuuming, bending over to clean her bathroom and kitchen floors, wall washing and other types of cleaning. The New Directions in Health Care is supposed to keep people at home and provide more services to them. It is more economic to not put people in the hospital or in seniors' homes.

Seniors in their own home feel productive, in control of their lives. They contribute to the family and the community. In a seniors' home

some lose all sense of value in life, get very depressed and feel they are useless to anyone and can never be productive again. The same applies to a senior in the hospital because they have no say on long-term stays.

I worked at the start of the New Directions in Smithers and the surrounding area. Services such as home care and extra nurses to visit patients in their homes were to be in place. Not just for seniors, but all types of patients discharged from the hospital. Even doctors could use home care and community health nurses to refer patients to their offices to cut the cost of visits to the emergency wards. These services were to be in place before hospital beds were closed down with staff being able to apply for jobs in the community.

But no extra services were put in place before the beds were closed, and the community isn't being served as was directed by the original committee members in their draft to the government on New Directions in Health Care.

Practical nurses are not being used to their full ability in the hospitals or the community. They are just as capable of handling all types of patients in their homes. The RNs are already complaining that they are doing jobs that do not need to be done by them. Meanwhile, the province is having trouble finding RNs to fill the need. Why did the hospital lay off the LPNs? Can they rehire them? The use of practical nurses worked well for over 30 years.

Why aren't LPNs used for doing dressings, diet counselling, monitoring IV fluids and oral intake on home visits? We used to do them in hospitals. I agree that RNs can be put to better use than they are these days.

New Directions needs to take another look at the services they are providing to the communities and reconsider the changes to home care. Take a look at the finances of the senior. If they can afford to pay a little for house-keeping services or not – provide the service so they can stay in their homes and keep their dignity for as long as possible.

Home care and nursing services could be run out of the hospital. They already have the payroll system and the staff. Save on the cost of office space, expenses and cut the cost of extra directors that way. The system needs changing. Combining departments makes good sense – cost-wise and staff-wise.

DONNA SCHRADER,

LPN, Bulkley Valley District Hospital

LPN issue should be front and centre

Where is our job security, our protection of LPNs, rehiring of LPNs?

The HEU made a commitment that LPNs would be rehired, that they would be taken seriously. During the past few weeks of news coverage of hospital overcrowding and the shortage of RNs, not one word from HEU regarding LPNs.

This is the time our Provincial Executive should be on the news

and talk shows to answer questions and show a positive attitude that the LPN can work alongside the RN and function as part of the nursing team.

To be fair to my union the LPNs are partially at fault for not demanding the union honour their promise of protecting the LPNs.

J.B. LATHAM,

Housekeeping Aide,
Surrey Memorial Hospital

LTD cheque welcome Christmas present

My name is Robert Smith and I have been on LTD for nine years now. It is nice to finally get a raise after all these years. I think I speak for everybody that's on LTD that we are very grateful for all the hard work done on our behalf so that we could have a decent raise and benefits.

It sure was nice receiving the lump sum cheque just before Christmas so that the people on LTD could have a nice Christmas and still be able to pay for the extra expenses at Christmas time, without it being such a hardship at this time of year.

I hope the raise becomes a permanent part of our monthly cheques in our new contract.

Thanks again for all the work and help that has been given to the people on LTD. I hope that everybody else had a nice holiday season and that people don't have to work so hard this year trying to get management to do the right thing.

ROBERT SMITH,
St. Paul's Local



Guardian

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

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What we're up to

Spring into labour studies

This spring Capilano College is offering another full slate of courses exploring labour history, law, health and safety and union development.

Any HEU member who registers for courses is eligible to be reimbursed up to \$300 per year. This is for registration only and does not cover books or wage loss. Courses begin in March, April, May and June. The faculty are all well-seasoned labour activists.

Upon successful completion of the courses which carry college credits, the student will receive a Capilano College Certificate in Labour Studies. Enrollment in the home study program of the Labour College of Canada also qualifies HEU members for the same reimbursement.

Pamphlets describing the program and courses were in a recent secretary-treasurer mailing, but if you did not receive one, call Capilano College at 984-1719.

HEU members should pay the registration fee, and then apply to the union for reimbursement.

We can help with LTD claim

Claiming for long-term disability benefits can be a difficult and stressful task. HEU can provide support to help those members who need to make a



DALE FULLER PHOTO

The members of the bargaining committee who negotiated the facility Master Agreement were finally able to celebrate their accomplishment on Feb. 11 at the Richmond Inn, having decided to wait until the agreement was in print. Present at the celebration (HEU members except where noted) were: Mary LaPlante, Mark Kohl (BCGEU), Don Allen, Bob Harris (BCGEU), Tom Knowles, Jennifer Duncan, Cathy Dunn (BCGEU), Laura Neil, Jean Holte (BCGEU), Chris Allnutt, Anna Koochin, Doreen Plouffe, Marty Norgren, Fred Muzin, Barb Burke, Zorica Bosancic, Richard Dennis and David Noble (BCGEU).

claim throughout the process.

If you have any questions about the claims package, the process for applying for long-

term disability, your rights under the collective agreement, or if you need to appeal a denial or termination of an LTD

claim, you can obtain assistance from your shop steward or servicing representative.

continued on page 4



GLENN OLSEN PHOTO

HEU PRESIDENT Fred Muzin, fifth vice-president Sheila Rowswell and CUPE 873 paramedic Stuart Myers kick off the B.C. leg of the ambulance tour on Valentine's Day in Nanaimo.

Medicare ambulances head toward Alberta

AS PART of the official launch of the nation-wide campaign by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, a special Medicare ambulance departed from Nanaimo Feb. 14 on the first leg of an eight day B.C. tour to raise public awareness about the threat posed by Ralph Klein's bid to set up private hospitals in Alberta.

Along with two others departing from different parts of the country, the ambulances headed toward Alberta to mobilize public opposition to the health care emergency caused by Klein and his privatization initiative, and to press the federal government to restore federal health care funding to modernize public Medicare services in Canada.

Representing CUPE's Health Services Division in B.C., HEU activists Sheila Rowswell (Provincial Executive and G.F. Strong local) and Arleta Keppler (Royal Jubilee local in Victoria) joined ambulance

paramedic Stuart Myers from CUPE local 873, on the tour which featured many stops, rallies and special events in communities across the province. They were to hand over the ambulance to Alberta activists on Feb. 23 in Pouce Coupe.

HEU president Fred Muzin said the ambulance tour is just the first step in the initial phase of the campaign, building towards a national day of action by CUPE members Feb. 29.

"We've gained some real momentum in the fight against Klein and right-wing proponents of privatization," says Muzin, who urged union members to take an active part in the campaign. "Let's keep up the opposition to Klein and increase pressure on federal health minister Allan Rock to block the privatization efforts."

Muzin said other groups are organizing and mobilizing around the Medicare campaign as well. The B.C. Health Coalition, which HEU is part of, has a number of events planned. The B.C. Teachers' Federation, with support from HEU, is sponsoring a speaking tour by Council of Canadians leader Maude Barlow about protecting health care and education in a global economy.

Contract is signed, but no money yet

Last June, after 14 months of bargaining and 12 weeks of job action, HEU community social services workers signed a new collective agreement.

The last thing they expected was to be back on the streets fighting to get raises they'd already won but that's exactly what they've been doing.

The new contract includes a wage increase retroactive to April 1998, certain RRSP contributions and other benefit improvements effective Oct. 1, 1999.

By December, workers were still waiting for their money and they mobilized to get it.

To pressure those responsible for the delay, workers met with employers and MLAs and suggested ways to implement the wage and other monetary improvements.

They filed grievances at their worksites. And the

union filed a complaint with the Labour Relations Board.

"The lengthy delay is a slap in the face to community social services workers and their families," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "Our members should not be paying the price of employers' failures to meet their obligations."

In January, workers went public with their story.

They rallied outside the Victoria offices of the Public Sector Employers' Council, and talked face-to-face with NDP leadership candidates at a public meeting.

The activists' efforts have paid off. The Community

Social Services Employers' Association finally finished the costings for most agencies, and Treasury Board met to approve the release of funds.

According to CSSEAs January 24 newsletter, "The timing of receiving the first payment will depend on how quickly agencies sign and return copies of the Compensation Increase Agreement."

"It's good news that the government and CSSEA have finally overcome their problems. Our community social services members can be proud of the part they played moving this situation forward," said Allnutt.

"Now it's up to the individual agencies to complete their paperwork so members get their money."

'In January, workers went public with their story'

WHAT WE'RE UP TO

continued from page 3

Call 734-3431 or 1-800-663-5813 to obtain names and phone numbers of your HEU contact persons. You can also contact the HEU People with Disabilities Caucus Help Line at 1-800-663-5813, ext. 514.

Two deaths, and many questions

HEU members and other health care workers were witnesses to two violent deaths in their workplaces over the Christmas holiday season.

Death is certainly a common occurrence in health care facilities, but these two deaths were particularly traumatic. For the workers, but also for the other patients and clients.

One took place in a residence for people coping with mental illness in Vancouver's downtown eastside Hampton House, and the other in Langley

Memorial Hospital's emergency ward.

A coroner's inquest has been ordered for the downtown eastside death, and the *Guardian* will attend and report on the testimony. The date for the inquest has not yet been set.

Cleaning up at Cowichan Valley

HEU staff do the washing, drying and ironing for the hospital and long-term care facilities in the area at Cowichan Valley Hospital's 30-year-old laundry facility. The work is slow and back-breaking, and it was obvious that something had to be changed.

The regional health board said the answer was to close the laundry and ship all the dirty linen, uniforms, etc. to Victoria. This would have meant the loss of seven jobs.

CDH staff calculated that it cost \$774,000 to process 1.7



COWICHAN NEWS LEADER PHOTO

The announcement that Cowichan District Hospital will upgrade its laundry facility instead of sending its cleaning to Victoria means HEU members like Marino Danesin will keep their jobs.

million pounds of dirty laundry every year in the Duncan facility. To ship and clean all that laundry to Victoria would have cost an extra \$213,000 a year.

The health board, together with the local MLA NDP Jan

Pullinger, saw those figures, and decided to fund a renovation and upgrade to the tune of \$1.2 million.

Jeanne Hardy, the local's chief shop steward, said, "This is good news for the hospital

and for seven staff members whose jobs will remain in the Cowichan Valley. The project will enhance the work environment by replacing an outdated facility with cost-effective, modern equipment that requires less maintenance and is physically easier to operate."

Oregonian sends kudos

Oregonian Nikki Ferranti was visiting Victoria when she ran into a group of community social services workers out on the picket line last May. She was so impressed she sent a letter to the HEU office, saying, "Striking is a hard thing to do, and I applaud your members' commitment to advocating for living wages and decent benefits in exchange for honorable employment." She also sent along an article which addressed the problem of long (both in number and time)

LPN has a caring disposition

by Margi Blamey

A FEW YEARS ago, when colleagues suggested to licensed practical nurse Marilyn Thornton that she get involved in the union, her response was quick and decisive.

"No, I don't want to be in the union. Unions are just a conspiracy," Thornton recalls telling friends.

However, things change and so do people.

An LPN at George Derby Centre in Burnaby since 1988, Thornton has rapidly become an HEU activist and a champion of her chosen profession even though she attended her first local meeting only two years ago.

She credits her best friend and co-worker, Marva Vidal, with being her union mentor.

"Without Marva, I never would have been active. She told me, 'We could use you.'" Thornton says. "She is the wings beneath my feet."

Marilyn is passionate about nursing, proud to be an LPN, and now, devoted to her union. At George Derby, where she's a shop steward, Thornton works to improve education and upgrade opportunities for LPNs, to have these professionals utilized to the fullest potential of their scope of practice, and to boost morale on-the-job.

Thornton's own naturally upbeat attitude is evident when she talks about

her work. She admires the people she cares for. Many are veterans and she enjoys hearing their stories but, finding the time for a few moments of personal interaction is difficult. She believes care-pro-

viders can't give the residents the care and attention they deserve due to work overload and a need for increased staffing.

Within HEU, Thornton serves as the Lower Mainland representative on the Ethnic Diversity Standing Committee. Eager to find out more about her union and how it works, she's waiting for another round of Basic Shop Stewards' courses, having missed the 1999 series.

She has been to Nursing Team conferences – which helped galvanize her into action – and wants future conferences to continue reaching out to more and more care aides and LPNs.

Her union activism extends into the broader community. An avid writer of letters-to-the-editor – she follows them up with phone calls to the papers to make sure the letters are printed – Thornton explains the valuable role LPNs play in our health care system.

And Marilyn is a board member of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of British Columbia and chairs its education committee. She intends to stand



MARGI BLAMEY PHOTO

LPNs Marva Vidal and Marilyn Thornton, in front of George Derby Centre in Burnaby where they work, enrolled in Capilano College's Labour Studies program after deciding, "Let's do it; it's getting late!"

BALANCING



IT ALL

'Her union activism extends into the broader community'

for re-election in October. "Advocacy doesn't start with any one [person]," Thornton maintains. "It starts from the heart."

Since that first, fateful local meeting, Marilyn's activities have forced some technological changes at home. Laughing, she admits she now owns a fax machine and has an e-mail address so she can stay on top of her advocacy work.

Marilyn recently put her name forward to the Ministry of Health for a place on the South Fraser Health Board. If she's not appointed, she hopes to sit on one of the board's committees. During her interview, she told the panel, "Even if I don't get this job, I want to talk [to you] about LPNs."

Nurturing her new-found interest in workers' rights and labour history, Thornton has just completed a Human Rights course at Capilano College, part of the institution's comprehensive Labour Studies program. "It was excellent. This is my field," she enthuses.

A recipient of the George North bur-

sary, she's registered for Labour Law and Employment Standards next.

Thornton was born, raised and educated in the Philippines and taught history and literature at a Catholic high school before marrying a Canadian and moving here. Wanting to work, she graduated from Vancouver City College's nursing program as an LPN in 1980. Marilyn, a single-parent from

1988 until four years ago when she remarried, brought her 17-year-old daughter up on the same philosophy her parents lived by and passed on to her – honesty is the best policy. She's active in her church and wants to begin volunteering at a local women's transition house.

She's not worried about doing too much, though.

"I eat the right food. I believe in rest. I go to church," Marilyn says simply.

She's learned to take care of herself while she takes care of others.

• **BALANCING IT ALL** is a regular *Guardian* column about the challenges facing women activists.

WHAT WE'RE UP TO

waiting lists for group homes for developmentally disabled adults. Ferranti agrees with the article's writer when he pointed out that the high staff turnover boils down to low wage rate for U.S. workers in this field – barely above the minimum wage.

We've got a new logo

At their Dec. 1999 meeting HEU's Provincial Executive formally added the letters 'CUPE' to the official HEU logo.

"This symbolizes HEU's standing as the Health Services Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees," said HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "The logo is still recognizable to all as it incorporated the new letters into HEU's traditional logo."



HEU's welcome mat

HEU organizers have been busy in the last few months. Their efforts have succeeded in bringing in a large number of people who work in the community social services sector, which receives its funding from the Ministry of Children and Families. Two hundred ten new members have won certification at the North Shore Association for the Mentally Handicapped. Thirteen care providers from Sharondale Lodge / Sunset Manor in Surrey have also joined HEU's ranks. Nine workers from Prince George have been certified as HEU members. Four lifeskills workers at the Prince George Mental Health Services offices work in the community subse-

tor, as do five workers at Urquhart House.

One new member works in the paramedical sector at Craig-end Rest Home in Burnaby.

One hundred five new members work outside the health sector. Vancouver's South Granville Park Lodge now employs 55 HEU members, with 25 additional members at Sodexho Marriot Services at the same facility. On Vancouver Island, 13 members who work for Beaver Foods Ltd. at Douglas House in Victoria and 12 more at Fian Group Home in Duncan have signed up with HEU.

Mac-Pap dream a reality

On Feb. 12 a dream was realized when a statue called "Spirit of the Republic" was unveiled in Victoria. The republic referred to is the Spain of 1936, when a violent civil war erupted. The loss of that war

was a victory for fascism and heralded the beginning of a world war.

Many people from around the world formed the Inter-

national Brigades and poured into Spain to help defend it.

The Canadian brigade – the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion – never received official recognition from the Canadian government, in spite of their contribution in the fight against fascism.

The dream referred to is that of BCGEU member Tom Kozar, the son of a Mac-Pap veteran. He made it his mission to have a monument erected to the Mac-Pap veterans.

The "Spirit of the Republic" is located in a prominent location in Victoria's Confederation Park.

JIM GORMAN PHOTO



The Spirit of the Republic

Support Medicare, Muzin urges business leaders

IN A CANDID presentation at a special forum on health care issues Jan. 27 sponsored by the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, HEU president Fred Muzin challenged B.C. business leaders to be more supportive of the public Medicare system, and recognize that our public health care system is an economic asset that gives Canadian companies a "competitive advantage that will expand opportunities on the world stage."

Muzin thanked leaders for the invitation, saying it was an important first step in building trust between business and labour.

He said the billions of dollars in transfer payment cuts by Ottawa have had a disastrous impact on health care, education and other social programs in Canada.

He also highlighted the health labour accord as a positive provincial government policy initiative that has set the tone for a more progressive approach to health care restructuring in B.C.

"It's created the opportunity – and I would argue a responsibility – for health care workers and their unions to move beyond the normal defensive stance in approaching change, and for us to be involved in developing ideas and strategies for progressive change and innovation in health service delivery."

Focussing in on the crisis that gripped hospitals across Canada around Christmas time, Muzin was critical of all levels of government for delays in implementing community based and preventative health



STEPHEN HOWARD PHOTO

HEU PRESIDENT

Fred Muzin told business leaders like Northern Drugs owner Gerry Martin and Terrace Business Summit panelist Dr. Geoff Appleton that the most cost effective way to address the problems in Medicare is through an expanded, modernized Medicare system, not through the massive intervention of private, for-profit companies such as those proposed by Ralph Klein in Alberta.

care services to take pressures off of acute facilities. "We don't have 24-hour care in the community or community health centres. We don't have creative supportive living arrangements or enough home care, a national drug plan to cover prescription costs outside of hospitals. Nor do we have doctors on salary and the holistic use of a range of caregivers to provide services."

While advocates of two-tiered U.S.-style health

care like the Fraser Institute and BCMA president Ian Courtice delivered their standard pitch to about 150 business leaders, Muzin was joined in a defence of the public system in an effective presentation by Vancouver Hospital president Murray Martin.

Martin said many people had a naive understanding of the role of for-profit companies in providing health care services in other countries. Simply put, he said, these companies focus in on "profitable illnesses" while steering clear of the more complex unprofitable cases that are left for the public system.

'Muzin was critical of all levels of government'

Comparability mailout: be ready to fight

A letter summarizing HEU's historic comparability award was sent to the home of every HEU member in the province.

The message contained some good news on the amount of retroactive wage adjustments members can expect.

But the letter also contains a call to members to stand ready to take whatever actions are necessary to close the final chapter of HEU's struggle for comparability.

"HEU members should feel quite proud of what they've accomplished over the last two decades in terms of comparability," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "It means many of our mem-

bers will reach their pay equity targets sooner. And by "raising the bar" workers in all sectors of health care will eventually benefit."

While significant progress has been made working out the details of implementation, Allnutt warns that further appeals of the comparability decision by the Health Employers Association of B.C. could lead to months or even years of delays.

"We're still far apart on such issues as the date of implementation for improved maternity/parental benefits," says Allnutt. "We've told HEABC in the strongest possible terms to abandon further foot dragging and get on with task of delivering comparability to our members."

EI benefits for parents not fair

HEU members currently receive the same maternity and parental leave as all new Canadian parents. Mothers receive 60 per cent of their salary with the maternal leave of 17 weeks for the first child. Mother or father receive the same amount for a parental leave of 10 weeks.

Employment Insurance penalizes workers who make more than one unemployment insurance claim, and the same goes for maternal/parental leaves. Therefore, the amount is reduced to 55 per cent of salary for the second child. Additional problems can be encountered if, between two children, not enough hours accrue to make a claim. This is especially difficult for casual or part-time workers.

PRESIDENT'S DESK



New premier has work cut out for him

by Fred Muzin

AMONG a sea of bright orange U! balloons and paddle shaped signs, competing for space with Corky's green and yellow balloons and streamers at the Pacific Coliseum, 1,318 B.C. NDP delegates chose Ujjal Dosanjh as our next premier. I was fortunate to be there at convention to congratulate Ujjal on his victory and offer our commitment to work with his new government on a plan of action to modernize our Medicare.

Lengthy leadership campaigns are always adversarial. While NDP members share the core values of justice and dignity and caring for the less fortunate in society, leadership debates and intense competition provide a clash of style, approach, ambitions, priorities and egos. We do express our politics passionately.

Now is the time to build on our diversity and nurture each other so that the NDP can regain its former strength. Ujjal Dosanjh cannot succeed alone. The hard work of rebuilding the party and refocussing the government on a people's agenda will

'Now is the time to build on our diversity'

take tremendous commitment and dedication from all of us, but it is essential that we continue to represent the HEU membership and support our social partners to the best of our abilities.

The alternative is to sacrifice nine years of extensive effort and the considerable gains that we've struggled to achieve for health care workers in B.C.

The pre-election window during which government can now act is short. In his last official campaign speech, on Feb. 19, Premier Dosanjh clearly articulated his opposition to a privatized, American style health care system. He acknowledged the value and efforts of health care providers in maintaining Canada's public Medicare and recognized the need to modernize the system. As frontline health care workers we have workable solutions to achieve much needed change. Like a national *Home and Community Care Act* to ensure standards and regulation, a national *Pharmacare* program, 24-hour community clinics staffed by multi-disciplinary teams and LPNs utilized to their full scope of practice.

The NDP leadership convention also approved an emergency resolution calling on our government to be unequivocal in its opposition to the immediate threat of Ralph Klein's proposed legislation that would privatize hospitals and place Medicare in peril under the trade provisions of NAFTA and the WTO. Over two-thirds of Canadians have consistently indicated that restoring federal health funding is more important than tax cuts.

Can the NDP restore its credibility and public trust? It is imperative that the government live up to its commitments for successorship and pay equity legislation.

As well, the party must come to terms with the need to thank former Premier Glen Clark for his exceptional efforts that gave the MLAs the opportunity to even serve a second term. While it may be politically attractive to vilify Glen, he made an exceptional contribution to furthering the Nisga'a Agreement, tuition freezes for students, free adult basic education and employment security for workers.

The lack of continuity between regimes created a vacuum at the convention. A true test of Premier Dosanjh's leadership will be his ability to work with activists to reconnect the party.



LOGAN SIGNS in on inauguration day, Dec. 6, 1999, making him officially one of the members of Colwood City Council.

Gordie goes to council

Running for Colwood City Council on Vancouver Island in last November's municipal election was a natural continuation of Glengarry activist Gordie Logan's involvement in his community. As a member of his residents' association executive, he had gone up against the council many times and was not happy with the positions it took on many issues. He wanted to get further involved in the community, and to be an advocate for residents on council.

He tossed the idea of running for council around for quite awhile, but couldn't make up his mind. NDP MLA Rick Kasper's constituency assistant encouraged him to run, offering him his expertise when Logan expressed his doubts in that area. "He gave me a lot of pointers, which helped and pushed me into running," says Logan.

One of the main election issues in Colwood was a the construction of a major development on the site of a gravel pit operation that will be winding down in the near future. The proposal is to build 2800 new homes – a major impact in a city of roughly 13,500. Logan partially supports the development, although he feels it is too large and there is not enough green space provided for in the plans. And he thinks either the province or the devel-

oper should pay for the \$5 million access road. The province says that the city should pay the bill. Logan also wants to see some affordable housing in the plan. He says his sense from sitting on the residents' association executive

and public forums during the election campaign is that the community supports this position.

Logan is already putting in about three nights a week on council business, with actual council meetings taking place twice a month.

One of seven council members (including the mayor), he takes on the responsibilities of chair of protective services (RCMP and the fire department), as representative to the Intermunicipal Committee on Disabilities Issues and on the Juan de Fuca Retail Water Commission.

So his plate is quite full, and will be for the next three years, at least. He says that if his life leads him in that direction, he may consider provincial political office in the future, but right now he's concentrating on the task at hand.

The most valuable lesson he learned, he says, was how to speak sincerely to the public.

"I didn't make promises, but I spoke from the heart, looked them right in the eye and answered their questions as truthfully as I could."

AFTER



THE SHIFT

NOTEBOOK

We've got some battles coming up

by Dale Fuller

The year ahead holds some interesting challenges for the union movement in Canada. The Hospital Employees' Union has mapped out its own priorities with some very important fights ahead.

With a provincial election on the horizon, we need to both prepare to work for the election of candidates who support the goals of labour and Medicare and to defend these goals should Gordon Campbell and his Liberals win an election.

Although lately Campbell has not spoken a lot on health issues and labour laws, his views are well-known, and they are not favourable to workers or British Columbians who support Medicare.

Under the NDP we've achieved employment security for health care workers, improvements in the provincial labour code and in spite of federal cutbacks, no decrease in the health care budget.

The fight to protect Medicare is happening at a national level, and HEU is working closely with CUPE to pressure the federal government to tell Alberta premier Ralph Klein that he has to back off on



'We could lose a lot if the Liberals win a provincial election'

privatizing hospitals. We are also working together to advocate solutions to modernize our public health care system. HEU members and the public are strongly behind this movement.

2000 could see the culmination of important fights in victories for HEU, too. We may at last achieve the elimination of the "wall" between the community and facility sectors, the implementation of the comparability/pay equity and win our fight over the paramedicals.

HEU will continue its campaign against a private lab giant which is intent on getting its foot in the public health care door. In conjunction with other unions, we will push Victoria to activate the lab restructuring process and continue to highlight the role of MDS in privatizing health care and its links to Klein's privatization initiatives in Alberta.

Unions won a major battle last year when they scored a certain measure of control over their own pension funds with the agreement to implement joint pension trusteeships. We will work hard this year to begin the negotiation process to get this program up and running.

And, of course, this year we are gearing up to another round of bargaining. And bargaining will be linked to everything we do in the next several months – on into the year 2001.

Labour

NOTEWORTHY NEWS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING WORKING PEOPLE HERE AND ABROAD



OWNED BY THE BANKS Indebted students converge on downtown Vancouver Feb. 2. The CFS says that the more than \$300 million transferred by governments to banks annually in the form of risk premiums and interest payments would be better used providing direct grants to students.

Students decry funding cuts to higher education

by Mike Old

FED UP with skyrocketing tuition fees, shrinking funding, decaying campuses and increasing corporate control of classrooms, members of Canada's largest union marched alongside students in a national day of strike and action held Feb. 2.

"The federal Liberals have slashed education and training funding by \$7 billion over the last five years," says CUPE National President Judy Darcy. "It's time to fund the future of this country. It's time to give that money back."

The Access 2000 campaign organized by the Canadian Federation of Students calls for restored federal funding for post-secondary education and other social programs, a system of national grants, the reduction and eventual elimination of tuition fees and of national standards for post-secondary education.

CUPE members work in colleges and universities

as sessionals, teaching and research assistants, custodians, support staff and library workers. "Funding cuts mean our work is contracted out, privatized and eliminated," says Darcy.

"At the same time, tuition fees have more than doubled in the last decade (except in B.C. where they have been frozen) and student debt loads have tripled to \$25,000. Post-secondary education is being priced out of reach of most working families.

"Corporate control and privatization are also looming threats," says Darcy. "Corporations court cash-starved institutions and offer to fill the funding gap—in exchange for ownership and control of courses, research and buildings. These 'partnerships' benefit corporations, not students, teachers and taxpayers."

In Vancouver, more than 1,000 students marched through the downtown core chanting "Martin, Chretien, go to hell. We won't fund the NHL."

Find out more about the Access 2000 campaign on the web at www.cfs.bc.ca.

Facing down privatization in El Salvador

by Teófilo Reyes

For more than three months, 10,000 health care workers in El Salvador have been on strike, part of an on-going battle against the effects of free trade.

The Salvadoran government is drastically reducing the public sector to comply with requirements of the WTO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. "In May of 1996, El Salvador became the 134th country to join the WTO," explained Manuel Vasquez, secretary general of the Asociación de Trabajadores del Ministerio de Obras Públicas. "In December of 1996 the Salvadoran legislature ratified the agreement of entry to the WTO, leading to the radical restructuring of the public sector."

Since this radical privatization campaign began, 15,000 public sector workers have been laid off. Restructuring has cost 12,000 more jobs and the government plans to lay off an additional 70,000 workers. Sugar mills, energy, telecommunications and public pensions are already privatized and the government promises to privatize health care, education, public works, water distribution and the ports in the next six months.

"To respond to this, unions have had to build a new movement," Vasquez said. "Seventeen public sector unions joined together to form the Movimiento de Organizaciones Laborales Integral (MOLI).

"The government's response," Vasquez said, "has been torture, gun fire and the assassination of three of our comrades."

Social Security workers went on strike Sept. 30 after the government reneged on a January 1998 wage increase. The strikers have strong support from the rest of MOLI; some 20,000 workers from other unions have participated in rolling strikes in solidarity. (The strike continues despite being declared illegal in late January.)

Repression, however, has been swift. Death squad activity is once again on the rise in El Salvador in conjunction with increased repression from the National Police. Vasquez himself escaped injury while riding in a car that was attacked with machine gun fire.

"We will not stop struggling until we have justice," Vasquez said. "The more they repress us, the more we will struggle. We will not die on our knees before the Salvadoran government and the WTO."

• reprinted from Labor Notes.

U.S. workers sign security pact

Unionized health care workers in the U.S. have inked a major employment security pact with the largest non-profit Health Management Organizations (HMO) south of the border. And in many respects, the National Employment and Income Security Agreement resembles the ground-breaking health labour accord reached between the provincial government and B.C. health care unions eight years ago.

A national coalition of unions representing 60,000 health care workers reached the agreement last October with Kaiser Permanente — an HMO with more than eight million U.S. subscribers. With an overall goal of avoiding displacement of employees in a sector undergoing dramatic structural and technological changes, the agreement also provides workers additional opportunities to work with Kaiser

on working conditions, staffing and patient care.

Like B.C.'s labour accord, the U.S. agreement aims to redeploy potentially displaced workers in jobs with comparable hours, classification and rate of pay within reasonable geographic proximity. There's also a one-year period of income security if a worker is redeployed to a lower paying job classification.

With 17,000 members working for Kaiser in Northern California, SEIU Local 250 is the largest member of the coalition. Local 250 president Sal Roselli says the agreement is a formula for success for his members and for the HMO.

"Our front-line workers are eager to add their voices to the effort to provide affordable, high quality care to all patients," says Roselli. He says his union is challenging other employers to adopt similar agreements.



HEALTH CARE WORKER Cornelius Stewart was at SEIU Local 250's recent leadership conference, where the new employment security agreement was a hot topic.



Numbers talk! Results from an HEU poll tell a story of on-the-job injuries and pain and how they affect our lives and work

by
DALE FULLER
illustrations by
DEBRA ROONEY

A December 1999 HEU/McIntyre & Mustel poll reveals a startling relationship between injury rates and workload – the most detailed insight we have had to date of health care workers' injury rates tied into what they see as the major contributing factor. And they are unequivocal – they have way too much work to do.

And things are not getting any better, they are getting worse. In number and in severity. Why?

One of the great victories of the last round of health care workers' bargaining was the establishment of the Occupational Health and Safety Agency. It signals the beginning of the process that will arrest the burgeoning problem of workplace injuries and illness.

"It is jointly recognized by all parties that this is a significant first step," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "It's a precondition for dealing with the problem of workplace injury and illness, and we have to make sure it works."

The stated goal of the new agency is to reduce workplace injuries and promote a safe and healthy work environment through healthy workers, safe work practices and manageable workloads. But before this poll was taken, workload was not so graphically tied in with injury rates.

The poll clearly illustrates that there is a link. "So we need to start talking about workload as being a health and safety issue," says Allnutt. "When 72 per cent of the 801 HEU members polled say they are working more shifts with not enough staff, a similar number say they stay home sick more than

they used to, and almost half say they have been hurt at work and/or suffer from chronic pain, it is easy to draw that conclusion.

"And to top it all off, many of them take their work problems home."

We've made the link; now we have to find solutions. This is in everyone's interest: workers, employers and the health care system all suffer from this situation.

Assessment rates for employers have risen dramatically, and if the situation is not corrected they could easily double in the future.

Health care employers should tear a sheet out of Surrey Memorial Hospital's notebook on health and safety. Its staff and management set up a very effective health and safety program after they demonstrated to the administration that there were substantial cost savings to be made.

Experience-based assessment rates could suck millions out of health care budgets, especially in long-term care with its high injury rates and the expected expansion of this sector.

What can HEU members do to reduce their workload and the resulting injury rates? They can start leaving a paper trail, for one thing, by diligently filling out incidence reports. And they can talk to their local executive and their supervisor. Show them these figures.

What is the union doing to help its members stay healthy? The *Workplace Anti-stress Guide* will be made available to union members as soon as it is off the press.

It defines stress, what it does to you and what you can do about it. It is innovative in that it does not blame the worker for stress.

We are also revising our OH&S manual and holding seminars for OH&S shop stewards, using these poll results as a teaching aid. We will work with forward-looking employers and WCB pilot projects to reduce injury rates.

"Finally, HEU members can make workload a bargaining issue in the next round of negotiations," says Allnutt. "We need strong language in the next collective agreements which enforce demands protecting workers from excessive workload."

Injury rates in health care and consequent costs have been creeping up since 1996

WCB injury stats for the health care industry

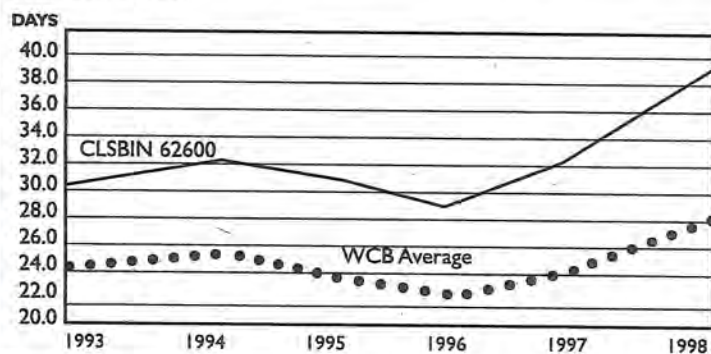
Year	Total # of T/L claims accepted	% increase or decrease over previous year	Current year claims costs	% increase or decrease over previous year
1999	7,148	2.2%	not available	not available
1998	6,994	8.0%	62,777,000	31.0%
1997	6,475	2.4%	47,915,000	15.9%
1996	6,322	-1.8%	41,326,000	-6.3%
1995	6,436		44,117,000	

The severity of injuries have taken a dramatic upturn – also since 1996.



Severity of injuries also increasing

WCB Average Duration of Time Lost by Year for Hospitals (CLSBIN 62600)



Chronic pain an ongoing problem

In the last six months have you ever worked while experiencing ongoing or chronic pain?

46% YES

53% NO

1% DON'T KNOW / REFUSED



Almost half have been injured at work

In the past five years, have you ever been injured on the job?

48% YES

52% NO

Increasing workload a widespread problem

In terms of your workload, would you say that over the past few years it has been increasing, decreasing or has remained at the same level?

77% INCREASING

3% DECREASING

18% REMAINED THE SAME

1% NOT APPLICABLE/NEW JOB

1% DON'T KNOW / REFUSED



Symptoms linked to higher workloads

How often do you end your workday feeling either mentally or physically stressed?

28% ALMOST ALWAYS

27% OFTEN

28% OCCASIONALLY

12% RARELY

4% NEVER

What are the on-the-job effects?

In your opinion, do you agree or disagree that the following workplace situations are related to increased workload?

72% MORE FREQUENT SHIFTS WHERE YOU WORKED SHORT-STAFFED

70% HIGHER USE OF SICK TIME BY YOU OR YOUR CO-WORKERS

63% MORE DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICT BETWEEN CO-WORKERS

53% MORE DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICT WITH YOUR EMPLOYER OR SUPERVISOR

49% MORE GRIEVANCES FILED BY THE UNION

8% NONE OF THE ABOVE



Workload impacts life outside of work

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree that increased workload has had a negative impact on your life outside of work?

30% STRONGLY AGREE

28% AGREE

34% DISAGREE

4% STRONGLY DISAGREE

3% DON'T KNOW / NO OPINION



SOURCE:
HEU/McIntyre & Mustel
poll of HEU members,
December 1999

Lab giant thwarted in Victoria

by Stephen Howard

A FAR reaching scheme to privatize hospital lab services in Victoria's Capital Health Region through a joint venture with health care multinational MDS has been kiboshed thanks to the concerted campaign efforts of HEU members in the region.

"We won the battle," says HEU Royal Jubilee activist Arleta Keppler, who was part of a HEU's regional campaign committee. "If HEU members hadn't mobilized, there's no doubt the proposal would be on its way to implementation," she says.

The defeat – confirmed in a Jan. 6 letter from Deputy Health Minister Leah Hollins – is a blow for CHR CEO Tom Clousson, a recent transplant from Toronto with a reputation as a privatization promoter, says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"But more importantly," he says, "it's a setback for the privatization ambitions of MDS in B.C. and its efforts to do an end run around the provincial lab restructuring process set up by health minister Priddy."



ARLETA KEPPLER was one of the movers and shakers who upset MDS's appletart in Victoria.

Clousson subsequently resigned his post in early February.

Allnutt says the union will continue to expose MDS as a key player in right-wing efforts to undermine and privatize Medicare – especially the company's links to Alberta Premier Ralph Klein's proposal to set up private hospitals.

The letter from Priddy's deputy to the CHR board made it clear that any changes in lab service delivery could only come from the provincial restructuring process.

With the lab privatization scheme in Victoria laid to rest, Allnutt says HEU will now press to get that process moving. "We're the only province in Canada that hasn't looked at restructuring," he said, noting Manitoba's new NDP government has launched a progressive plan to bring all testing under a public system. "A similar move here would create a more efficient service and save millions of dollars that could be reallocated to solve problems in other parts of our health care system."

A December HEU/McIntyre & Mustel poll shows continued strong public support for hospital labs. Coupled with a commitment to maintain accessible, quality services, 64 per cent of British Columbians support Victoria buying out private lab operators.

Keppler says the "experience with MDS has served as a wake up call to health care workers in CHR."

While recognizing the election of a Gordon Campbell government would open new privatization opportunities for Clousson and MDS, she says the campaign – her first – was also a victory in terms of educating and mobilizing members, and then taking political action.



Resistance to privatization gathers steam in Alberta

Revelations about what's behind Klein's plans to derail Medicare are a scandal

Premier Ralph Klein says he's determined to legalize private hospitals in the spring sitting of the legislature despite growing opposition to the scheme in Alberta and across the country.

And in an effort to counter critics like CUPE and the Friends of Medicare – who have been holding public meetings across Alberta and taking out TV and radio ads targeting the privatization push – Klein has sent out two "truth squads" to support his proposal.

But CUPE Alberta president Terry Mutton doesn't think Klein's truth squads will wash with the public. "Klein's government did implode the Calgary General, they did close other hospitals, the Holy Cross, the Grace and the Colonel Belcher and they have closed a lot of hospital beds," says Mutton.

"Klein did say that the status quo wasn't going to work any longer and that we need the private sector to get involved to save Medicare and reduce waiting lists. He forgot to say that his cuts caused these lists to get out of hand."

But Klein's PR pitch has hit another snag with the recent revelation that the private clinic that stands to benefit from legislation that contracts out overnight surgical procedures is in tough financial straits. HRG, the private Calgary clinic that operates out of the former Grace Hospital lost \$2.1 million in the last fiscal year. The information was released by the Alberta NDP caucus.

"I see now that Premier Klein really is

dedicated to alleviating the pain and suffering of financially-strapped investors who appear to be experiencing serious financial difficulties," says acting leader of the Alberta NDP Raj Pannu. "Klein's entire scheme to open private for-profit hospitals has nothing to do with shortening waiting lists or reducing costs – it is an elaborate and obscene bailout package for private interests."

Pannu says HRG's 1998/1999 income statement analysis contains several other revelations including:

- general administration expenditures of HRG account for 36 per cent of total expenditures, almost exactly the average administration expenses of U.S. for-profit hospitals as determined by a study in the New England Journal of Medicine. This compares to the Canadian average of approximately 13 per cent for Canadian public hospitals;

- HRG accrued almost \$400,000 in debenture interest, pointing to significant debt. Pannu believes that if HRG were to contract with a Regional Health Authority to perform overnight surgeries, taxpayers would indirectly subsidize this debt bill; and

- budget overruns in general administration expenses related to public relations efforts on Bill 37, the communications were over budget.

Pannu also released information that indicates HRG is operating at much less than capacity. Bed nights and surgery hours were way below projections.

Klein is expected to introduce his legislation sometime in March.

American seniors venture north

American seniors – desperate to buy their prescription medicines at prices that don't devastate their budget – have been coming north to Canada by the busload.

The cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. is so high, it is actually less expensive for them to travel to a neighbouring country (some go to Mexico), pay to stay at a hotel for a night, buy their drugs and then return home than it is just to go to their own corner pharmacy.

Seniors collect on average \$16,000 a year on their

pensions. The cost of their drugs can – and often does – exceed one-third of their income. In fact, sometimes it can exceed the whole \$16,000. They just cannot buy the drugs their doctor tells them they need and pay for the basics of food and shelter.

Most American seniors are eligible for Medicare, so they can go see a doctor without being out of pocket. But their prescription drugs are not covered at all, nor are generic drugs available to them. And that is the crux.

What is the difference in price? U.S. prices run two to three times higher than in Canada. 60 Minutes said these people are "refugees from the U.S. health care system" and called for a universal pharmacare program. "Drug companies are gouging American seniors," said the commentator.

The problem is that pharmaceutical companies spend millions of dollars on lobbying to stop reforms that would help seniors; especially with the potential market that the looming baby boomers represent. They don't want Medicare to pay for drugs; therefore controlling prices.

According to the American news show 60 Minutes, drug companies claim any reforms to help seniors would cripple research and development. Yet their profits triple the amount they currently spend on R&D. Their friends, the Republicans, say their is no time this year to address Medicare coverage of prescription drugs.

Meanwhile the American oldsters continue to arrive. They only need a local doctor's signature on a prescription.

Polls take snapshot of health care attitudes

There is strong public support to increase funding to health care, while confidence in system is declining

A RECENT POLL of HEU members offers some critical insights into the impact of high workload and short staffing on the lives of B.C. health care workers (see pages 8-9).

Meanwhile, a companion public poll, completed in December amid the emergency room crisis that plagued hospitals across the province, shows declining public confidence in B.C.'s health care system, and a record level of support for increased funding to help the system address problems.

From a public standpoint, confidence levels have declined significantly since the last HEU public survey almost two years ago. Just shy of 20 per cent of British Columbians rate the system very good to excellent, compared to 36 per cent in the previous HEU/McIntyre & Mustel public poll in early 1998. And a record 84 per cent say funding levels need to increase, up 10 points over the

same period. For the most part, HEU members are satisfied with the general performance of their union.

About 16 per cent of union members say they're dissatisfied, up slightly from 13 per cent in the last member poll two years ago. In specific areas, four out of five members are satisfied with the union's efforts on health and safety issues, but less pleased with HEU's ability to implement solutions to the workload crisis.

While negotiations for new collective agreements are still a ways off, maintaining employment security is the top bargaining demand for more than 90 per cent of members. Other priorities pinpointed by members include workload, protection against privatization and contracting out, retraining and skills upgrading opportunities, a wage increase and bet-

ter health and safety practises.

In another more recent poll taken by McIntyre & Mustel for HEU, 60 per cent of the 511 B.C. adults polled said they agreed or strongly agreed that federal health minister Allan Rock should take all necessary steps to prevent Alberta Premier Ralph Klein from privatizing surgical services and legalizing private hospitals.

"Canadians are concerned about the unprecedented pressures facing Medicare," says HEU president Fred Muzin. "Unfortunately, health care corporations and some provincial politicians say the only way to save our

health care system is to privatize it. But British Columbians aren't buying the privatization agenda by a long shot. And they want Ottawa to stop it."

'Maintaining employment security is the top bargaining demand'

Reinvest surplus in health care

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' sixth annual *Alternative Federal Budget* (AFB) contains plenty of advice for Finance Minister Paul Martin as he prepares for a late February budget.

The AFB would reinvest the budget surplus — forecast at close to \$12 billion next year — in programs that ensure healthy families and communities. "Program spending as a share of GDP is at a 50-year low," says Seth Klein of CCPA's B.C. office. "There is no moral justification for delivering tax cuts to Canada's upper-income families. With one in five children living below the poverty line, a national homelessness emergency, public health care in crisis and an education system starved for funds, we must put first things first."



TENANTS' RIGHTS Action Coalition's Vanessa Geary tells media how *Alternative Federal Budget* would tackle homelessness crisis while Rita Chudnovsky of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada looks on.

The AFB proposes new spending in the 2000 fiscal year including: \$2 billion in National Child Care and Early Education Services; \$3 billion for health care; \$5.5 billion to bolster family income security through the Child Tax Credit; \$2 billion for a National Housing Investment Fund; and \$1.5 billion for infrastructure investments.

The AFB would make these invest-

ments while maintaining a balanced budget over its five-year plan and reducing debt at about the same pace projected by Ottawa now. The AFB's authors say the benefits of tax cuts or debt reduction are small compared to spending on public programs that stimulate job creation and economic growth.

And according to a recently released HEU/McIntyre & Mustel poll, British Columbians support the AFB plans for the surplus. Seventy-one per cent of those polled said Ottawa's first priority for the surplus should be to fully restore health care funding to the provinces that it has cut since 1995. Only 24 per cent said the first priority should be tax cuts and debt reduction.

"Federal politicians have failed to address the growing social deficit that's resulted from years of program cuts," says HEU president Fred Muzin. "The AFB proposals would realign federal budget priorities with those held by British Columbians."

• The AFB 2000 is available online at www.policyalternatives.ca.

HEU / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

60

PER CENT

say federal health minister should prevent privatization of medical services in Alberta

HEU / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

84

PER CENT

of the public say health funding levels should be increased

HEU / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

80

PER CENT

of HEU members are satisfied with union efforts on health and safety issues

HEU / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

75

PER CENT

of the public think Medicare can be modernized without privatizing health care services

HEU / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

71

PER CENT

support restoring health care funding to the provinces

HEU / McIntyre & Mustel Poll

24

PER CENT

of the public say tax cuts and debt reduction are top priority

Sinclair shares vision

B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair says that during his tenure he'll work hard to build solidarity and defend Medicare



GUARDIAN: What is Jim Sinclair's mandate as the new B.C. Fed president?

SINCLAIR: It is imperative that the labour movement has a profile and a voice in this province. Primarily, for our membership, but also for all British Columbians.

One of the challenges I have is to do a good job as leader in building solidarity and with working with the affiliates and with people in communities. I think we have to have a voice in government. We need to be putting forward policies that reflect the interests of working people, to keep jobs in British Columbia, and to create employment for young people.

G: Talk a bit about building alliances.

S: It's important that we reach out to people in the anti-poverty movement, in some of the environmental groups, in advocacy groups, women's organizations. It doesn't mean that we set aside our agenda or that they set aside theirs.

There are specific issues where we can work together for a common goal. I think it is important in labour disputes that the community support us. We need to work at building these alliances, and not just around broader public issues. For instance, what we are fighting for in the case of the *Calgary Herald* is the right to seniority.

Seniority provisions for these journalists would protect them against being fired when they write something the publisher doesn't like. Journalists have to have the protection to tell the truth. There is enormous pressure to make news fit a certain set of ideas and not to make it reflective of the community.

'All of our kids should have access to health care'

G: What do you think is the role of labour in protecting Medicare?

S: My firm belief is that if the labour movement abandons this fight, it's over. If we do not take the issue up on behalf of all working and poor people in this

country, then we will lose it. We need to make this one of our major priorities in the coming year or two, because it is under severe attack with governments cutting back funding, with doctors and others wanting to set up a for-profit system.

We are at a very critical time right now. I think British Columbians should know that the system is fundamentally sound. It needs to be improved and the policy issues sorted out. But the answer is to not allow a two-tier system where the wealthy get to butt ahead of ordinary people for health care because they have more money. All of our kids should have access to health care based on their needs. What the wealthy – or the doctors – are proposing is that we don't do it that way anymore. They say we should sell people's health care the same way as we sell Chevrolets. I think most Canadians are against that. They know that it will cost more and be worse if we go to a private system like the United States has. There would be maybe a half million British Columbians not covered by health insurance, and who would they be? What doctor is going to take care of them for free?

Jump forward a few years, and Sinclair is working as a journalist in Nelson, B.C. Active in the labour council, he started going to B.C. Fed and CLC conventions, Harrison Winter School, etc.

Later on he used his skills as a reporter to edit the Fisherman's Union newspaper. He stayed there many years, eventually becoming an elected vice president of the union.

It would be one of the great tragedies of this century if we lost Medicare.

G: What can we do to prepare for the next provincial election?

S: I think the best that we can do is to explain to our members what these parties stand for. There are achievements we need to maintain in this province, and also there are things we need to change to make it a better place to live. I believe that it's our job to ask the right questions of politicians. What will you do with the health care system? What will you do with the labour code? Will you maintain funding to public education? Will you have wage controls on public sector workers or won't you?

The Liberals have close ties to the business community and their agenda is very clear: to cut public spending by 10 per cent, to cut taxes for the very wealthy and cut taxes very little for ordinary working people, to lift the tuition freeze, to lower the minimum wage, and to sell off Crown corporations such as B.C. Hydro, Insurance

Corporation of B.C., and B.C. Rail.

G: What do you tell people who say, "Unions were all well and good in the beginning but now their time has passed."?

S: I say they are even more important now. The only balance to corporate greed is the labour movement. Those who don't believe we are necessary



should just go down to Mexico, into the factories where people work for \$3.50 a day, who go home at night to no running water, no electricity, polluted rivers and streams running through their communities from the factories because there are no environmental standards. Those people need to be organized. We need to be organized to protect ourselves, and if we are not, then we simply go backwards. It is not a stagnant situation where we just suddenly tell the unions to disappear today and everybody keeps what they got.

That's why we are fighting the WTO, the Free Trade Agreement and the MAI (which we did defeat). We categorically reject that Mexican workers are our enemy. They are our allies in this fight.

G: How do we make the unions relevant to young people?

S: We have to ensure that when young people join a union or go to work at a union site they are welcomed, and not seen as people who know nothing. They are the next generation of the labour movement, and therefore need to be encouraged. We should make sure the union structures are considering their needs. Young people care about what happens to them on the job; they want to go to a safe job and to be paid fairly. They want to have a job that perhaps they can raise a family on. It's real important to say to young people who are in the non-unionized sector, "The reason you have a 40-hour work week and not an 80-hour work week with no overtime is because of the trade union movement."

G: What do you see as the role of labour in this century?

S: I see labour as remaining the backbone of progressive change in our society. Most of the decent things we have today have come, in large part, through the efforts of organized working people. Not to underplay the role of other movements – farmers, women, the CCF, NDP and other political parties. I see the role of the labour movement actually becoming more important. I think as the labour movement goes, so goes the decency we have in our society.



SINCLAIR SCRUTINIZES article in the *Wall Street Journal* about a group of health care providers in Florida who are forced "go begging" for health care for uninsured patients.

DALE FULLER PHOTOS

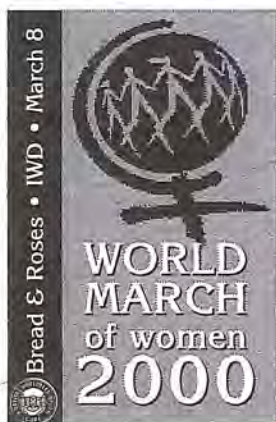
Women on the march in 2000

This year, on March 8, International Women's Day, women around the world will be taking part in local, regional and national events to kick off the World March of Women 2000.

Throughout the year, women in more than 140 countries will be marching, lobbying politicians, signing petitions, writing poems, singing songs, making banners, holding workshops, and talking, educating and mobilizing around the march's theme, "Bread and Roses." Its focus will be to eliminate women's poverty and end violence against women.

The HEU Women's Committee will mark the event with a B.C. tour. Linking up with the table officers' conferences in April, May and June around the province, Women's Committee members will hold workshops on the WMW2000 "Bread and Roses" theme.

At each workshop, banners will be designed and then left with participants to finish for presentation at HEU's 22nd biennial convention in October.



HEU sisters will join hundreds of other women on March 8 in Vancouver to link hands in a massive circle around Library Square's federal building.

Inspired by the Quebec feminists who encircled the Quebec legislature in 1995 to reinforce their demands for equality, the goal of this IWD event is to have 2000 singing, dancing women ring the site dressed in the official Women's World March 2000 colours of red and purple.

Placards will declare an end to women's poverty and to violence against women.

And that's just one of the many activities being planned in B.C.

Watch for information in locals' mailings, or contact the International Women's Day committee in your area.

• For more and up-to-date information on the World March of Women 2000 and events around the planet, check out the FFQ's web site at www.ffq.qc.ca.



ANGELA DAVIS posed with members of HEU's Women's Committee and others: Iris Reamsbottom, Mary LaPlante, Vancouver Status of Women's Audrey Thomas, Patricia Charter, Davis, Donna Dickison, past PE member Alberta Dorval (now retired) and Louise Hutchinson.

Davis still fighting

American social activist Angela Davis spoke at the Vogue Theatre on Feb. 12 about race, globalization, women and prisons. Her talk flowed seamlessly from one topic to the other, demonstrating how they are not separate issues, but intertwined.

The injustices of the American prison system — where 2,000,000 people are incarcerated — are especially acute because of capital punishment.

She campaigns for the liberation of Mumia Abul Jamar and Leonard Peltier,

among others. "I went to visit Mumia recently," she recounts, "And I say we just cannot afford to lose this eloquent spokesperson for the abolition of the death penalty."

Davis is first and foremost a teacher, and it was evident from her talk that she has genuine respect — and hope — for young people.

"It is now time to start following the younger generation," she says. "They have the creative ideas — just like we did when we were young."

Women pay the price of privatization

The increasing shift of health care dollars and services from public to private is jeopardizing women's health and threatening the jobs of female health care workers, according to a report released in December by the National Network on Environments and Women's Health at York University.

The report, *Women, Privatization and Health Care Reform: The Ontario Case*, is the first comprehensive look at the effects of privatization and health care reform on women as patients, providers and decision-makers.

- long-term care facilities now deal with a pre-dominantly female resident population of whom 60 per cent require heavy care of 3.5 hours or more per day;

- long-term care providers are not being trained for the new demands including those of residents with Alzheimer's, dementia and mental illnesses;

- resident-to-resident and resident-to-care provider violence is on the rise and workers are insufficiently trained to deal with the escalation; and

- the number of registered practical nurses (known as licensed practical nurses in B.C.) and registered nurses employed in Ontario hospitals declined from 74,007 in 1991 to 60,446 in 1998. The number employed as casuals increased by 4,778 during this period while the number employed full-time decreased by 9,000. Many of those casuals are employed by for-profit companies providing community services.

"Women's choices about care are increasingly restricted, especially for the frail elderly, those with disabilities, and the many poor women without resources to purchase or successfully demand care," said Hugh Armstrong, report co-author and Carleton University professor.

"Female care providers face an equally bleak situation. They are being replaced by lesser skilled, non-unionized workers, stripped of job security, benefits and adequate pay. All these factors add up to a very dismal picture of our health system."

Stress causes injuries

Health care workers know full well they hurt themselves — a lot — at work. As a matter of fact, work-related musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) are the most prevalent — and costly — occupational health and safety issue in the health care workplace.

Mieke Koehoorn wanted to know why. She made it the topic of research for her PhD thesis at the University of British Columbia.

She conducted her research over a period of four years at an acute care hospital in B.C., taking a close look at the work and injury rates of clerical staff, dietary aides, housekeepers as well as pharmacists, physiotherapists and RNs. She found that low job control, low work support, high job demands, time pressures and high levels of workload are all triggers for MSIs.

Health care workers often perform repetitive and demanding tasks —

sometimes using very awkward postures — which can lead to back and neck problems. Lifting and bending during patient care, data entry of health records, cleaning equipment and patients' rooms, and the filling of hundreds of food trays are examples of work that can cause these injuries.

Koehoorn also identified stress as a risk factor for MSIs. "The changing health care system is a source of stress. The layoffs in the health care industry have also led to feelings of job insecurity," she says. All contributing to high injury rates.

"Health care providers who have little to say about time pressures, workload levels, social structures and support and control over work decisions

are vulnerable to MSIs, Koehoorn's study found. People in low-control and support jobs have three to four times the upper body injuries as people who are able to exercise control over their work environment and

'The changing health care system is a source of stress'

enjoy good support from their supervisors.

Koehoorn makes several recommendations to combat this epidemic of injuries among health care workers: open communication between managers, supervisors and workers, ergonomic improvements to alleviate lifting and repetitive movements, and additional staffing during critical levels of workload.

• Look for HEU's Anti-Stress Guide to be published in the near future.

Canadians tell the WTO to go

Canadians went down to Seattle by the thousands last Nov. 30 to help send a clear message to the World Trade Organization: our public services, our environment and our future aren't to be traded away.

CUPE members mobilized across the country, attending events in their own communities, writing MPs and joining forces with local allies.

They say the WTO agenda is a fast track to privatization of health care, education, social services, water and waste services.

And they're determined to defend public services and the power of governments to protect human rights and the environment.

Buoyed by the successes with the MAI and Seattle, CUPE activists are clear that we've stopped them once and we can do it again.

• December 1999 CUPE Organize.

FEBRUARY

African Heritage Month.

FEBRUARY 29-MARCH 2

Advanced shop stewards workshop, Victoria.

FEBRUARY 29-MARCH 2

Introductory OH&S workshops, Kelowna.

MARCH 7-9

Advanced shop stewards workshop, Vancouver.

MARCH 8

International Women's Day, World March of Women.

MARCH 14-16

Advanced shop stewards workshop, Kelowna.

MARCH 14 / 15

Introductory OH&S workshop, Nanaimo.

MARCH 21

International Day for the Elimination of Racism.

MARCH 27

Labour Research Forum, Maritime Labour Centre, Vancouver.

MARCH 28-30

Advanced shop stewards workshop, Prince George.

MARCH 28-30

Advanced shop stewards workshop, Nelson.

Standley wins HEU at Work photo contest

THE *Guardian* announced a photography contest – HEU at Work – in its July/August 1999 issue, and several of you got to work to meet the end of the century deadline. We got what we wanted – pictures that show what HEU members do at work.

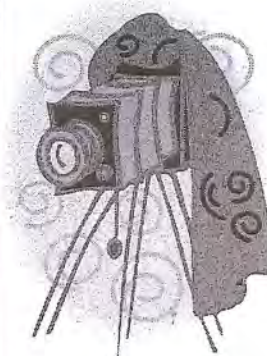
Jeanette Standley, a teacher in the program for three to five-year-olds at G.F. Strong's daycare program, is the winner of the contest.

Ian Smith, a *Vancouver Sun* photographer served as adjudicator. He picked Standley's photograph because it was the one that was the most appealing – that captured the attention of the viewer instantly.

Honorable mentions and kudos go to Charlotte Cail, a care aide from 100 Mile House and District General Hospital and Sue Simmons, a cleaner (and photographer who was featured in a December 1998 *Guardian After the Shift* column) at Saint Joseph's General Hospital in Comox.

Thank you to all who took the time and made the effort to enter our contest. All the photos we received will be used in future articles of the paper, with full credit being given to the photographers.

JEANETTE STANDLEY PHOTO



DAY CARE WORKER
Leith Schenkenberg cuddles little Ellie Lyburn at G.F. Strong's day care centre.

BOTTOM LEFT
St. Joseph's Hospital CSR technician Dora Mould pushes a cart full of clean linen.

BOTTOM RIGHT
100 Mile House and District General Hospital food services worker Clara Klassen finishes the rinsing of the silverware.

COMING UP ON WORKING TV

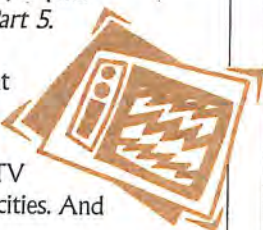
March 3 – Broadcast premiere of *Buy-bye World: The WTO in Seattle*.

March 10 – Maude Barlow's March 3 appearance; March 17 – Part 2

Then a five-part/five-week series produced by volunteers from around the world (including Working TV) at the Independent Media Centre in Seattle during the WTO Ministerial. Series title is *Showdown in Seattle: 5 Days That Shook the WTO*. March 24, Part 1; March 31, Part 2; April 4 at 8 p.m. a one-hour WTO special, "best of" the 5 part series; April 7 Part 3; April 9, 2 p.m. repeat of one-hour special; April 14, Part 4; and April 28, Part 5.

April 28 – Mayday program.

Regular broadcast times for Working TV are Fridays at 7:30 p.m. and Mondays at 8:30 p.m. in the Lower Mainland on Rogers Cable TV; Tuesdays at 9 p.m., Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8 p.m. on Catena Cable TV (Kimberley and Fernie) and now on air in 50 American cities. And don't miss the Working TV website at www.workingtv.com.



SUE SIMMONS PHOTO



CHARLOTTE CAIL PHOTO



Coffee break



All stories guaranteed factual. Sources this issue: Internet, Manchester Guardian Weekly, The Georgia Straight, Vancouver Sun.

Action! Ouch! Cut!

Karate is a form of martial arts in which people who have had years and years of training can, using only their hands and feet, make some of the worst movies in the history of the world.

Good for them, but not for us

Caterers have delivered Monsanto the final insult by banning genetically modified food from the corporate giant's own staff canteen "in response to concern raised by our customers."

Out of the mouths of babes

A first grade teacher collected well known proverbs.

She gave each child in her class the first half of a proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the

proverb. Their insight may surprise you.

- Better to be safe than – punch a 5th grader
- Strike while the – bug is close
- It's always darkest before – Daylight Savings Time
- Don't bite the hand that – looks dirty

- A miss is as good as a – Mr.
- You can't teach an old dog new – math
- An idle mind is – the best way to relax
- A penny saved is – not much
- Children should be seen and not – spanked or grounded
- Better late than – pregnant

INZE / CALM GRAPHIC



Shoppers anonymous

Hospitals and clinics in Ontario and Quebec have begun to sell space for backlit framed advertisements in toilets, corridors and staff rooms.

Michael Forbes of the Ontario Hospital Association claimed that many hospitals already feature commercial ventures such as "a Tim Horton's, a Roots and a Disney store."

Near-sighted heads merit second look

Sometimes those who write headlines are a little too close to the story, and they can – and have as is illustrated here – come up with some real bloopers, such as:

- Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers
- Drunk gets nine months in violin case
- Typhoon rips through cemetery, hundreds dead
- Include your children

HEU people

New rep joins HEU's legal team

A new Rep II position has been assigned to HEU's legal department. Carol Reardon is a lawyer with a background in aboriginal, environmental and labour law. Jim Quail, HEU's chief legal counsel, said, "Now that we have two in-house legal advocacy staff, plus Carmela Allevato assigned to HEU by CUPE, we should be able to reduce referrals to outside counsel to a small trickle."

Reardon is originally from Nova Scotia. She studied at King's College, Queen's University, Dalhousie Law School, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at Harvard Law School's negotiation program. Besides environmental and labour law, she studied urban planning and political science.

At the Massachusetts Supreme Court Race Bias Commission, she assisted in the organizing of public hearings throughout the state on the issue of racial discrimination in the court system.

She moved to British Columbia in 1992. Here she has represented environmental groups and First Nations clients on energy-related environmental issues. Reardon has also represented clients in both federal and provincial environmental assessments, water licensing processes and waste management processes.

Already well-ensconced in her job, Reardon looks forward to continuing to use her expertise and education in HEU's legal department. "I hope to succeed while at HEU in fighting to protect our members with tenacity and integrity," she says.

Director becomes UBC governor

HEU's director of communications Stephen Howard has been appointed to the University of British Columbia's Board of Governors for a three-year term.

Howard is delighted with his appointment and says it will be an interesting challenge.

He looks forward to helping the university set its priorities, which in his mind include pushing for increases in federal and provincial spending on higher education while supporting the provincial govern-

ment's tuition freeze.

Howard would also like to see increased access to university education for more British Columbians. "I want to promote a vision of the university that's relevant to working people," he says. "And one that's

able to form social partnerships and connections with community organizations."

Howard has been at HEU's communications department since 1991.

Boycotts, strikes and lockouts

The following list was compiled from the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Strikes and lockouts

- International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 31 vs Domino's Pizza distribution, Langley
- Industrial, Wood & Allied Workers of Canada, Local 1-3567 vs Solidlock Canada Inc., Langley
- IATSE Local 348 (B.C. Projectionists) vs Famous Players Theatres and Cineplex Odeon

Hot edict

- Hyundai-Kerckhoff, B.C. & Yukon Territory

Boycotts

- BCAA
- California Table Grapes
- Electrolux
- Hyundai Products
- National Post and Calgary Herald
- Non-Union Postal Outlets
- Philips Electronics
- Products from Indonesia
- Sony products



HOWARD



REARDON

HEU'S CONFIDENTIAL HUMAN RIGHTS HARASSMENT PROCESS

COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATORS can help if you are being harassed at work because of:

- sex (including sexual harassment)
- race
- sexual orientation
- disability
- religion

(see Art. 4.03 of the Facilities Sector Agreement)

1-800-310-6886

call for a recorded message

- when baking cookies
- Clinton wins on budget, but more lies ahead
- Stolen painting found by tree
- If strike isn't ended quickly, it may last awhile
- Red tape holds up new bridges
- Hospitals are sued by seven foot doctors

Just fueling

Bicycle courier Wayne Scott won his 16-year battle with Revenue Canada over whether or not he could deduct money for the additional 1,300 calories of food per day he claimed his job required, in the same way that car messengers can write off gasoline.

Canned democracy

"People seem to get a little closer to their emotions in the lavatories. You don't have to pretend in here. We are all human and we are all equal.

I just try to treat everyone the same: with a little bit of respect."

Carol Champion, a public bathroom attendant who was presented with an award for her services to tourism by the London Tourist Board.

No charge, really!

"There's this feeling that if we could only take Americans aside and in a polite way explain to them the things they were doing wrong ..."

Toronto-born Saturday Night Live founder Lorne Michaels, explaining that the prevalence of Canadians in American comedy is the manifestation of an inner need to offer free advice.

Teacher's pet

To draw attention to classroom understaffing, a union convention representing 35,000 British teachers voted to back a motion that trained dogs be

used as classroom assistants.

Teacher Wendy Dyble said a big dog could be useful for keeping kids in line, breaking up fights, and "looking for lost property like gym shoes or Barbie dolls."

More mad mergers

The last few weeks have seen many mergers, and anticipating them could mean excellent Market gains. Here are some likely mergers to expect in the future:

- Fairchild Electronics and Honeywell Computers: Fairwell Honeychild
- 3M and Goodyear: mmmGood
- John Deere and Abitibi-Price: Deere Abi
- Denison Mines, Alliance and Metal Mining: Mine, All Mine
- Zippo Manufacturing, Audi, Dofasco and Dakota Mining: Zip Audi Do-Da
- Fed-Ex and UPS: FedUp

EQUITY PHONE LINE

1.800.663.5813, ext. 514
Lower Mainland 739.1514

press 1

Ethnic Diversity

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



press 2

First Nations

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



press 3

Lesbians and Gays

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



press 4

People with disAbilities

We'd like to hear from you, if you are on WCB or LTD. Or if you are invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.



ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

TALK TO US ... TOLL-FREE!

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

PROVINCIAL OFFICES:

- Vancouver site
1-800-663-5813
- Abbotsford site
1-800-404-2020

NORTHERN OFFICE:

- Prince George
1-800-663-6539

OKANAGAN OFFICE:

- Kelowna
1-800-219-9699

VANCOUVER ISLAND OFFICES:

- Victoria site
1-800-742-8001
- Nanaimo site
1-800-347-0290

COURTENAY OFFICE:

- Courtenay site
1-800-624-9940

KOOTENAY OFFICE:

- Nelson
1-800-437-9877



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by notifying us promptly of any change of address.

Just clip this coupon, which has your mailing label on the back, fill in your new address below and mail to the Guardian, 2006 West 10th Ave., Vancouver V6J 4P5.

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Facility _____

Privatizing health care in Alberta is a tough job



Hi, I'm Ralph Klein. I want to salute some of my many corporate supporters in the campaign to bring private hospitals to Alberta.

Like MDS, the private health care multinational from Toronto that makes a bundle off Medicare in Canada.

I know they like to model themselves as a small outfit that operates community lab testing clinics in B.C. But MDS is far too modest! They've provided crucial corporate support

to advance the cause of privatized health care in Alberta. They've donated generously to my political coffers. And they've injected \$3 million into the Calgary private hospital that's front and centre in the efforts to bring for-profit care to Alberta.

Even better, the MDS-backed private hospital is leading the charge in a legal suit against my worst critic — Alberta NDP

leader Pam Barrett. Thanks MDS. Your support for private health care is deeply appreciated!

But I've got friends like MDS to help me get the job done!



WANT TO HELP PROTECT MEDICARE? For information about how you can help make sure Ralph Klein and MDS don't get to turn back the clock on Medicare contact the Hospital Employees' Union at 734-3431, toll free 1-800-663-5813, or www.heu.org.

A message from the Hospital Employees' Union, the B.C. Health Services Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees

Guardian



VOL. 18 NO. 1

THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2000



We're defending Medicare

Three emergency vehicles headed for Alberta to save Medicare.

PAGE 3

We're fed up!

Canadian students unite to protest education cuts and heavy debt loads.



PAGE 7

The giant slayers

MDS thought it had captured a private lab deal in Capital Health Region, but didn't count on Victoria activists.



PAGE 10

Medicare support strong

A new HEU/McIntyre & Mustel poll shows high support for Medicare.

75 PER CENT

PAGE 11

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