

# THE HOSPITAL Guardian

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

## THE HOSPITAL Guardian

Editor: Lecia Stewart

Contributing writer: John Doyle

The Hospital Guardian is published by the Provincial Executive of the Hospital Employees' Union, Local 180, under the direction of an Editorial Committee whose members are: GORDON MacPHERSON, JACK GEROW, MAURICE SMITH, BILL MACDONALD, CLARKE GARDNER.

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ERNIE ELLIS *1st Provincial Executive Alternate*

The Union maintains offices at:

**Provincial Office:**

2286 W. 12th Ave., Vancouver V6K 2N5

Telephone 734-3431

**Okanagan Office:**

No. 103, 2359 Hwy. 97 North, Kelowna V1X 4H9

Telephone 860-5115

**Kootenay Office:**

745 Baker St., Nelson V1L 4J5

Telephone 354-4466

**Vancouver Island Office:**

No. 214, 1095 McKenzie Ave., Victoria V8P 2L5

Telephone 727-3331

**Northern Office:**

829 Victoria St., Prince George V2L 2K7

Telephone: 564-2102

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HOSPITAL  
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## COMMENT

# The last double-cross

By Jack Gerow

The last double-cross.

That's what the recent labor code amendments mean to all working people including health care workers.

Most will remember that when Operation Solidarity called off its escalating political strike action last November, an agreement to end the strike action had been negotiated with the premier of the province. This agreement was intended to settle differences between the provincial government and Operation Solidarity over education funding, human rights, labor relations and other vital social concerns. It caused much relief and optimism for the future of British Columbia. Regrettably, however, the agreement was no sooner made than it was broken.

In rapid succession, the provincial government first double-crossed the working people of the province on education funding, then on human rights and finally on labor code amendments.

The most treacherous double-cross is the labor code amendments.

We all remember that last November's agreement with the premier promised full consultation with Operation Solidarity on changes to the labor code. Yet,

when the labor code amendments were tabled, not one improvement recommended by the trade union movement was accepted. Instead, the provincial government and the Employers' Council of B.C. had it all their own way.

The self-serving rhetoric spilling from the mouths of provincial cabinet ministers and the Employers' Council representatives cannot hide the duplicity of the labor code amendments. It's easy for every working person to see that union wages, union benefits and job security are to take a back seat in Premier Bennett's "new reality".

All one has to do is look at the new provisions that make it harder for unions to be certified, easier for unions to be decertified and almost impossible for unions to stop employers from intimidating their members.

This all adds up to the Social Credit dream of deunionizing British Columbia in order to make a safe haven for the international profiteers who want our resources but do not want British Columbians to have their fair share of the wealth produced in the manufacturing of these resources.

And how should working people respond to this greedy attack on their standard of living and quality of life?

Some say we should wait until

the next provincial election to register our concerns at the ballot box.

I do not agree.

There is too much time between now and the next election. There are too many rights that can be stripped from working people. There will be too few trade union members left to fight for the issues that made British Columbia a proud and prosperous place to live.

The answer then is to resist all the repressive provincial government legislation now. And the resistance must be militant. Operation Solidarity must once again mobilize all those who think the government has again gone too far. There should be regional meetings, there should be provincial meetings and there should be escalating job action to protect unions now under the attack of deunionization such as the building trade unions.

Finally, if the government is not prepared to negotiate in good faith the restoration of social and trade union rights, the trade union movement in this province is left with no choice but to coordinate collective bargaining so that wide spread strike action will occur when the vast majority of contracts expire in late 1985 and early 1986.

If that is the only way to make the Socred double-cross on the labor code amendments the "last" double cross, then let it be so.



# ***A look at ourselves***

## **HEU to publish Union history**

Forty Years of Progress, a print history of the Hospital Employees' Union from 1944-1984, will be made available later this year to HEU members as part of the union's 40th anniversary celebrations.

The 10-section history, describing the early pre-union years, the struggle to form the union, the development of the HEU in B.C. and the continuing present-day issues facing the membership, is in the final pre-printing stages.

The history has a two-fold function that will make it especially valuable to HEU members.

First, the history is written in an informative and easy-to-read manner that will provide appeal to the general membership as a reference document to enable interested members to gain a deeper understanding of the roots of the HEU. By understanding our past, we develop a more meaningful sense of how the HEU came to be, the issues the union has faced historically and the challenges we face today.

Second, the history's detail and depth make it a worthwhile support document to the HEU's widely-acclaimed Education Program.

Originally established in 1969,



(Left to right) Bill Black, John Fleming and Tom Wilshire.



Vancouver General Hospital in 1945 . . . birthplace of Local 180 and the origin of HEU's logo.

the HEU Education Program has grown to be recognized as one of the best trade union education programs in the country.

More than 500 HEU members have taken at least some of the five levels of the Education Program since 1980. Steps include study of the duties of shop stewards and unit officers; grievance procedures; contract analysis; the Labour Code and Employment Standards analysis; parliamentary procedure; public speaking, HEU history and the history of trade unionism in B.C.

It is in this fifth step of the program — the history section — that the written history of the HEU will

be reviewed.

While the main portion of the history deals with the union from its legal formation in 1944, no student of health care trade unionism in B.C. could understand the burning desire to form the HEU without going back to the dark Depression days of the 1930s.

Thus, the history begins with a look at the wages, working conditions and general health care environment in place during the 1930s. This helps to establish a backdrop against which present-day HEU members can understand the original need for the HEU to be formed and the struggles of the past which







Alex Paterson, left, a founding member of HEU, with W. M. (Bill) Black, the union's first secretary-business manager.

forged many present day structures and attitudes.

The union's roots can be traced to the Vancouver General Hospital, which in the 1930s was filled with indigent patients who couldn't afford care elsewhere. A callous provincial government had forced VGH into the position of being nearly one-third filled with indigent patients, for which the province provided a 70-cent per diem. Because only two-thirds of its patients were full-payment patients, VGH became nearly

bankrupt treating the poor.

To cope, the administration slashed wages and benefits for its workers.

To understand just how bleak conditions were, an illustration is in order.

In 1936, a first-class orderly received \$52 a month and three meals a day. There were no rest breaks in an eight-hour day. The work week was seven days. Employees received one week's vacation and had no formal sick leave.

There was no such thing as job security.

These working conditions led some male employees that year to join the Vancouver Civic Employees' Union, with soon-to-be HEU members signing up co-workers in hallways and in the tunnels of the vast labyrinth of buildings which make up the VGH complex.

It wasn't until the dramatic changes to health care and the Canadian economic and social scene brought about by World War II that the HEU Local 180 could be formed, uniting male and female workers and laying the groundwork for expansion from VGH to virtually every major health care facility in B.C.

Hard as it may be to understand in today's environment, the HEU pioneers faced almost insurmountable obstacles in the 1940s and 1950s when red-baiting right-wing

politicians viewed any union activity as communism. Employees were fired for "talking union," much less for organizing.

The history traces the development of the HEU's organizing campaigns through four decades, the battle against wage discrimination for female workers, the wage and benefit gains made during each era and the relationship of the HEU to the Canadian Labour Congress, B.C. Federation of Labour and other major labor groups.

When the National Union of Public Sector Employees (an Eastern Canadian umbrella group) merged with the National Union of Public Employees (to which the HEU belonged) in 1963 to form CUPE, a long and difficult struggle for the HEU began.

The original terms of the merger recognized the fact that the HEU wished to maintain its own identity, service its own members and continue its jurisdiction in B.C.

The HEU, in return for this commitment, agreed to provide a per capita payment to help labor continue the national battle to organize workers and keep the trade union movement financially strong.

However, later disagreements over the amount of the per capita levy payable to CUPE brought about HEU's withdrawal from CUPE, causing the union to lose its CLC affiliation.

This year, HEU will re-apply to the CLC for affiliation, hoping to restore not only our national affiliations but also our affiliation with the B.C. Fed and local labor councils, which was also lost on withdrawal from CUPE.

While many members are not even aware of the CLC/B.C. Fed non-affiliation — because of our close working relationships with other trade unions and umbrella groups — there are benefits to be obtained for both parties in re-instating HEU's status.

This and other central issues are covered in detail in the history and we hope the document will be of interest to all HEU members.

The 1956 convention of the Hospital Employees' Union.





Roy Gautier, Building Trades president, speaks to Pennyfarthing demonstrators.



# Pennyfarthing

## Battle of False Creek just the beginning

The battle against anti-union contractors that drew nation-wide attention to the Pennyfarthing luxury condominium project is really a battle for the survival of building trades unions in British Columbia.

And at issue is the right of working people in all unions to have union representation without employer or political interference.

The fight centers around an attempt by Pennyfarthing Development Corporation to award a \$20 million contract for Phase II of the Harbour Cove condominium project to the notoriously anti-union "right-to-work" contractor J.C. Kerkhoff and Sons. And it is intensified by the provincial government's efforts to give the anti-union contractors like Kerkhoff a clear advantage on government

projects in the province.

### KEY ISSUES

The building trades unions see this battle as a key to their future for a number of reasons:

- It represents part of a co-ordinated assault by the "right-to-work" movement, the provincial government and big business interests to take advantage of the desperation of unemployed workers and use it to slash wages by up to 50 per cent and undermine safety standards and other working conditions.

- It is the first major construction project of its kind in Vancouver to be awarded to an anti-union contractor.

- The first phase of the three phase project was built union by Stevenson Construction. The sec-

ond phase was 80 per cent pre-sold on prices set in the expectation that it too would be built by Stevenson. Thus the attempt to bring in the anti-union contractor Kerkhoff represents a straight grab for higher profits by reducing wage costs. (No new or additional jobs are created by switching to Kerkhoff from Stevenson. And it means union members are denied the few jobs there are in favor of bringing in workers from Alberta or using unemployed and unskilled building trades workers.)

- If developers are able to successfully establish the practice of turning union projects over to anti-union contractors, any project anywhere in the province could be treated the same way, threatening the jobs and livelihoods of all building trades workers in the province.

- The Pennyfarthing project is financed by the B.C. Central Credit Union — an institution which is supposed to serve the interests of ordinary citizens. Instead, it has turned a profit of \$8 million through flipping the property on which Harbour Cove is being built, and it has profit sharing agreements with Pennyfarthing on the project. Unions, which until now have heavily backed the credit union movement and invested hundreds of millions in pension funds in various credit unions in the province, now find these same organizations using



union funds to finance an attack on union jobs and wages.

• This is the first of a major series of projects scheduled for the False Creek area in Vancouver, including those connected with Expo 86. Premier Bennett has declared that the contracts for Expo 86 will be "open" to both union and non-union contractors. Such a policy, if implemented, will mean the further growth of the low-wage, anti-union construction sector at the expense of union building trades workers. It is effectively a declaration that B.C. has become a "right-to-work" province.

#### **"RIGHT-TO-WORK"**

The government's position is part of a major push to "de-unionize" British Columbia (starting with the construction industry) and turn the province into a mirror image of the "right-to-work" states in the southern USA. As such, the dispute at Pennyfarthing has taken on a tremendous political significance.

Bennett revealed a glimpse of how far he may be prepared to go in his anti-union crusade when he threatened British Columbians that Expo 86 would be cancelled entirely rather than accept the proposition that it should be built with union labor.

#### **BENNETT THE THREAT TO EXPO**

But Provincial Council of Carpenters President Bill Zander says the only threat to Expo 86 is from Bennett himself. "Building trades workers want to build Expo 86 on time and on budget," Zander says. "All we are insisting is that it not be used to promote the attack on our wages and conditions. If Expo 86 is in jeopardy it is Bennett's responsibility because he is the one that is trying to use it as a political football."

B.C. and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council President Roy Gautier underlined the seriousness of the dispute when he told a rally of 2,000 unemployed building trades workers on March 17 that regardless of



the outcome of the Pennyfarthing battle, the message must go out that there is a heavy price to pay by building with anti-union contractors.

Workers were particularly incensed by the fact that Stevenson Construction's owner Ken Stevenson is also a 40 per cent shareholder in Pennyfarthing. Thus, he stands to profit either way; if his company builds the project (with union labor) or if Kerkhoff builds it non-union, increasing the profit of Pennyfarthing.

#### **STEVENSON IMPOSED LOCK-OUT**

When the deal between Kerkhoff and Pennyfarthing was sealed the Stevenson crew was sent home. On March 5 pickets went up at the site to protest Stevenson's lock-out of his work force.

Kerkhoff wasted no time attempting to start work, but the picket lines held firm. In the courts he got an order limiting the number of pickets at each gate to 12. Later, a Labour Relations Board order banned picketing altogether, but as the days passed the numbers at the site grew from dozens to hundreds of demonstrators.

Kerkhoff and his sub-contractor, the equally anti-union Rempel Concrete, boasted they would drive through the lines and, at one point, a fleet of Rempel trucks arrived — some of the drivers armed with baseball bats — but still the lines held firm.

Then the LRB order was filed in the Supreme Court and contempt proceedings were launched against the Building Trades and Carpenters' Local 452.

At the March 17 rally B.C. Federation of Labour President Art Kube said the Pennyfarthing site had been declared "HOT." Fed affiliates will not provide utility hook-ups, telephones or other services to the site.

On March 23, the Supreme Court found the BCYT guilty of contempt (there was not enough evidence to implicate Local 452) and ordered the demonstrations and picketing to cease immediately. The threat of massive fines of \$75,000 per day or more loomed in the background.

The BCYT executive met and announced the demonstrations would cease.

"Any other decision could lead to developments which would drastically weaken all building trades unions and would seriously impair our on-going campaign for jobs and justice for our members," Gautier said.

The battle will now move to other arenas, including more publicity against Kerkhoff, additional action to pressure B.C. Central Credit Union, and stepped-up efforts aimed at ensuring Expo 86 is built with union labor.

(Reprinted courtesy of On the Level, a publication of the B.C. Provincial Council of Carpenters)



## FRONTLINES

### College course biased

A recent B.C. Federation of Labour bulletin warns its members about community colleges offering anti-union advice under the guise of labor studies programs.

Many community colleges offer industrial or labor relations courses that are primarily geared to the business community. But now, the Fed

says there is evidence of at least one labor studies program which is blatantly anti-union.

According to the Fed bulletin, the course, offered at Okanagan College in Kelowna, contains such union busting information as how to avoid union organizing and how to de-certify a union.

The Fed's education committee has protested strongly to the college administration for promoting such a course with the use of public funds. The committee has also asked that labor councils around the province monitor local colleges to ensure that these types of programs aren't offered.

### Corporate bailouts costly

Governments are wasting millions of dollars propping up failing industries when they should be spending the money to retrain and relocate workers, a recently-released study says.

The study, sponsored by the Ontario Economic Council, argues that plant shutdowns and company collapses are the inevitable result of a free-enterprise economy.

But instead of spending money to salvage these companies, governments should concentrate on retraining and relocating affected workers, the study says.

It goes on to state that cash bail outs to industries or individual corporations are costly and inefficient. On the other hand, the study maintains that government subsidies to workers facing layoffs in a failing industry are economically efficient and politically astute.

The study's author, Toronto economics professor Ronald Saunders, says generous retraining and relocation aid is preferable to protectionism.

In the past several years, the federal government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars bailing out floundering corporations such as Canadair and Massey-Ferguson.

### Unions must fight for social progress

The battle for social progress may at times be politically unpopular, but it is wrong for unions to shy away from this challenge, says Bob White, Canadian Director of the United Auto Workers.

"We must not get into the role of adopting programs or policies just because they have shown up as popular in recent opinion polls," said White.

Speaking in Vancouver recently, White said unions and all progressive movements must continue to go with the issues and fight for them.

The fiery and often controversial leader of Canada's auto workers also took aim at critics of the trade union movement who say that unions have outlived their usefulness.

"If society today is

satisfied we've reached utopia; that we have all the social programs we need; that workers will be guaranteed protection from the technological revolution and that employers are so benevolent that workers simply don't need a union ... then I might see the point of view which says unions aren't necessary these days."

But White said the opposite to these statements is true and that today there is a greater need for the labor movement and collective bargaining than at any time in our history.

White noted that collective bargaining especially was under attack by both governments and employers.

"Employers are now coming to the table with lists of rollback demands!



Bob White, UAW head

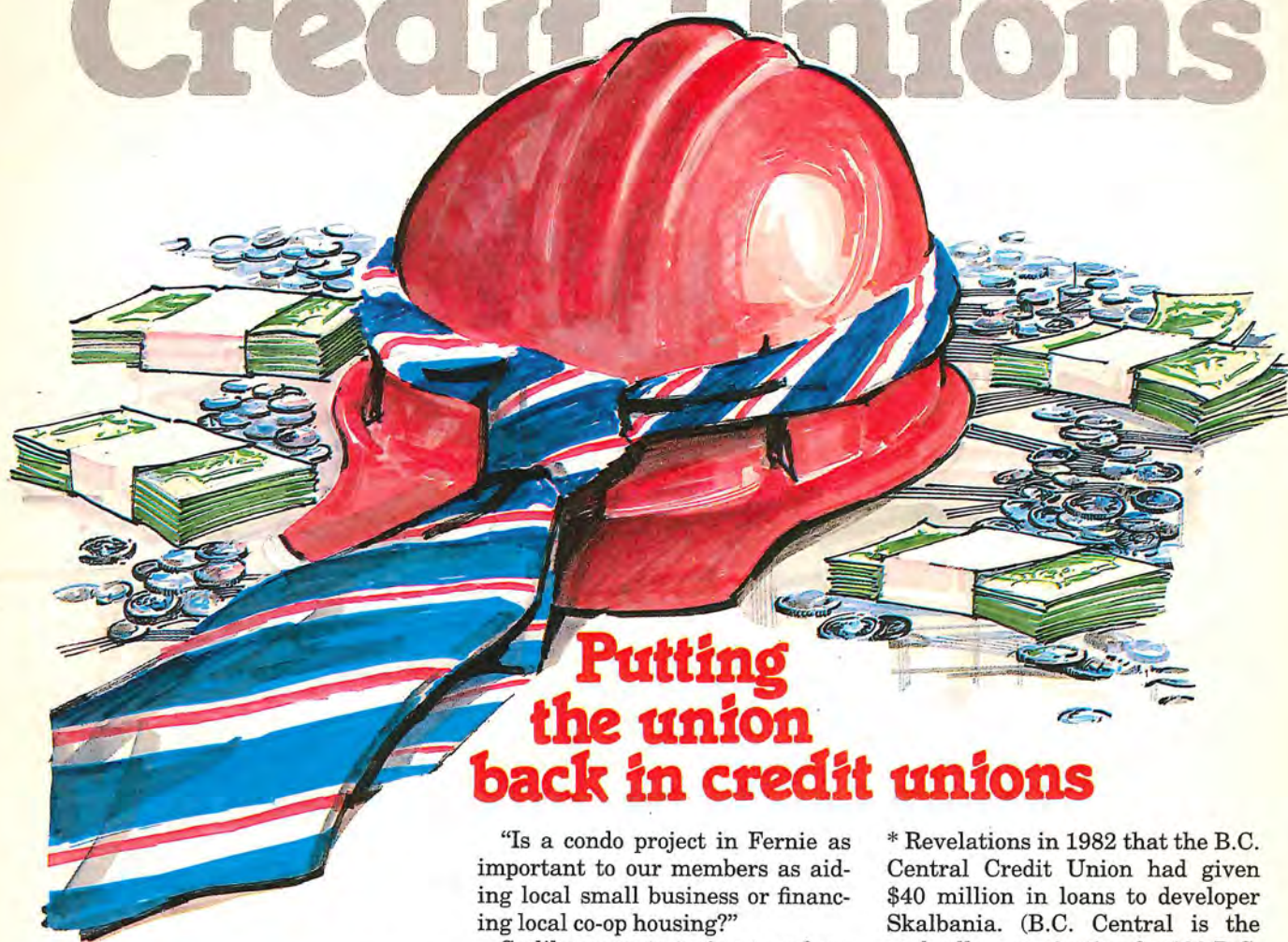
Collective bargaining was never designed for this purpose. It is, and should remain, a vehicle to achieve progress for workers."

White dismissed the employer's notion of profit sharing as a substitute for guaranteed wages and benefits. "Workers are not investors and are entitled to more stability. They should not be expected to adjust to company vagaries over which they will have little control."

The best place for employers to share profits, White said, is at the bargaining table.



# Credit Unions



## Putting the union back in credit unions

Trick question: What bank has bailed out real estate speculators like Nelson Skalbania, taken out membership in the pro-Socred Fraser Institute and financed a large condominium project to be built by a non-union firm?

Answer: It's not a bank — it's B.C.'s credit unions. And that doesn't sit well with the province's labor movement and many credit union members who feel there are already enough banks.

"The question credit unions have to ask is are they going to be big banks or are they going to be responsive to their membership?" says Darlene Marzari, a newly-elected director of the Vancouver City Savings Credit Union, the largest credit union in North America.

"Is a condo project in Fernie as important to our members as aiding local small business or financing local co-op housing?"

So like parents trying to reform a wayward child, labor unions and individuals like Marzari are trying to bring credit unions back to their co-operative roots.

The B.C. Federation of Labour has established a committee to raise the profile of labor in credit unions.

And Marzari, a former Vancouver city alderman, and David Levi, a stockbroker, were elected on a slate pledged to stressing local jobs and dropping VanCity's membership in the Fraser Institute, a right-wing think tank that regularly attacks trade unionism in its literature.

Marzari calls her and Levi's election "just the crest of a wave."

That "wave" of reform was sparked by a series of high-profile debates throughout B.C. over:

\* Revelations in 1982 that the B.C. Central Credit Union had given \$40 million in loans to developer Skalbania. (B.C. Central is the umbrella organization for 139 B.C. credit unions with combined assets of nearly \$6 billion. Local credit unions pool their capital with B.C. Central and borrow according to their financial requirements. B.C. Central also lobbies the provincial government on credit union matters and provides economic and organizational information to member credit unions.)

\* VanCity's move to pay \$1,000 to become a member of the Fraser Institute. That outraged many members who saw the Fraser Institute as the brains behind the Social Credit government's restraint legislation.

\* B.C. Central's role in financing the Harbour Cove condominium development — the luxury rental project being developed by Penny-farthing Development Corp. and



built by the non-union "right-to-work" contractor, J.C. Kerkhoff & Sons Ltd.

B.C. Central's connection with Kerkhoff, the largest non-union contractor in B.C., prompted the B.C. Federation of Labour and the building trades unions to threaten to withdraw their funds from credit unions.

The Federation eventually dropped that threat and instead established their credit union committee, hoping to reform the credit unions from inside.

"I think we'd only lose if we withdrew from credit unions," says committee chairman John Vernon, president of the International Woodworkers of America and Community Credit Union in New Westminster and Surrey. "You can't win by turning to the Bank of Commerce or the Toronto Dominion Bank. They've never been friends of labor."

That begs the question: What went wrong?

Keith Jardine, a delegates' relations officer with B.C. Central, says that credit unions generally appealed to the "working people" when they started but have since expanded their appeal to a "middle-class audience" and now have a large deposit base in suburban areas of the Lower Mainland and Victoria.

The upshot, according to the reformers, is that managers — largely drawn from banks — replaced the elected directors as the dominant force in the larger credit unions.

One labor official, who declined to be identified, says that these managers also feel "pressure" to seek the "top-dollar value" for their investments and that has led B.C. Central into "risky" deals like the contentious loans to developers such as Skalbana.

The same official adds that the election of Marzari and Levi to the VanCity board reflects a "desire to make managers accountable."

Asked about this Jardine says: "Some of the managers have been slow to understand that credit

unions were supposed to be different, and that's where some of the tension with labor has come from."

Jardine adds that labor's revived interest in credit unions has been given added urgency by the record unemployment and the declining state of B.C.'s economy.

"People in communities across B.C. are looking for alternative employment opportunities and looking for capital to start job-creating ventures. People are seeing credit unions as having an information and financial role in developing the local economies," Jardine says.

Much of the apathy affecting many credit unions can be blamed on the absence of any risk for members. Large shareholders in banks demand accountability from their managers because they have huge amounts of money at risk while the deposits of credit union members are guaranteed by the provincial government.

The IWA's Vernon says: "Unfortunately, a lot of trade unions and employee associations who founded credit unions let them go — in some cases through sheer laziness — and so it will take time to get them back.

"The same thing happened to our credit union that has happened to a lot of other credit unions. Although it was set up by the IWA, it was gradually taken over by other people in the community, people like car dealers and real estate types. But in the past 10 years, through elections, union people have gradually regained control."

Vernon says his 40-year-old credit union made a number of risky investments and lost heavily during the period when union supporters lost their dominance among the directors.

Labor, however, faces an uphill battle at a number of credit unions. The political row that erupted last year in the Fraser Valley Credit Union is a good example of this. A board of directors, led by non-union cement contractor Ewald



Trade unionists everywhere have expressed their indignation about the role played by B.C. Central Credit Union in financing the Harbour Cove condominium project.

Rempel, refused to negotiate a first contract with its employees, leading to an eight-month strike by the Union of Bank Employees, an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Then at last year's annual meeting, a pro-labor audience voted to turf out the board of directors but the courts later declared that move illegal. Elections followed last summer and a conservative slate, including Rempel, was re-elected.

Vernon says he attended B.C. Central's annual general meeting recently and felt that "the managers are the dominant people there and the elected boards are too lax in giving their managers latitude over policy."

These managers have gained prominence, says Marzari, because credit unions have become comfortable with their growth and forgot that they are supposed to be different from banks.

The Pennyfarthing case and the Fraser Institute episode are classic examples of this lapse in memory, say the reformers. Both Vernon



and Marzari said B.C. Central should never have allowed itself to get into a position where one of its projects could go non-union.

"I thought that B.C. Central should have covered its ass better ... If B.C. Central's membership is largely union then it should support union jobs and not try to get concessions after a deal is struck. They should realize we're living in a different time — a time of Jimmy Pattison (the right-wing businessman who is chairman of Expo 86). As their policy, B.C. Central should state that its projects will go union unless they think their members are mostly Kerrisdale matrons."

Bob Williams, a former NDP cabinet minister who was elected to VanCity's board on a reform slate last year, says VanCity's membership in the Fraser Institute became the "perfect symbol for what is wrong with some credit unions." He adds: "As it turned out the Fraser Institute thing was excellent because it infuriated people and got them thinking: hey, maybe credit unions aren't what we thought they were."

That sentiment was reflected in the election of Marzari and Levi, adds Williams. The 637 members who attended VanCity's annual general meeting in April, where the election results were announced, also voted to withdraw from the Fraser Institute.

So what should be the difference between a bank and a credit union?

Says Marzari: "One gives you money when you put in your card while the other asks you what can we do for you? Now maybe it's idealistic to think that but if technology can bring us computerized banking then why can't it bring us better access to decision-making?"

"Many credit unions, especially VanCity, simply aren't what they ought to be," says Williams.

"I don't think VanCity sees itself as a generally different institution from banks. And, of course, they are because they are popularly directed.

"Nevertheless, they've tended to imitate banks and so they've lent money on speculative ventures without thinking of the broader social impact their loans could have."

Williams feels VanCity's capital could be used to generate jobs. "At my request VanCity economists are going to prepare employment impact analysis for all major loans. This will allow us to follow our new policy which is that if other things are equal then we'll invest where the most jobs are created.

"I think that's a real breakthrough to get them (VanCity's directors) to think in those terms.

"Credit unions must be more

socially responsible than banks who generally fail to consider the social impact of their loans policy," says Williams. "It's a scandal that at a time of high unemployment we have about 40 per cent of all bank loans going outside the country."

Both Williams and Marzari say credit unions should restrict their loans to the areas where their members reside. Williams said credit unions should pursue the "balancing act of servicing the market competitively while also being a more concerned and thoughtful player than the other guy.

"What is needed in this whole area of capital investment is a different mind-set," says Williams.

"I was talking to a member of the Carpenters' Union the other day and he was telling me about how his union is investing their own pension funds into a housing project in downtown Vancouver that will create good housing, make money and also create jobs. There has to be more of that kind of investment by unions and credit unions."

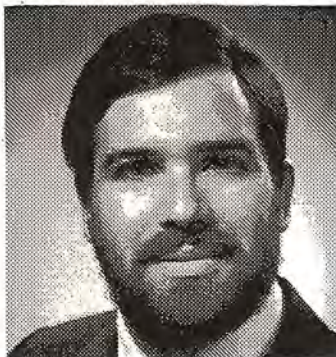
Levi, son of former NDP cabinet minister Norm Levi, says he favors a "better policy for small business people and also to see if we cannot set up a counselling service for small business."

Levi adds he would also like to see a revamped loan policy so "we no longer help property flippers or make loans that end up helping somebody in the Grand Cayman Islands."

The new board of directors have to develop an investment policy that would tell staff: "Here are the areas you invest in and here are the areas you stay out of."

There is also the question of profits. Credit union reformers like Williams, Marzari and Levi feel the members should have a say in how that money is used.

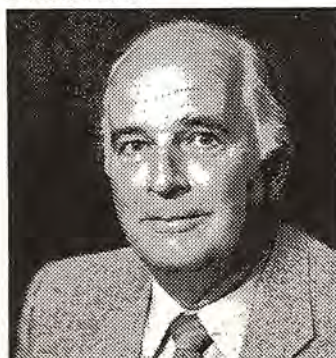
Undoubtedly, these reformers will make their voices heard in the campaign to help credit unions rediscover their roots as true alternatives to Canadian banks.



David Levi



Darlene Marzari



Bob Williams



## FRONTLINES

# A place for members to meet

Social clubs are a growing phenomenon.

In the past ten years the number and variety of social clubs has expanded rapidly.

A quick glance in the Yellow Pages shows more than 100 in the Lower Mainland alone from the Alpha Gamma Club on Marine Drive to the Yugoslav Pensioner's Club down on Campbell Avenue in Vancouver's east side.

Each club is different. Some are based on shared cultural interests. Others are made up of military veterans. While still others may be sporting fraternities.

The kind of activities in each club also differ widely. The focus of attention at the British Ex-Servicemen's Club, for instance, is its English-style pub where beer-drinking and dart-throwing are regular pastimes.

Members at the Shakespearean Arts Club, however, might pursue more sedate types of recreation.

But amidst all these clubs there is one type that is conspicuous by its absence. There is no such thing as a trade union social club.

Long a fixture on the British trade union scene, the union social club operates as a center for members to congregate and enjoy each other's company.

Brother Bill Macdonald is an HEU member at Chilliwack General Hospital. He is also HEU's first vice-president. Before immigrating to Canada, Bill worked for the United Wire Company in Edinburgh, Scotland. One of the features of the job, he says, was the social club operated by his union, the Wire Drawers and Kindred Workers.

"There is an unending list of positive aspects to having a union social club ... a meeting place where members, staff, executive and other union members can get together," he asserts.

The club Bill belonged to in Edinburgh was located in a three-storey building and had a large meeting hall, a lounge bar the size of a neighborhood pub and a T.V. room that contained two, full-size billiard tables.

Bill acknowledges that operating a union social

club is no simple task. For a province-wide union like HEU there would be the question of whether club membership would be determined by unit or by individual.

And then there's the financial aspect. "One thing is certain, a social club costs money, especially to get started," Bill says.

But Bill is not the only HEU member who thinks a union social club is a good idea.

Brother John Frew is another ex-Scot with pleasant memories of Old Country union clubs. John, an HEU member for 20 years and a member of the Vancouver General unit executive, thinks a union social club would work here.

"The whole idea is to promote trade unionism and that's what a club does," John asserts. "I don't see why it wouldn't work here."

John recalls that his home town of Glasgow boasted a number of union clubs including a 3,000-seat large facility known as Trades' House and operated by a joint council of unions. "That place was massive and the entertainment and food there was as good as you get at the Hotel Vancouver," John says.

John admits that there would be obstacles to establishing an HEU-sponsored club but believes that once it got off the ground, such a club would gain wide support.

For people like Bill Macdonald, union social clubs are an idea whose time has come. And Bill believes that the first step to getting an HEU social club started is to find out how many members favor the idea.

"Strong membership interest is essential if we want to proceed with this idea," Bill says.

## Membership survey complete

Results of HEU's first province-wide membership survey are now being tabulated.

The survey of more than 500 HEU members was conducted in mid-April after the provincial executive decided there was a need for more specific information on members' concerns.

A Vancouver research

firm, Marktrend Marketing Research, is presently analyzing the information collected. A full report is expected early this month.

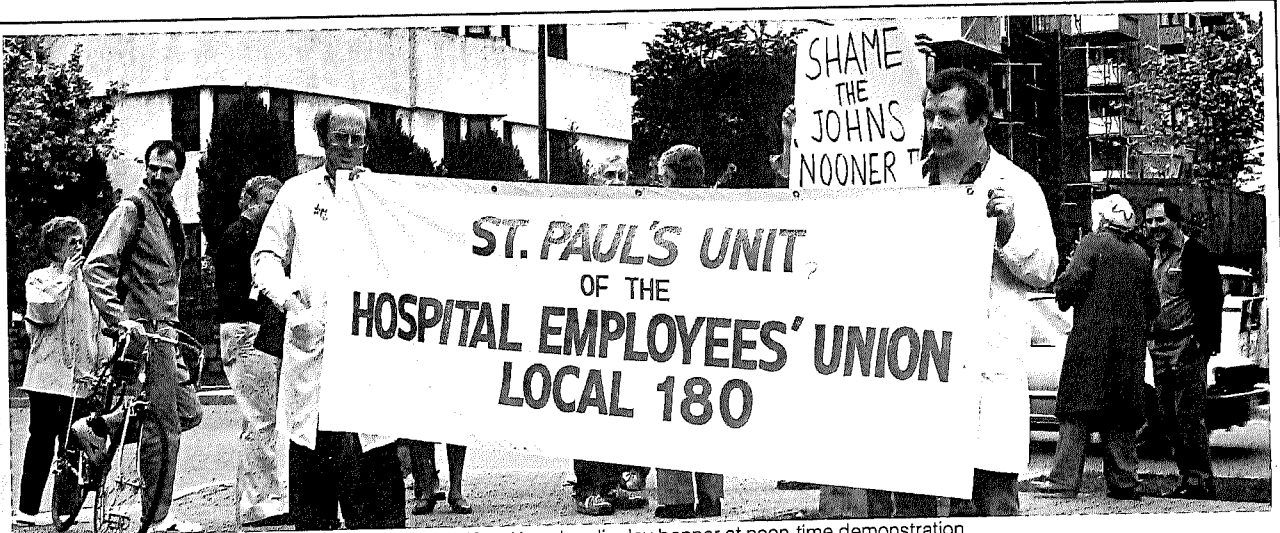
Marktrend vice-president Dr. Bruce Campbell said the level of co-operation received from HEU members polled was the highest his firm had ever experienced.

"This indicates that health care workers are aware of the issues and want to take an active role in bringing about improvements," said Dr. Campbell.

The survey sought information on union communications, collective bargaining, arbitration, government policy and union representation.



## LETTERS



St. Paul's executive members Fred Muzin, left, and Tom Knowles display banner at noon-time demonstration.

### St. Paul's unit "Shames the Johns"

The St. Paul's Unit is very concerned with the welfare of our members, not only in the workplace, but in the community as well. For this reason we have supported groups and associations whose aims have been the betterment of our mem-

bers' lives.

Most recently, we participated in a noontime demonstration in support of the "Shame the Johns" Committee, a West End group devoted to cleaning up the problems caused by prostitution in their area.

Our main concern is for female members leaving the hospital after late shifts and being solicited or harassed while on the way home.

We hope that by expressing our concern in an active and constructive way that we can

improve safety in the area and lessen our members' exposure to harassment.

Fred Muzin  
Assistant  
secretary-treasurer  
St. Paul's unit

### Protect health care

The articles in the March issue of the Guardian have moved me to write my first letter to the editor. I was particularly impressed with the articles on Medicare and

Privatization.

Our senior citizens pioneered the Medicare system. They deserve to have quality health care, guaranteed along with every other British

Columbian, in the event of illness or disability.

With government cuts in the home care programs and the threat of privatization many sick and disabled individuals will be unnecessarily forced to leave their home and be institutionalized.

We have to protect our health care system because people are a priority. Healthy, happy working people will invest and spend their dollars to promote our economy. I am proud to be a British Columbian and I support Solidarity.  
(Mrs.) Terry Lukach  
MSA Unit  
Abbotsford

### "Interesting and informative"

Having just read the March issue of the Hospital Guardian, I feel obliged to write and congratulate you on the new format.

I found the articles interesting, informative and very easy to read. It is publications like the new Guardian that will help increase the aware-

ness of the public to health care and union issues.

Who better to speak out for the preservation of health care than health care workers?

Lisa Hansen  
Labour Relations Officer  
Health Sciences Association

### Marching down Main Street

Why is the HEU supporting a communist plot? The recent Walk for Peace on April 28 is nothing short of a communist idea.

Indirectly, what these people are asking the communists is if we disarm don't come over here and bomb us. How insane can a person's thinking be. Once disarmed, the Russians and any other eastern country will be marching down Main Street.

I ask that the union offer no further support to such a cause.  
J.B. Latham  
Surrey Unit



# PEACE WALK 84

Sunshine and clear skies were the order of the day April 28 as 115,000 people crowded into the streets to demonstrate for disarmament in Vancouver's annual Walk for Peace.

And the massive turnout once again established Vancouver as the peace capital of Canada. Similar demonstrations in Calgary and Toronto on the same day drew smaller but equally enthusiastic

crowds.

The Vancouver march was led by Mayor Mike Harcourt and attracted groups from every sector of the community. Trade unionists, political parties, students, professionals, church groups and many others took part in the Walk.

The Hospital Employees' Union was, as in past years, well represented. HEU members carried the union's banner, which read "Peace

is the Ultimate Health Victory" in the trade union column of the march.

Jack Gerow, HEU secretary-business manager, said the walk was a clear sign that more and more people were taking a stand against the arms race. "People are beginning to realize that the arms race is an economic threat because it takes up so much of the nation's resources," Gerow said.







## Destined for permanent disability ?

Health care workers in B.C. are hurting, and in more ways than one.

Most obviously they are hurting from an increased number of work-related injuries.

Workers' Compensation Board statistics show that health care workers are getting injured at a remarkable rate. Over the past five years, the total number of injuries to health care workers in Hospital Employees' Union job designations has jumped by an astonishing 25 per cent.

Back injuries among health care workers in HEU job designations

have increased at an equally dramatic rate.

According to WCB figures, between 1978 and 1982 the number of back injury claims among health care workers increased from 814 to 1074, an increase of 32 per cent. Statistics for 1983 are not available.

But the rising injury rate is only part of the painful occupational health and safety problem facing health care workers in B.C.

The other part of the problem is the Workers' Compensation Board — the agency responsible for preventing work-related injuries and for taking care of workers who suffer an injury.

A number of recent moves by the WCB and the ministry of labor, the provincial ministry responsible for WCB operations, have led many



observers to conclude that the WCB is heading in a distinctly anti-worker/pro-employer direction.

And WCB critics say this direction means it will be tougher for injured workers to obtain fair treatment and easier for employers to avoid their responsibilities to the compensation system.

According to Keith Graham, director of occupational health and safety for the B.C. Federation of Labour, there is a "well-planned, deftly executed program" to destroy B.C.'s compensation system, a system that has evolved over the past 60 years.

That system provides for a no-fault insurance scheme that employers pay for on the basis of annual assessments. In return, workers give up their right to sue a negligent employer in the event of an injury.

The underlying theory of this type of insurance system first emerged in England at the turn of the century and was most recently enunciated during the tenure of Terence Ison, WCB chairman from 1972 to 1975.

The cost of preventing injuries and of compensating injured workers is a legitimate cost of doing business, Ison stated, and as such, a cost the employer should pay for.

Ison further explained that only employers can control compensation costs by maintaining a safe work environment thus reducing the frequency and severity of injuries.

"Employers have complete control over working conditions," says the Federation's Graham. "If they want to cut compensation costs all they have to do is make workplaces safer."

But now this basic and equitable approach to workers' compensation is being altered. Graham and others attribute the changes to the provincial government and its persistent restraint philosophy.

As proof of this assertion, they say, it is only necessary to examine some of the recent developments which have occurred at the WCB

and which have been initiated by the Social Credit government.

The first of these moves was the surprise resignation last December of WCB chairman Art Gibbons and the appointment by Labour Minister Bob McClelland of current chairman Walter Flesher.

Gibbons, former director of health and safety for Labour Canada, had a reputation as a reasonable administrator who sought to keep the WCB free of any political interference from Victoria.

Jim Jarmson, business manager of the 1,500-member WCB Employees' Union, describes Gibbons as a "people person." Gibbons believed in the need for economic restraint, Jarmson says, but not as enthusiastically as his overseers in the ministry of labor.

Flesher, on the other hand, has a reputation for a tough, pro-business approach. Since his arrival at the WCB's monolithic Richmond headquarters, the former corporate lawyer has stressed the need for Socred-style restraint.

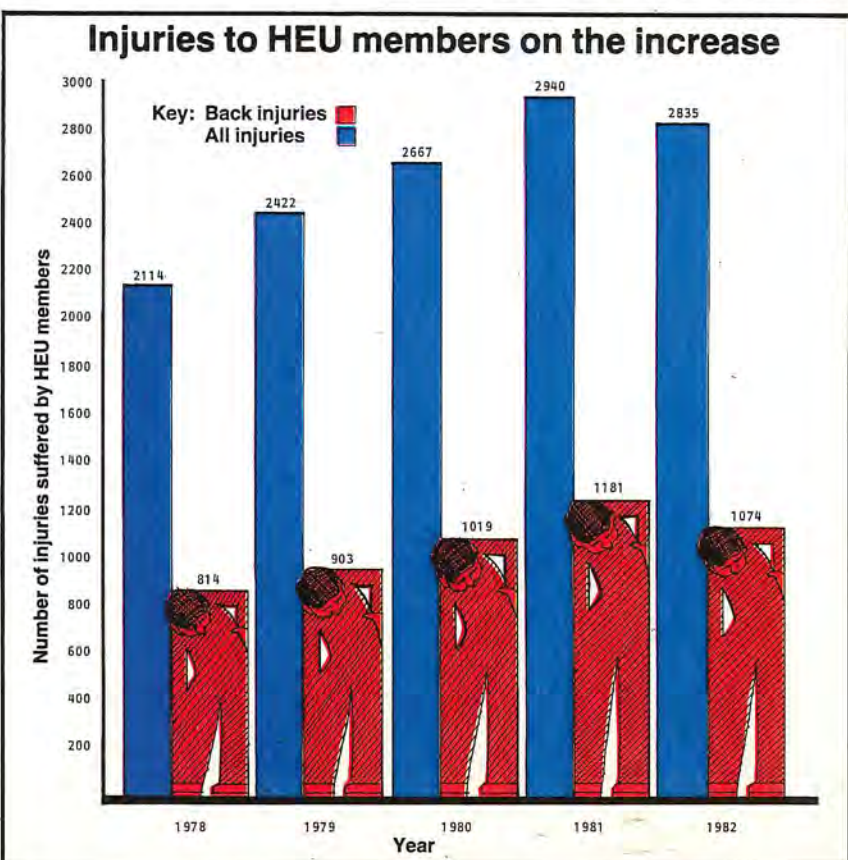
Bruce Elphinstone, a member of the Federation's occupational health and safety committee, notes that Flesher's background provides him with no previous WCB experience.

"He has no expertise in health and safety except that he assisted employers when they appealed WCB decisions," Elphinstone says. "This was a political appointment. The government wants to politicize the Board and it's moving people into position so it can do anything it wants."

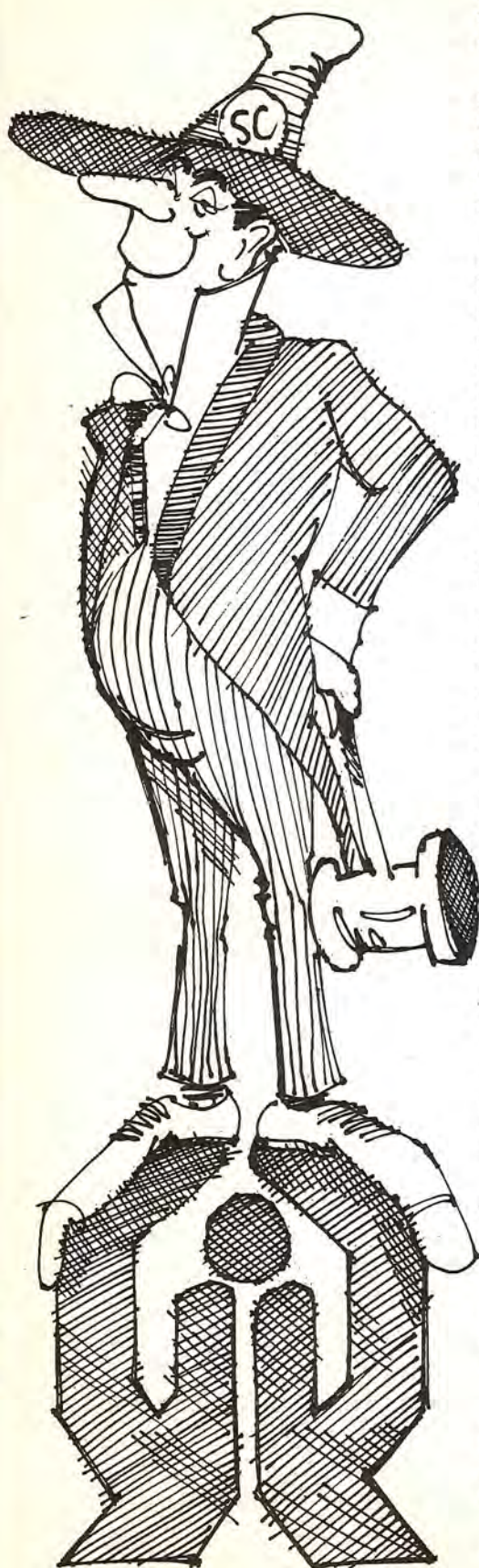
Since his take over, Flesher has dumped several key WCB executives and replaced them with people more in tune with his corporate philosophy.

Foremost among these is the appointment of Bill Greer, former Employers' Council safety officer, to the position of executive director of the WCB's industrial health and safety department.

The Employers' Council has long argued that the WCB is too stringent in the area of accident







prevention resulting in too many regulations which interfere with an employer's ability to function.

But perhaps the most controversial move by the WCB was the freezing of employers' assessment rates for 1984. Flesher announced this move in early January and critics immediately attacked it.

In a statement made shortly after the assessment decision, the B.C. Fed said the move would cost the Board \$66 million in lost revenue and would mean either a reduction in service or a cost shifting to general revenue. Fed president Art Kube described the assessment freeze as a "serious departure from the principles of workers' compensation."

Board insiders say that the \$66 million assessment freeze is a deliberate effort by the government to ease the employers' cost of compensation. And to make up the difference in revenue the government will have to pump money from general revenue and reduce costs at the Board.

The process of cutting costs is already underway. Flesher has promised to reduce the number of staff as the principal means of trimming the Board's administrative budget and since taking over the chairman's duties, he has axed more than 40 staff members in the claims and accident prevention departments. In early May, the WCB closed its Prince Rupert regional office as a cost-saving measure, laying-off staff and depriving workers in the area of adequate service.

The WCBEU's Jarmson says the resounding message coming from Flesher is that he is there to "downsize" the organization through staff cuts. And although the cuts have not yet reached critical proportions, they are already having a negative effect.

"Everyone is demoralized," Jarmson says. "Morale is terrible. Nothing is getting done because people are sitting around waiting for their pink slip."

This observation is echoed by sources inside the WCB. A middle

manager with more than 10 years' experience at the WCB says people there are scared by the continual talk of staff cuts.

"But what's happening to the Board is the same as all public sector organizations," the same manager says. "And it will stay this way as long as the Socreds are around."

The WCB's new corporate philosophy towards workers' compensation is appearing in at least two other critical areas of the operation: claims adjudication and accident prevention.

The first evidence that the WCB would be applying its rules differently came several months ago with the revelation that it was planning a change to the claims appeal system.

Up till now, an independent body known as the Boards of Review heard appeals to decisions made by the WCB's claims department. But now, Labour Minister Bob McClelland says this system will be scrapped and replaced by an appeal tribunal hired and paid for by the WCB.

The reason for the change, according to McClelland, is to eliminate the lengthy delays caused by the current appeal structure. In some cases, it takes up to 18 months for an appeal to be heard.

But under McClelland's proposed system a worker unhappy with a decision on his claim would have to appeal that decision to the same people who made it in the first place. The possibility of an unbiased appeal review system would be negligible.

One claims administrator, who asked not to be identified, recently admitted that this kind of new appeal system could open the door for abuse because the staff needed for such an appeal system would have to come from the WCB's present claims adjudication staff.

Critics say the WCB has also adopted a new pro-employer attitude towards the crucial area of accident prevention.

Probably the clearest example of this is the WCB's decision to shelve



proposed safety regulations for farmworkers, despite strong opposition to the move from the labor movement and community groups.

"This decision only benefits the owners of farms," says Mike Kramer, secretary-treasurer of the B.C. Fed. "We are sure that any future safety regulations for farmworkers will be prepared by farmers for their own advantage."

In addition, the WCB has abandoned the idea of a co-operative approach between labor and management as a way of reducing injuries, something it was attempting under the leadership of Gibbons.

Some observers fear these changes are the first indications of a move by the WCB to eliminate accident prevention regulations and leave it up to employers to police safety at the work site.

Peter Dent, occupational health and safety officer for the B.C. Nurses' Union, suggests that deregulation is a real possibility given the ideological direction the WCB is moving in.

"The worst is yet to come," Dent says. "It's possible the WCB will cancel accident prevention regula-

tions for certain industries."

Those kind of fears are not totally unfounded. In May, two of the WCB's safety inspection sections were axed without warning.

The first to go was the engineering division of the WCB's accident prevention department. The engineering section was responsible for investigating major structural failures such as the one that occurred in 1981 during construction of the Bentall Four office complex resulting in the deaths of four workers.

The next was the WCB's hearing branch which monitored industrial noise levels and which aided workers who were suffering from hearing loss.

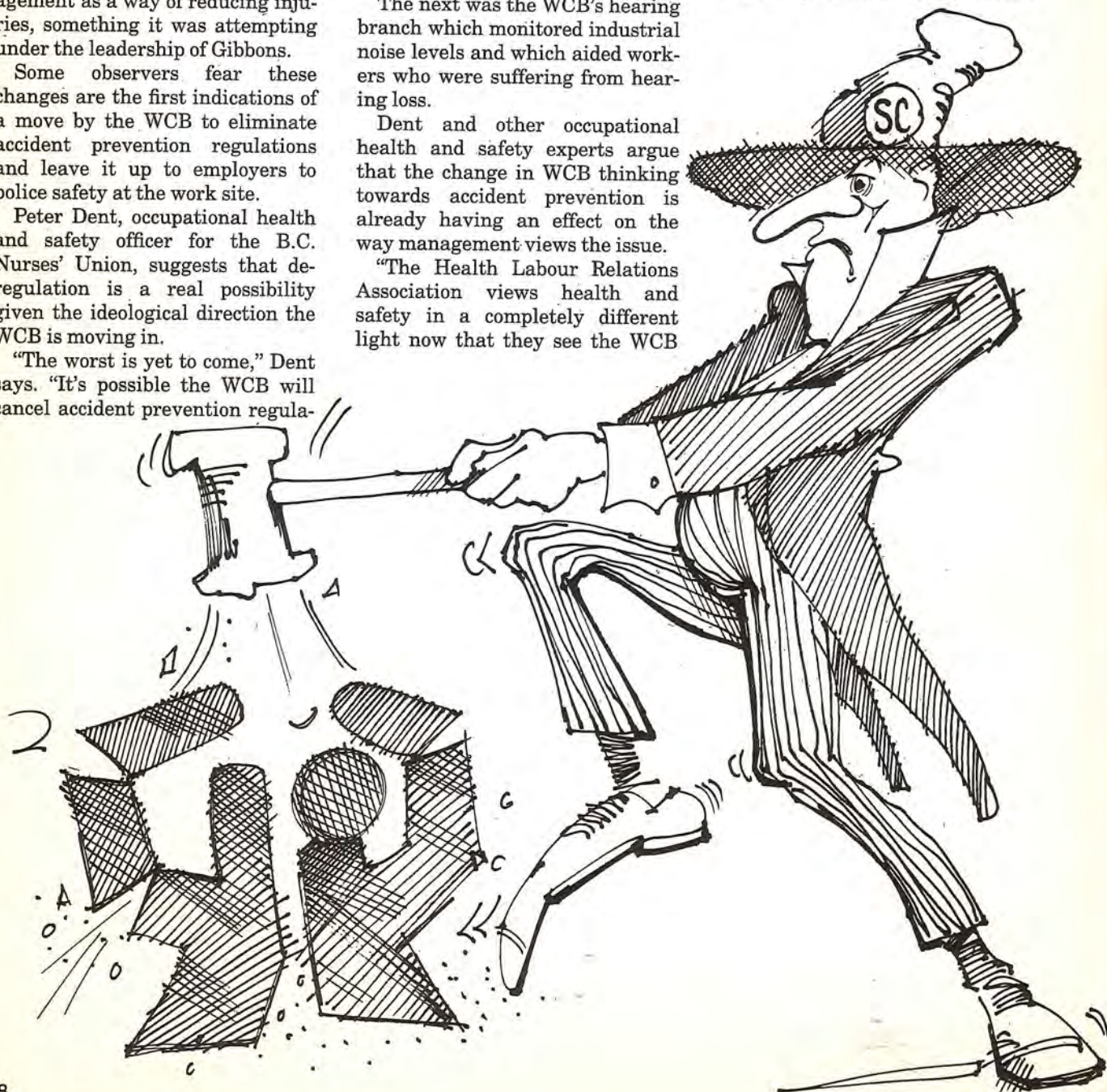
Dent and other occupational health and safety experts argue that the change in WCB thinking towards accident prevention is already having an effect on the way management views the issue.

"The Health Labour Relations Association views health and safety in a completely different light now that they see the WCB

taking a different approach," Dent says.

In April, HLRA pulled out of a joint labor/management committee studying safety in B.C. hospitals. "Obviously, they (HLRA) don't care about the safety of hospital workers or the critical problem of back injuries," says Jack Gerow, HEU secretary-business manager.

The combination of staff cuts, a more stringent attitude to claims adjudication and a pro-employer accident prevention policy means





health care workers can expect more injuries with less chance of proper compensation and treatment.

"The WCB is turning its back on workers," says HEU's Gerow. "Like so many other things in B.C., workers' compensation will take a back seat to profits and at the expense of the individual."

But HEU members are not entirely without protection against the politically-motivated changes taking place at the WCB.

The first is their unit occupational health and safety committee. Under article 58 of HEU's master agreement, each unit is entitled to a joint safety committee with equal representation from union and management. Experience has proven that these committees can be an effective force in achieving work site safety improvements.

It is also important to note that existing WCB industrial health and safety regulations give workers the right to refuse unsafe work. This means if an HEU member is required to perform a job which is unsafe or likely to create an undue hazard, such as strenuous lifting without proper aid, that member has the right to refuse.

This important right is supported by the B.C. Labour Code. If

the refusal to perform unsafe work results in a work stoppage, the law states that this type of stoppage shall not be considered a strike.

Gerow says HEU staff are available to help any member needing assistance obtaining WCB benefits or filing an appeal on a rejected claim.

In the meantime, the overwhelming conclusion is that workers and trade unions will continue to be alienated from the WCB as long as the provincial government persists with its plans to remake the Board in its own ideological image.

And once that transformation is complete, chances are B.C. workers will be hurting for a long time.





# Double

## Wage controls penalizing workers in



HEU members working in B.C.'s long-term care facilities are being discriminated against, and the union plans to do something about it.

The discrimination takes the form of lower wages and sub-standard benefits compared to those paid to HEU members in acute-care hospitals.

Moreover, the union argues that this type of discrimination is encouraged and endorsed by the province's controversial wage control legislation, the Compensation Stabilization Act.

And while this legislation affects both publicly and privately operated long-term care institutions, it



People inside Woodgrove Shopping Mall gather to watch the HEU protesters outside.

is private institutions which provide some of the worst examples of the act's injustices.

In a recent letter to CSP commissioner Ed Peck, HEU secretary-business manager Jack Gerow argues that wage controls should not be imposed on any group of workers and specifically notes that CSP controls are not legally applicable to employees of privately owned facilities.

Gerow's letter states that private institutions receive the same government subsidies as publicly owned hospitals. However, private facilities are under no obligation to use these subsidies to pay fair wages or benefits to employees.

"No matter what wages are paid to employees . . . the cost to the taxpayer will neither increase nor decrease," Gerow said.

In other words, a private long-term care operator receives a "block" of funds from the government. The operator is then free to use those funds to turn whatever

profit he sees fit. In most cases this is accomplished by paying sub-standard wages and benefits to HEU members.

"CSP legislation was never designed to regulate the wages of employees wherever an employer receives government funds," says Gerow.

Prior to the introduction of CSP, the wages and benefits of newly-certified union members in long-term care units were traditionally brought up to the standard rates in the HEU master agreement.

This is no longer the rule because of CSP wage controls. Instead we see long-term care



# trouble

## long term care



Jack Gerow, HEU secretary-business manager, speaks with news media at anti-privatization demonstration in Nanaimo.

operators stampeding to the CSP offices in an effort to have first contracts brought under controls.

And controls mean that an aide working for \$5 per hour will get no more than a 5 per cent wage increase. Five per cent of five dollars is 25 cents. Does anyone really believe that consumer confidence and spending will recover if health care workers are limited to only 25-cents-an-hour wage increases?

HEU is determined to fight this type of discrimination.

The union recently retained the services of a Vancouver law firm to prepare a constitutional challenge to CSP legislation. HEU intends to proceed with the challenge on two fronts.



HEU members protested against the "profitization" of health care in Nanaimo May 12 in front of Woodgrove Realty. The real estate business was targeted because its owner is also a part-owner of Malaspina Lodge, a for-profit long term care facility in Nanaimo.

First, it is the union's contention that CSP controls violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and are discriminatory.

"The legislation is discriminatory ... in that it singles out the public sector as the only sector subject to controls," Gerow says.

"It is also discriminatory in the way it treats most harshly women, ethnic minorities and others at the lower end of the economic scale."

On the second front, the union argues that CSP legislation does not apply to employees of privately-owned health care institutions because these institutions are not government agencies.

In addition to the legal challenge, HEU is taking special aim at private operators who use CSP to avoid providing decent work environments.

The union has commissioned a special study to examine working conditions and standards of health care in privately owned long-term care facilities.

The study, carried out by Camosun College sociology instructor Noel Schacter, examined six privately-owned institutions on Vancouver Island and compared them with their publicly-run counterparts. The preliminary findings from the study reveal that residents in private institutions generally pay higher costs and receive lower quality service.

It also revealed that working conditions for HEU members at private facilities were inferior and that wages in all cases lagged well behind the wages of HEU members in acute care hospitals.

The study is expected to form the basis of a province-wide campaign by HEU to expose the reality of profitization in health care and its effects on both patients and staff.



## PEOPLE IN FOCUS

### Como Lake sponsors foster child

Paula Andrea Montoya is seven years old and lives in Tulua, a remote village in the South American nation of Colombia.

Unlike most Canadian children her age, Paula can neither read nor write. She has never been to school. Both Paula's mother and father are illiterate as well. And not only is Paula unable to read or write, there is little chance to obtain these skills because of the extreme poverty her family lives under.

But now, due to the efforts of the 70 HEU members at Coquitlam's Como Lake Hospital, Paula will have a chance to attend school and to enjoy a better quality of life.

Sister Barbara Roberts, Como Lake chairperson, explains that the members decided at their March unit meeting to take part in the Foster Parents Plan of Canada.

After making all the necessary arrangements, they were informed in late-April that they had been assigned responsibility for Paula. "We were hoping to sponsor a girl," Barbara says, "because young girls there have such limited opportunities, especially when it comes to schooling."

The unit's first \$23-per-month contribution paid for Paula to enter pre-school. The regular donations will help to pay for

the cost of Paula's education and for other family needs such as food, clothing and health care.

Barbara says that besides money, foster parents are encouraged to send plenty of letters

and post cards. Fortunately, Como Lake has a Spanish-speaking member who is able to translate letters by the other members who take turns writing each month.

"We're all very excited

about having Paula as a foster child," Barbara states. "It makes all of us feel good."

And for Paula Montoya, having 70 foster parents is probably a good feeling too.

### Picking cotton for a cause



Canadian delegation shows Solidarity with Nicaraguan workers.

Picking cotton in the blazing heat of the Nicaraguan highlands while surrounded by the threat of attack from right-wing guerrillas is enough to faze the toughest individual.

But it didn't bother Brother Ron Jagpal, a 23-year-old HEU member from Burnaby General, who spent four weeks this spring in Nicaragua as part of a group of international volunteers helping with the country's

cotton harvest.

"It was worth it," Ron said after his return to Canada. "The people were so friendly and I got a first hand look at what is happening there."

Four years ago, Sandinista rebels ousted the CIA-backed regime of Anastasio Somoza and set up a socialist state. Since then guerrilla forces supplied by the U.S. military have been waging a war to overthrow the Sandinista gov-

ernment.

"Our group (the B.C. Nicaraguan Solidarity Committee) went down there to show the Nicaraguan people that we support their struggle. We wanted to help in a concrete way," Ron explains. And help they did.

The 35 B.C. volunteers joined more than 2,000 other volunteers from around the world to harvest Nicaragua's valuable cotton and coffee crops. Without the cash



## PEOPLE IN FOCUS

from the sale of these crops, Nicaragua's economy would collapse.

Ron's group, which spent most of its time on a 3,000-hectare state farm in the northern Nicaraguan province of Leon, also helped dig dry wells to improve drainage in the neighboring villages.

But four weeks of picking cotton is the hard way to find out about the problems facing the Nicaraguan people. Last month, a less strenuous opportunity for HEU members came available.

A leading member of Fetsalud, Nicaragua's national health workers' union, toured B.C. and visited a number of HEU units including Grace, Children's, and G.F. Strong.

Mercedes Navarrate, Fetsalud's director of international relations, spent a week in B.C. during which time she addressed the NDP lead-

ership convention and met with Vancouver city council. She also met and had lunch with HEU's provincial executive.

Navarrate told B.C. audiences that her union is concentrating on improving the health of all Nicaraguans, a difficult

task because of the lack of material resources and technical expertise.

She explained that so much of the country's resources are used to fight the attacks of anti-Sandinista forces that critical areas like health care are deprived.

"The only way to free

up these resources is to restore peace to Nicaragua and eliminate the threat of American interference," she told one public meeting.

Navarrate's B.C. tour was endorsed by HEU who also contributed \$500 towards the cost of the tour.

### Central supply technicians take special training course

After more than a year of specialized training, four HEU members at Victoria General Hospital have recently become the first registered central supply technicians in the province.

Sister Joyce Townsley, Brother Robert Hotchin, Sister Barbara Kerr and Sister Myrtle Donaghy, completed the training this spring and received their diplomas after writing two separate exami-

nations.

Joyce explains that the training program was offered as a correspondence course through Purdue University in the United States. It's the only program of its type in North America.

"The program focuses on the latest techniques for sterilizing and disinfecting hospital materials," Joyce says. "Central supply has developed into a specialized body of

knowledge in the crucial area of disinfection and sterilization," she says.

Joyce says she and her three co-workers took the course because they wanted to improve their knowledge in the important area of central supply.

"The course taught us everything we needed to know in this field and we all believe that it will give us a better understanding of all aspects of our jobs."

## MILESTONES

The Inn of the Rockies in Kimberley was the scene of a recent retirement party for Sister Effie Gillespie, an HEU member for the past eight years.

Effie worked as a resident care worker at the Kimberley Special Care unit since the first day the facility opened its doors. Popular with residents and co-workers alike, Effie was honored by

both groups at separate celebrations.

Effie plans to spend her retirement in the east Kootenay city "probably getting some yard work done around the house." She says the most difficult thing about being retired is that she doesn't get to see her friends from the unit, especially the residents.

"I miss all the old dears," Effie says, "but

the home is close enough for me to drop in and visit."

After 15 years of service, Sister Grace Marchment, a housekeeper at Victoria's Mount Tolmie unit, retired on April 20.

Grace was an active HEU member during her time at Mount Tolmie. She held the positions of chairperson, vice-chairperson, warden and

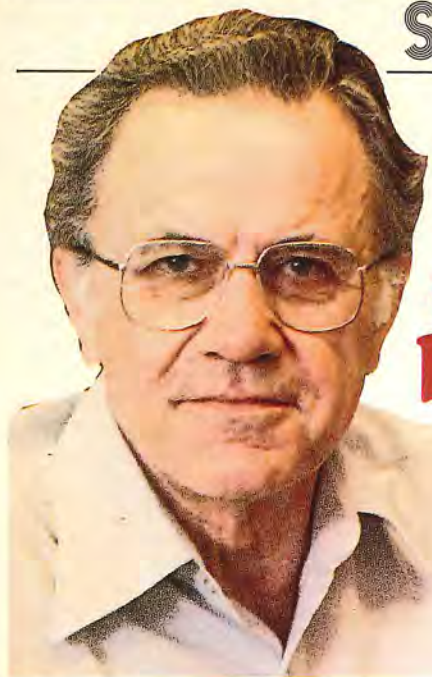
trustee in the unit.

An avid bird fancier, Grace has served as a judge at various bird shows. The Order of the Eastern Star and the local bowling league are other community interests that take up Grace's time.

Now that she is retired, Grace says she is looking forward to spending more time with her birds and "getting a well deserved rest."



## SPEAKING OUT



### **Pulp industry settlement custom-made by employers and government**

By Art Gruntman  
Regional vice-president  
Canadian Paperworkers Union

The introduction and passage of Bill 18 (otherwise known as the "Pulp and Paper Collective Bargaining Assistance Act") on April 3, has destroyed the bargaining rights of union members in the pulp and paper industry. But it is important to recognize that the passage of this bill was the result of outright collusion between the government and pulp and paper employers.

To understand these assertions, one must go back to the commencement of the industry-wide lockout on Feb. 2.

During the months of December and January, just prior to the lockout, production records were set in a number of mills. In effect, there was no threat of job action even though the members of our union had worked without an agreement for some seven months.

Despite this good record, the employer did lock us out saying it was because we did not want to go back to the bargaining table, which simply was not true.

The real reasons for the lockout

were to soften up our members making it easier to force an agreement of the employers choosing, including one that contained concessions, and to drive up the price of pulp.

The employers succeeded in driving up the price of pulp. By locking us out, they created a shortage of pulp, causing the price to rise.

But they were not successful in softening up our members. And this is the reason they sent their lobbyists to Victoria to ask the government to pass legislation to get the mills running again.

The matter of the lobbyists being in Victoria and their purpose for being there is contained in Hansard, the official record of B.C.'s legislative assembly.

It is obvious that the government complied with the employers' request and passed Bill 18. Briefly, the act states that the lockout must be lifted and the mills must start running. There can be no strike or any kind of job action, even though we still do not have an agreement.

If there is any type of job action the government will impose an agreement. The employers and unions were to go back to the bargaining table and if they could not

come to an agreement, the government would impose one.

Government also gave cabinet the authority to vary the agreement by regulation any time it chooses. Further, the act does not have an automatic expiry date, but instead, it can only be repealed by cabinet regulation.

In effect, the pulp industry trade unions no longer have any true bargaining rights. Once the threat of strike action is removed, there is no need for the employer to bargain in good faith. That is, of course, precisely what has happened in this case.

What can be done?

The obvious answer is to elect a government that has some understanding and sympathy with working people. That, of course, can't happen for several more years.

The only alternative is for the trade union movement to unite in a strong fight-back campaign. We must inform our members and then mobilise them to oppose extremely harmful legislation.

Anything less on our part will only be an invitation to the Socreds to continue to impose this detrimental type of legislation whenever they choose. We simply cannot let that happen.