

Guardian



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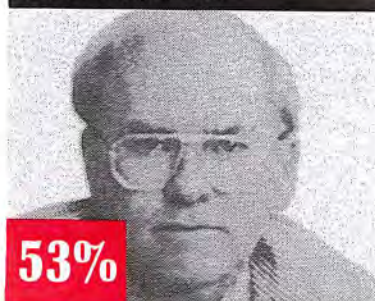
THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES UNION

JUNE/JULY 1991



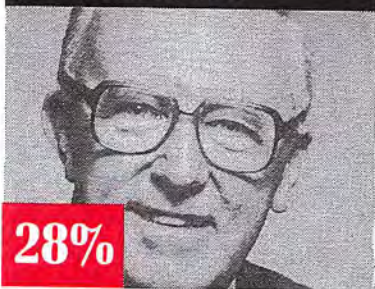
Victoria gave its health bosses pay hikes of up to 54% while HEU members received 9.4%

KEN FYKE, CVHS



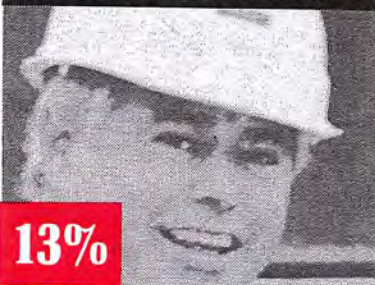
53%

JAMES FLETT, VGH



28%

RON MULCHEY, ST. PAUL'S



13%

A special HEU investigation has revealed that B.C.'s health care bosses received pay raises of up to 54 percent between 1988 and 1990.

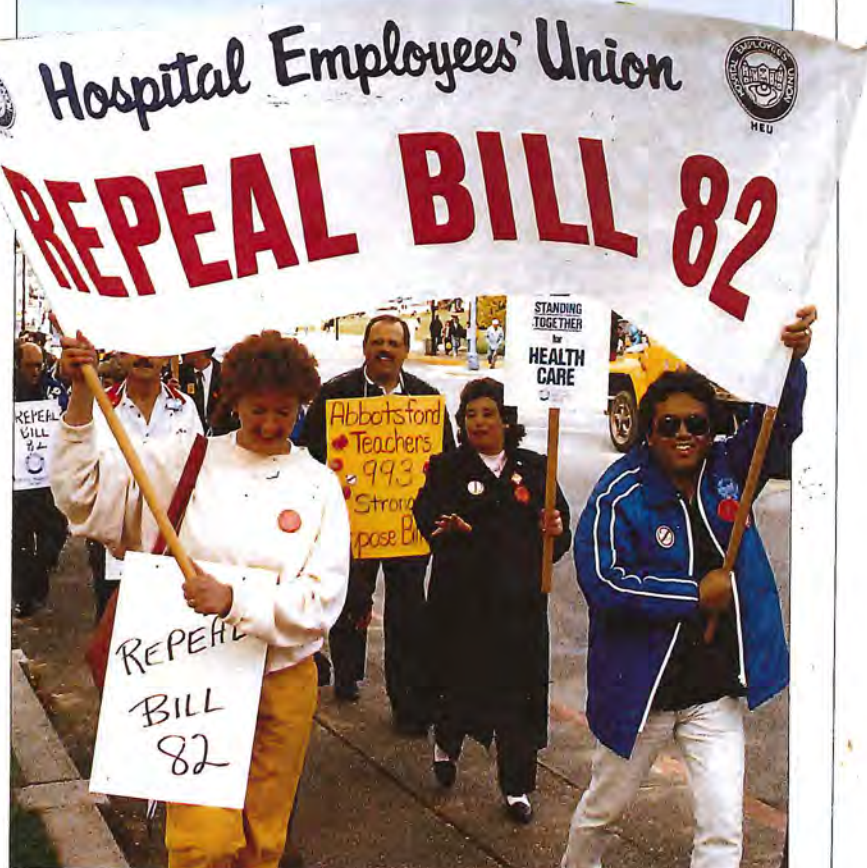
During the same period, HEU members' wages rose only 9.4 percent.

Among the big winners:

- **Ken Fyke**, president of Greater Victoria Hospital Society, whose pay rose 53 percent between 1988 and 1990 to \$183,659.
- **James Flett**, president of Vancouver General Hospital, whose pay rose 28 percent to \$165,254; and
- **Ron Mulchey**, president of St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, whose pay rose 13 percent in a single year to give him \$155,040 in 1990.

Labour wins Harcourt pledge to repeal Bill 82

HEU members joined the B.C. Teachers Federation and hundreds of other public sector workers May 7 for a massive protest in Victoria against the Social Credit government's wage controls. Details page 3.



It's time for a change in the Legislature

ON May 7 and 8 HEU joined other public sector unions in Victoria to talk to all Social Credit and NDP members of the Legislature about repealing Bill 82, the legislation that eliminates free collective bargaining in the public sector.

I came away from that experience with even greater conviction that, for the sake of the health care system alone, there has to be a change in government in Victoria.

The provincial government is in a state of utter confusion and the people of the province are paying for it.

In health care, finance minister John Jansen (formerly minister of health), introduced a provincial budget which purports to increase hospital budgets by 7.5 percent.

In a government propaganda piece delivered to every household in British Columbia early in June, the minister boasted that his budget would not result in lay-offs or cuts in services in health care.

Tell that to the 29 LPN's and orderlies and 45 RN's who are losing their jobs due to budget deficit at Vancouver General Hospital!



COMMENT

by CARMELA ALLEVATO

At the same time the structure of provincial government funding of health care collective bargaining settlements has been changed. Health care facilities have been told by the government that contract settlements must come out of the increase in their operating budgets.

Yet each hospital has been given a different percentage increase (for example, 4.1 percent to Smithers, to Kitimat 5.3 percent, to Vancouver General 7.1 percent and so on). One can only conclude that this restructured funding was done to make easier the job of Ed Lien, the man in charge of contract rollbacks under Bill 82.

Ed Lien has expressed his eagerness to roll back health care collective

agreements if an employer has to reduce services to pay for them.

It's clear that the government's decisions are made for political expediency.

Bill 82 itself is a case in point. During 1989 and 1990, hospital administrators quietly gave themselves hefty wage increases and the number of non-union personnel in management positions grew at an alarming rate. Where was the provincial government then?

It wasn't until 1991, when the collective agreements of health care workers, government employees, teachers and municipal workers were up for renegotiation, that the Socreds started to talk about the need to control people's wages and improvements to working conditions.

Not only do health care workers need and deserve a general wage increase to catch up to inflation, they need additional improvements to implement pay equity.

Over the next two months HEU members will be working with others to bring the message about Bill 82 and unfair government policies home to each incumbent and aspiring MLA in their local constituencies.

And we will be encouraging all of our co-workers, families and friends to ensure they register to vote so that when an election is called there will be a change for the better in British Columbia.

Guardian

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

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Letters

The Guardian welcomes letters to the editor. Please be brief. Write to 2006 W. 10th Ave., V6J 4P5 or leave your views on the HEU Guardian Hotline, 734-5311.

HEU member appalled by Gitksan ruling

I am appalled by the ruling of B.C. Chief Justice Allan McEachern against our Native people in the case of the Gitksan Wet'suwet'en land claims.

While wiping out the land claims of our Native people, the judge has the gall to tell them that should solve their social and economic problems by joining "mainstream" Canadian life. This attitude is plain and simple prejudicial racism.

I see the hands of the business community, governments and the judicial system behind the pitting of loggers against Natives. I cannot see the Natives causing more damage to our environment than we have if given the stewardship of the land they claim.

Where is our social conscience? Will we acknowledge it after the fact, like we did in the Oka situation? Is the excuse that this issue is so controversial that we should sit on the sidelines until we see which way the chips fall?

Natives are facing the same methods and attitudes that used to put down the labour movement. The advance of the labour movement has



benefitted the whole of society, and I see the same thing happening if Natives are given their rights and land claims.

We have abused the Natives physically, mentally, sexually, socially and economically. I see serious damage facing our country if we fail to have the Natives' claims accepted by all of society.

Rita Morris,
Port Alberni

Guardian cover is already recycled

I like the new look of The Guardian and the fact that I get it mailed to me.

My only complaint is that it is printed on shiny paper and my recycling depot will not accept it when I am finished with it.

Please consider making it on paper I am able to recycle.

LYNNE ANDERSON

• Since January, The Guardian cover has been printed on a Canadian-made paper called Evergreen, which is made from recycled paper. Our printers advise that it can be recycled again.

Unhappy with men's exclusion

Regarding men's participation in the B.C. Federation of Labour Women's Conference, Della McLeod says in the last Guardian: "But women in non-traditional jobs say they find little support from unions which are run more like old boys' networks. I didn't miss having men there." Is this the way we are building the union?

TERANCE McDONALD
Vancouver

• McLeod's sentence said in full "I don't miss having men there, nor do I think their presence would have undermined the openness or strength and solidarity of the gathering."

HEU radio ads do a good job

For the last couple of weeks I have heard on the radio some of the advertisements which were put out by the Hospital Employees' Union. I am very pleased to hear such a clear message put out by the HEU.

It is good HEU tried to bring this information to the attention of the general public as well as the people who currently have some of their loved ones staying in B.C. hospitals, which are so very badly underfunded.

KEH MING LEE
Vancouver

Carpenters seek support against Safeway

The Carpenters Union has launched a massive leafletting and signature campaign against Canada Safeway. Our members are going to be in attendance in front of every Safeway store in B.C. over the next few months to draw attention to an important issue.

In the past, Canada Safeway has earned the respect of working people by building and renovating their stores with union contractors.

Recent developments may mark the end of this long-standing policy and endanger labour's support. The Parkgate Village

Shopping Centre in North Vancouver and a store in Kamloops are current examples of a corporate decision to use non-union labour. This comes on the brink of Safeway embarking on a major building program that could see more than \$300 million spent on construction and rebuilding projects in more than 30 communities in the province.

Please support our call for Safeway to re-establish its long-standing policy of providing fair union wages and conditions on all projects. Fill in the card when approached by our members.

MARK DERTON,
Carpenters' Union,
Vancouver



What we're up to

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

Columbus workers join HEU fold

Workers at Vancouver's new Columbus Residence, a 35-bed long-term care facility, have voted to join the HEU. The 50-member local won its certification after a vote April 14 which was marked by a strong anti-union campaign in the workplace.

The union plans to seek early bargaining dates at the facility.

HEU member still waiting for marrow donor

Craig Caldwell, a maintenance worker and HEU activist at Burnaby General Hospital who has leukemia, refuses to feel sorry for himself.

As reported in the February *Guardian*, the young father was diagnosed with leukemia last summer.

Just before Christmas, his doctor brought good news: a donor had been found and the transplant would take place in February.

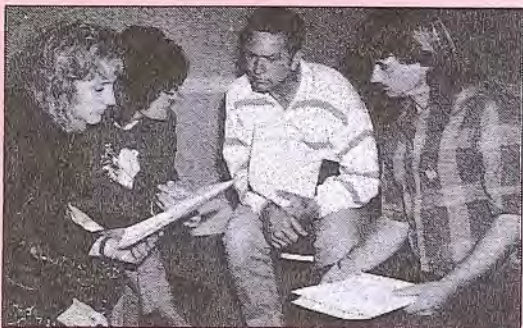
Caldwell had spent the months of waiting helping various agencies improve awareness of the need for bone marrow registration. It may take 120,000 potential donors to match the requirements of a leukemia patient.

Just days before his admission to hospital, however, Caldwell's life took another sharp turn. The donor decided not to go through with the transplant. Caldwell is again on the waiting list.

"I haven't let it get to me," he said recently. "I feel good. But it really underlines the importance of people registering for bone marrow transplants."

Nanaimo coffee break protests violations

The administration's failure to follow the collective agreement during



READY FOR ACTION: Provincial executive member Nancy Macdonald (second from left) briefs (left to right) Pam Payne, Victoria Community Living; Merv Schmit, Queen Alexandra, and Duane Grabia, GVHS fire/security on HEU's strategy in May 7 lobby to Victoria. About 40 Victoria-area members joined the lobby demanding repeal of Bill 82.

a reorganization of housekeeping and nursing assignments led to a prolonged coffee break May 30 by about a dozen HEU members at Nanaimo Regional Hospital.

The employer's failure to post the changes in accordance with the contract led to number of individual and general grievances.

Friends of Royal Inland produce huge petition

VICTORIA — More than 3,000 Kamloops residents have signed a petition opposing cutbacks at Royal Inland Hospital. The petition was tabled in the Legislature May 14 by NDP health critic Tom Perry.

The HEU, the Health Sciences Association and the B.C. Nurses' Union are just three of the groups supporting the community movement to protect health care in Kamloops. The petition demands a reversal of recent bed closures, medical service cuts and layoffs.

Perry said the NDP supports the petition. "We agree the hospital must continue to improve and expand so-

plicated services which will meet the widest possible range of health needs for residents of Kamloops and the surrounding region."

McBride organizing drive results in narrow loss

HEU's organizing efforts never stop, but existing labour laws make it extra difficult to extend union conditions to workers who want them. Despite a solid organizing campaign at McBride and District Hospital in April, HEU's application for certification was defeated by an extremely narrow margin in a vote supervised by the Industrial Relations Council.

Simon Fraser Lodge contract talks open

HEU has opened contract talks for a new agreement with the owners of Simon Fraser Lodge, in Prince George. The facility is privately owned and represented in bargaining by Pri-Care, which acts for private facilities around the province.

Simon Fraser's owners have recently been embroiled in controversy over the awarding of a grant for the construction of an Alzheimer's wing.

Powell River wishes retiring members the best

HEU Powell River local members are going to miss Georgetta Holuboch, who retired June 2 after 10 years as a cook at Olive Devaud. Holuboch was a strong union supporter who is planning a Caribbean cruise in November.

Also planning to travel is Maria Bourassa, a dietary worker at the fa-

Continued on page 4



KILLING BILL 82: The NDP will introduce a motion in the current session of the Legislature to rescind Bill 82, party leader Mike Harcourt told health care unionists May 7. In a meeting with a delegation including HEU, the B.C. Nurses' Union, the Health Sciences Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Harcourt pledged an NDP government would repeal the bill.

NDP pledges to repeal Bill 82 wage controls

VICTORIA — An NDP government will restore "fair, free collective bargaining" to public sector workers, party leader Mike Harcourt told a delegation of health workers May 7.

Harcourt told the health workers, part of a 600-strong labour lobby to the Legislature demanding repeal of Bill 82, that he would bring a motion before the house to rescind the Social Credit wage control law.

HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato told Harcourt that Bill 82, like the Socreds' Bill 19, "needs to be gone, gone, gone" after the next election.

"We're here with teachers and others who have felt the impact," she said, "to demand repeal of Bill 82."

"When elected we will ask unions and employers to consult and bring forward a new labour code for restoration of full collective bargaining," Harcourt said.

The two-day lobby, initiated by the B.C. Teachers' Federation, was joined by HEU, the B.C. Nurses' Union, the Health Sciences Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and several other unions.

More than 600 unionists paraded in protest around the Legislature May 7, then broke into groups for

meetings with Social Credit and NDP representatives.

Social Credit MLAs were inflexible in their support of Bill 82, Allevato reported later, but Harcourt told a delegation of leaders from HEU, BCNU, CUPE and the HSA that his party was opposed to the bill.

On May 8, members of HEU's Provincial Executive and about 40 rank-and-file members from HEU Victoria-area locals continued lobbying politicians missed the previous day.

News

Allevato said the lobby was an important achievement for the labour movement because it brought together teachers, health workers, municipal workers and many others.

Allevato praised the BCTF for "giving us the incentive and the example to take on this battle."

At its May meeting, the HEU Provincial Executive agreed to continue the pressure for repeal of Bill 82 with a community-based campaign of education and a province-wide voter registration.

May Bennett staff, residents fight 'union-busting' change

KELOWNA — Families and friends of residents at May Bennett Home have joined forces with HEU and the B.C. Nurses' Union to save the facility from its own board.

The Friends of May Bennett appealed to Health Minister Bruce Strachan to order a 30-day moratorium on any changes in service at the intermediate care facility.

They issued the appeal June 3, the day after an emergency meeting called to respond to management's announcement that the facility would be reduced to a Sheltered Housing Community as soon as possible.

The change would mean the transfer of most of the intermediate care 35 residents and lay-offs for 23

HEU members and six members of BCNU.

In a joint news release May 31, HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato and BCNU president Debra McPherson denounced the scheme as "union-busting." HEU won a first agreement at the home in March after a 23 day strike.

But the labour conflict has taken back seat to the struggle to save the community which has grown up at the home since the present board acquired it in 1983.

Friends of May Bennett are appealing to the board to reconsider its decision and have asked the health ministry not to make any changes in funding until the matter is resolved.



HEART PLAYS MILLS: One of the few performances of the Heart of Health Care Revue inside a facility took place in late April in the cafeteria at Terrace's Mills Memorial Hospital. The show was covered on the regional news broadcast.

What we're up to

Cont. from page 2

cility for the past eight years, who held several positions with the local. She retired May 14 and will head to Australia for a visit in 1992.

Powell River maintenance worker Joe Konopelski, a maintenance worker, retired April 30 after 27 years at Powell River General. He'll be sticking closer to home.

Duncan HEU local take action to protect LPNs

About 15 LPNs held a study session in the cafeteria of the Duncan hospital May 29 to protest the administration's failure to replace LPNs on sick leave with other LPNs.

The union members were demanding that the hospital adhere to a 1982 agreement that halted the elimination of LPNs. By replacing LPNs on sick leave with care aides, the administration was violating the spirit of the agreement.

Discussions are continuing in an effort to resolve the dispute.

HEU steward wins Hep B vaccine for Mission workers

When Mission Memorial Hospital announced it would provide hepatitis B vaccine to registered nurses but not to the nurse's aides who worked alongside them, HEU shop steward Mary



FOND FAREWELL: Retiring Prince Rupert activist Vicky Tauber received a warm send-off May 1 by local members attending the Heart of Health Care revue. Among those wishing her well after 31 years at Prince Rupert hospital were shipper-receiver Dale Grantham and his son Josh.

Hofer got angry.

Then, with persistence and the use of her collective agreement, she got even. Her story may have wide implications for health care workers.

By the end of June, Mission Memorial will be providing hepatitis B vaccine free of charge to HEU LPNs, nurse's aides, housekeeping workers, administrative workers and cauls working more than two days a week, largely thanks to Mary Hofer's efforts.

But it wasn't easy. After her first refusal, Hofer obtained an information package from the Liver Foundation. When she approached the hospital's infection control committee for the vaccine, its members ruled

she was at risk for exposure to hepatitis, but not at "high risk."

According to Article 57.02 of the Master Agreement, a worker must be "in a high risk control area as determined by the Infection Control Committee" to qualify for vaccine.

That wasn't good enough for Hofer. She began documenting every time she encountered a dirty needle and took her findings back to the committee. They still refused.

Finally she launched a grievance under Article 57.02 and appealed in writing to the hospital's doctors, who offered to take the issue up. Finally, early in May, the administration gave in.



SAVE MAY BENNETT: More than 70 residents, family members and staff involved in Kelowna's May Bennett home turned out June 1 to an emergency meeting called by HEU in the wake of management's decision to end intermediate care at the facility. The meeting was chaired by Zorica Bosancic (left), HEU's assistant to the president.

St. Mary's to close hospital laundry

NEW WESTMINSTER — St. Mary's Hospital has confirmed that plans are under way to close down the hospital laundry, which employs eight HEU members who have kept the facility working despite serious neglect.

Personnel director Maureen Jeffrey said June 3 that no date has been set for the closure but "one of these days the laundry will be centralized — shipped out."

Jeffrey admitted that the hospital has done little to keep the laundry

up to date over the years and now finds that no funds are available to purchase replacement parts.

The only reason it still functioned, she said, was because of the efforts of laundry manager Gaston Gobillot, who indeed, appears to have worked largely without hospital support to keep the laundry operating.

By shopping for parts at suppliers throughout the region, Gobillot has managed to keep machinery dating back to 1957 in running order.

HEU members say that a management company hired by the hospital has

worked to undermine the laundry service since taking over a year ago.

Versa, a national management company, has created extremely difficult working conditions, say the workers.

Albina Veltin, who has worked for some 20 years at St. Mary's, Emma Chang, a laundry worker since 1986 and Grace Buder, a six year laundry veteran, all say Versa management has undercut staffing levels since taking over a year ago.

"Today we were one short, but there was no replacement, said Buder. "It has just meant more and more work."



TEAM NURSING RALLY: About 80 HEU members from the Vancouver area demonstrated outside Vancouver General Hospital May 13 to demand restoration of the nursing team. The rally was part of a number of province-wide activities during Team Nursing Week.

Team Nursing Week marked with demonstration, float

A rally, a parade float and blood pressure clinics were among the activities carried out by HEU locals and Nursing Team Committees during Nursing Team Week, May 13 to 18.

In Vancouver, 100 Licensed Practical Nurses, orderlies and patient care aides gathered for a rally in front of Vancouver General Hospital.

HEU Secretary-Business Manager Carmela Allevato told the crowd that Bill 82 wage controls could threaten HEU's work to save the jobs of LPNs, orderlies and aides.

Several locals around the province did their bit. In Ashcroft, a Disneyland-themed float featuring a bearded Mickey Mouse captured first prize for HEU's local entry in the community's annual May 11 Stampede Parade.

Several HEU members helped mark LPN day by participating in the event including local chair Loreen Martin, Tracey Peterson, Fusa Teshima, Pam Johnson and Ida Culos. The HEU crew, assisted by residents Mary Parsons and Jesse Cummings, worked for three hours on the silver and blue float. Hundreds of spectators lining the street were treated to Heart of Health Care music booming from the award winning entry.

Six long term care residents,



AWARD-WINNER: HEU's Ashcroft local highlighted health care concerns in an award-winning float in the Ashcroft Stampede.

dressed as Grumpy, Dopey and other Disney characters, entertained young and old alike on the Main Street parade route.

The Ashcroft local has captured first prize three years running at the annual event.

The Comox local Nursing Team Committee held a blood pressure clinic in a local shopping mall.

Earlier, members at the Castlegar local took NDP health critic Tom Perry on a tour of the hospital as part of their effort to save the jobs of LPNs in the extended care ward of Castlegar and District Hospital.

Many locals distributed "Save the Nursing Team" buttons and pamphlets. This year's Nursing Team Week was designed to bring HEU's bargaining demands to save the Nursing Team to public attention.

Labour minister rejects IRC role in health talks — for now

Labour minister James Rabbitt has so far rejected a request from the Health Labour Relations Association to order the Industrial Relations Council (IRC) to designate essential services.

In a letter May 22 to HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato, Rabbitt said he had received a report and recommendations on the issue from Ed Peck, commissioner of the IRC.

Health care employers have appealed to Peck to intervene in the essential service process. The HEU, like the other health care unions, is observing the B.C. Federation of Labour boycott of the council be-

cause of its obvious bias against unions.

But Rabbitt has so far resisted employer pressures.

"It would be premature to direct the council to designate essential services," Rabbitt wrote. "Progress is being made at the bargaining table, and I encourage all parties to put their full energies into settling their contractual differences."

The HEU has offered to allow a neutral third-party to establish essential service levels.

Rabbitt warned that he will tell the IRC to get involved "if the public's interest requires."

HEU demands probe of Victoria laundry deal

VICTORIA — A Hospital Employees' Union investigation into the lay-off of 15 union members from a Victoria laundry facility snowballed last month into a major scandal involving two Victoria area hospitals.

Union finds links to Couvelier, top Socreds

VICTORIA — When 15 HEU members at Greater Victoria Hospital Society's Fairfield laundry received lay-off notices last March, HEU began an investigation which quickly turned up links to the top levels of the Social Credit party.

Careful investigation by HEU activists and staff confirmed rumours that the contracts had been awarded to Grahame Quakenbush, a former manager at the GVHS laundry who was a brother-in-law and former business associate of finance minister Mel Couvelier.

There was no evidence of any involvement by Couvelier in the contract awards. Further inquiries by union members and *The Guardian*, however, revealed that:

- when Saanich and Mount St. Mary's hospitals decided late last year to remove their laundry service from the Fairfield Hospital laundry, they failed to offer an opportunity for competing bids;
- the hospital boards mysteriously opted to award the contracts to a facility that didn't yet exist because Grahame Quakenbush's Vancouver Island Linen Service wasn't incorporated until February 4, 1991;
- Quakenbush's laundry was still under construction in May two days before work was to begin;
- in an apparent attempt to cover up the tendering violation, Saanich Peninsula Hospital in March invited

The union has twice called on the Social Credit government to launch an independent public inquiry into the transfer — without public tender — of up to \$3.2 million worth of hospital laundry contracts to a family member and ex-business associ-

ate of former finance minister Mel Couvelier.

A special report May 23 to Health Minister Bruce Strachan confirmed HEU charges that contracts held by Saanich Peninsula Hospital and Mount St. Mary's Hospital had been



FACING CUTBACKS: Night shift workers at Greater Victoria Hospital Society's Fairfield laundry were laid off last month after two Island hospitals improperly transferred their laundry contracts to a firm established by Mel Couvelier's brother-in-law. HEU is demanding a proper inquiry into the affair. Above, Alan Dixon moves laundry on day shift.

the competing firm of Renfrew Health Care Systems to bid on the project, but rejected its bid even though it was lower than Quakenbush's; and that

- the Saanich hospital board is chaired by Melissa Hernblad, who is also president of Couvelier's Socred riding association.

In the wake of HEU's press conference May 8 calling for a public inquiry, GVHS officials released correspondence clearly showing that the Saanich deal with Quakenbush had been struck no later than February, well before Renfrew even knew the contract was available.

In fact, Renfrew owner Randy Bartsch told *The Guardian* that he only learned of the contract through Quakenbush's boasting.

Bartsch says Quakenbush, who had retired from the GVHS Fairfield

laundry management two years before, offered to sell the two contracts to Renfrew in return for a prominent position with the company. The offer was later withdrawn.

The HEU was told in a March 4 GVHS memo that the loss of the Saanich and Mount St. Mary hospital contracts would force the layoff of all 15 HEU members working the night shift at the Fairfield laundry.

Meanwhile, the Socred failure to provide proper funding has left the overloaded GVHS laundry vulnerable to further losses to opportunistic private operators. GVHS vice-president Rick Roger was quoted in the May 11 *Times-Colonist* as saying the laundry has operated well beyond capacity since a 1989 fire destroyed a second GVHS laundry facility, the Glendale laundry in Saanich.

transferred in violation of ministry policy.

The work was taken from Greater Victoria Hospital Society's Fairfield laundry and given to a new company established just weeks earlier by Grahame Quakenbush, Couvelier's brother-in-law and former business associate.

At a May 8 press conference at the B.C. legislature, HEU secretary-business manager Carmela Allevato called for an independent public inquiry into the affair. Allevato said B.C. residents should be told why the two hospitals failed to advertise their laundry contracts as required under health ministry policy.

Allevato's call for an inquiry was echoed by the New Democrats, the 23,500-member Victoria labour council and the *Victoria Times-Colonist*.

The same day, HEU launched a grievance on behalf of the 15 Fairfield workers whose jobs were eliminated May 10 by the loss of 1.5 million pounds of laundry work annually.

Nevertheless, the proposal to have the affair aired in public was denied May 14 by Health Minister Bruce Strachan, who refused to intervene in what he conceded was an improper process.

Cutting short a health ministry investigation into the deal, Strachan admitted that the hospitals broke the rules but said there was no need for an independent review. He encouraged competitors at odds with the deal to sue.

But HEU has vowed to press for a full investigation and to fight the lay-offs. "The failure of this government to take action against a multi-million dollar policy violation is reprehensible," Allevato said. "Fifteen of our members have lost their jobs because of decisions unfairly arrived at by these two hospitals. Why has the Socred government contributed to the loss of business from a public laundry facility by promoting the interests of an untried private operator?"

LOOK BACK

On the eve of an election

A LOT of people may recall it as the eve of the descent back into Hell. It was the winter of 1975 and members of the Hospital Employees' Union were campaigning for the re-election of the NDP government of Dave Barrett.

Despite numerous frustrations with the NDP administration, particularly with essential services legislation and laws ordering legally striking workers back on the job, stock-taking by the HEU during the campaign revealed the NDP made a big difference to the province's health care system in just three short years.

When the NDP defeated the Socreds under W.A.C. Bennett in 1972,



HEALTH PRIORITY: B.C.'s ambulance service was created by the NDP government of Dave Barrett.

the hospital industry was in a state of depression caused by frozen funding, anti-labour legislation, and a breakdown in communications with Victoria.

But by 1975, the number of chronic care hospital beds had grown from 2,400 to 3,800, with almost 2,000 more on the way. Emergency care had improved, including a province-wide ambulance service operating for a flat \$5 per trip, a concept long advocated by the union. The system was backed up

by improved training for ambulance attendants and sophisticated new equipment.

Under the leadership of Minister of Health Dennis Cocke, the NDP government also began buying private hospitals, taking them under the wing of the public system, thereby improving standards, and it expanded and improved home care programs.

The government also cooperated in efforts by the HEU to eliminate sex discrimination in the hospital

industry, and paved the way for payment for non-conventional medical procedures such as acupuncture through the provincial medical plan.

In a speech to the B.C. Federation of Labour during the election campaign, Premier Barrett declared the province could afford the government's Pharmacare program and welfare improvements because the government was prepared to levy succession duties and gift taxes on the wealthy.

Unfortunately the success of the NDP reforms and the prospect of more scared the business community and wealthier citizens of B.C. Rallying to the call by the Socreds to unite to defeat the NDP, leading members of the Liberal and Conservative parties threw in their lots with the Socreds.

Even though the NDP increased its share of the popular vote on Dec. 11, 1975, it was defeated by the big business gang-up.

ON THE JOB



PACK ROOM: Ann McGlashan (left) and Terry Rousseau, both active in HEU's new local at K-Bro Linen Services in Cumberland, work in the OR pack room preparing linen for hospitals in the region.

6

Laundry workers clean up boss

By GEOFF MEGGS

CUMBERLAND — Eight months after their brand new state-of-the-art hospital laundry washed its first sheets, HEU members at K-Bro Linen Systems Ltd. are hoping life is beginning to settle down.

Since several Vancouver Island hospitals decided last year to turn their laundry work over to a private contractor, many of the workers have been riding an emotional roller-coaster.

The stresses of a new job in a new plant were compounded by a confrontational and anti-union manager whose actions produced more than 20 major grievances in a three-month period.

The manager had failed to implement medical and dental plans, made arbitrary schedule changes, denied overtime and rejected requests for holiday time. At the first safety meeting, held five months after the plant opened, he directed workers to listen while he outlined how the committee would function.

A day-long series of meetings with K-Bro owners in April produced a formal apology, termination of the manager concerned, and resolution of 85 percent of the grievances, says local chairperson Terri Rousseau. "I'm glad that part's behind us."

"HEU both in Victoria and Vancouver have been great," she says. "You feel you're here by yourself if someone is riding roughshod over you."

The \$4 million K-Bro plant, built from scratch in this former coal-mining town west of Courtenay, was dogged by controversy from the beginning.

HEU members have paid a price for Victoria's insistence on privatization. Comox and Campbell River hospitals decided to contract-out their laundry work over HEU's protests.

Although all workers at those facilities were assured jobs at K-Bro if they wanted them, the change meant turmoil for many families, says Rousseau. Those who remained at their old facility had to bump others with lower seniority.

For those who made the move, there was the challenge

New workplace proves to be a big challenge

of negotiating a first agreement and breaking in a new plant which uses automated and computerized equipment to do much of the work.

"It's different work now," says Linda Ray. "We use different parts of our body. We're working just as hard, but we seem to be processing more for the same effort."

From the sorting area, where laundry is unloaded and sorted into bags, most of the handling is done by machine. An overhead monorail operated by the

workers can deliver 500-pound bags of laundry anywhere in the plant.

Now Nanaimo General has added its work to the load, giving K-Bro a total of 3.6 million pounds of laundry a year. The company still is running at only 50 percent capacity and is seeking other contracts throughout the north island.

Rousseau, herself a veteran of Comox, sometimes still misses the stronger community feeling at her old workplace. Despite the changes, however, she believes the new local is settling in, has secure prospects and has established a proper relationship with the new management.

AFTER THE SHIFT

From union activist to civic politics

HEU member finds 'new world'

CUMBERLAND — When Linda Hargreaves agreed to represent her HEU local on the area's labour council, she had no idea she was embarking on a career in politics.

But that's how it turned out for the cleaner at Cumberland Health Centre, who last November ran second in a field of seven to become the first woman member of this Vancouver Island community's town council.

All that lay in the future in 1986, when her local affiliated to the Campbell River and District Labour Council, which represents a wide range of unions in the central Vancouver Island area. (HEU encourages all locals to affiliate to local labour councils.)

With her children grown up, Hargreaves had the time to plunge into the labour council's activities.

"It opened up a whole new world," Hargreaves says. "I got involved on the women's committee, I learned about international issues. I attended labour history conferences."

The years of activity culminated last November, when local unionists asked Hargreaves to run for council with their



HARGREAVES

backing. Her convincing win has opened up a new career.

Now Hargreaves must juggle existing commitments — including teaching a weight-training classes at the recreation centre — with the demands of civic politics.

She has regular council meetings, had to sit on the management side in contract talks with Cumberland's CUPE workers and represents council on several committees. It's a hectic life, but Hargreaves traces her successes back to her early work for her local and labour council.

"All that experience gave me the confidence to consider running," she says. "I'm glad I did."

editor's notebook

By GEOFF MEGGS



ACCORDING to the regulations of the B.C. Community Care Facility Act, operators of long-term care facilities must employ staff who have "the personality, ability and temperament necessary to operate a care facility in a manner that will respect and maintain the spirit, dignity and individuality of the residents."

As all too many HEU members have learned, many administrators and board members of provincial facilities would fail such a test if it was applied to them.

That point was driven home June 1 at an emergency meeting of residents, their families and staff of May Bennett Home in Kelowna.

All were reeling from the news that the board of the non-profit society running May Bennett had decided to downgrade the home to a Sheltered Housing Community. Since the society would offer only room and board, virtually all the aged residents will be forced to move.

BCNU member Dawn Young reminded the meeting that "several studies have been done to support the theory that interfacility transfer strikes a blow that one in three elderly residents does not survive. They die within three months of transfer."

"I would be overdramatising to say that 10 death warrants have been signed — or would I?"

If the board members of the Central Okanagan Health Care Society who run May Bennett had to meet the legal standards set for their staff, could they keep a job?

The reality is that many non-profit societies established around the province to run health care facilities are controlled by well-meaning individuals who know little about health care. (The situation in privately-owned facilities often is worse.)

When problems develop, as they inevitably do, unionization by the staff is the best response. But the non-profit boards, usually dominated by small businessmen, often fight unionization tooth and nail even though the costs are borne by public funding. Why?

One group of HEU members seeking a first agreement in the Kootenays last year found the answer quickly. Their board members were threatened by the idea of decent wages for what they considered "women's work."

After all, how many women will work in the shoe store, the pub or on the ski hill for \$6 an hour when they could earn \$12.52 in a unionized health care job?

These business people want to keep wages down, particularly in communities where private retirement homes are rising like mushrooms. When women start organizing, the needs of facility residents take a back seat to the economic interests of some board members.

It's time to require the same minimum standards from health care operators that the law demands of health care workers. If such standards existed, the crisis at May Bennett might never have happened.

Labour

IWA Canada seeks wage hike, pension changes

B.C.'s lumberworkers are seeking a new contract with wage increases to compensate for inflation, pension improvements and protection from contracting-out.

Contracts for 35,000 members of IWA-Canada across the province expire June 15 and union president Jack Munro vows there will be no concessions.

The union is demanding the improvements in a one-year agreement. There is no question the talks will be difficult.

Employers are complaining of slumping prices and are ruthlessly slashing jobs.

But delegates to the union's wage and contract conference set their sights on a number of contract im-

provements, especially to pension benefits and health and safety protection.

Zeidler workers fighting on

It may be the longest active strike in Canada at the moment. But 98 pickets at two Alberta plywood plants aren't celebrating their five year anniversary. They just keep walking the line.

No negotiations are planned, and despite a major concession by the union last winter, Zeidler Forest Industries continues to operate its Slave Lake and Edmonton plants with scabs.

It started at the Slave Lake sawmill on April 11, 1986 as a fight by

Another key area is contracting-out. Despite a tough strike in 1986 on the issue, forest companies have

the union members against roll-backs. The company kept the plant operating with scabs.

Two years later the strike spread to the Edmonton plant.

The unionists have been living on strike pay of \$175 a week since then, but no one is giving up.

Says Edmonton picket captain Jim Krezanoski: "It's the principle of it. 'If you let one company kick the union out and the union walks away, which would be the next (company) to try it?' — CALM"

been doing end runs around contract language.

More than 500 IWA members demonstrated outside the Legislature in Victoria April 19 to protest MacMillan Bloedel's latest round of mill closures. During May, about 350 members will be laid off in Port Alberni plywood operation, 200 at the company's Somass Cedar Mill and between 200 and 400 at the Alberni pulp mill.

This round of bargaining is a vital one for IWA-Canada.

Continued technological change in the woods, combined with contracting out and reduced wood supply, are making the 1990s a challenging decade for union woodworkers.



STANDING UP FOR CANADA: About 200 opponents of a new free trade deal with Mexico and the U.S. applauded June 1 as Jeff Keighley (right) of the Coalition Against 'Free' Trade posted a free trade proclamation on the doors of Vancouver's Trade and Convention Centre. Universal medical care is threatened by the free trade program.

Environmental groups, labour score victory over Alcan

A unique coalition of trade unions, environmental groups and community organizations has won a stunning court victory over one of Canada's largest corporations.

A federal court ruled in May that the federal government must conduct a full environmental assessment review into the Aluminum Co. of Canada's plans to spend \$1 billion on its Kemano Completion project.

The project will reduce the Nechako River, a tributary of the Fraser, to 30 percent of its original level. The water will be diverted to power new hydroelectric facilities at Kemano on the coast.

All the new electricity will be sold to the United States.

The court agreed with the Rivers Defence Coalition that Ottawa was wrong to allow the project without a full review.

Among the coalition members are two unions, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU) and the Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers (CASAW), which represents workers at Alcan's Kitimat smelter.

"For the first time in 40 years, Alcan is going to have to conduct and environmental impact study and subject it to public scrutiny," said the UFAWU's Arnie Thomlinson. "We all stand to benefit if Alcan is required to let enough water down the Nechako River to benefit downstream users."

The coalition has been fighting for a review since 1979. It has drawn together native, labour, community and environmental groups.

The project would hit farmers, fishermen and native groups throughout the Fraser. The Nechako's waters help cool the Fraser to ensure the safe passage of spawning salmon.

Action Canada vows to derail trade talks

VANCOUVER — Members of the Action Canada Network slapped a "Free" Trade Proclamation on the doors of the World Trade Centre June 1 to protest the opening of free trade talks with Mexico.

"This is the first day of the second round of the free trade fight," network chairperson Tony Clarke told the 200 demonstrators. "It's going to a long, tough fight to tell our American and Mexican brothers and sisters what is really happening with free trade."

The proclamation, which was issued at similar demonstrations across Canada, demands repeal of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. In its place, the network is demanding a progressive alternative for continental development to

- improve living standards of workers in any countries involved;

- establish strong environmental protection;

- ensure the protection of human rights, including the right to organize as workers; and

- ensure that democratically-elected governments are able to develop and implement policies and programs which meet the needs of their citizens.

Action Canada Network is a national movement of labour, church and community organizations mobilizing against the Tory free trade agenda.

Canada was built on a distinctive set of social values, Clarke said, based on a mixed economy and social programs. These are threatened by free trade.

"We must stand up and say, 'I am a human being, I am a worker, a British Columbian, a citizen of the

world, but above all, I am somebody and I have rights.

"We can show an alternative way of developing a trade pact to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of people in all three countries, not just one country.

"If we love this country, we must say no to a fast-track free trade process now."

HEU Provincial Executive member Maurice Smith, who represents the union in the B.C. Coalition Against Free Trade, said the rally and a related conference laid the groundwork for renewed action against free trade.

"We'll be putting out more information about Bill C-69," Smith said. "That bill is linked to the free trade issue, it cuts federal payments to health care and will destroy medicare in this country."



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... and they're asking you to tighten your belt!



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percent April 1, 1989, for a two year compound increase of 9.4375 percent.

But while employers preached wage restraint for workers, they showed very little when it came time to boost their own pay.

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Fyke's 53 percent hike was just shy of the biggest percentage increase. That prize was won by Henry (Fred) Stewart, director of physical plant at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital. Stewart's salary ballooned by 54 percent from \$45,992, in 1987/88 to almost \$71,000 in 1989/90.

The average salary of an HEU member in 1989/90 was about \$24,000 a year. GVHS tops the list of largest increases. The average increase paid to a senior GVHS administrator was a whopping 39 percent for two years. The 10 top GVHS bosses won an average pay boost of \$31,500.

Prince George Regional Hospital was also very generous. Shirley Butchart, the hospital's associate executive director, pulled in a 43 percent increase from \$56,559 in 1987/88 to \$80,769 two years later. Her boss, PGRH executive director Allan Husband received a 35 per-

cent boost, the second largest of any hospital president, from \$73,274 to \$98,567.

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Vancouver General Hospital president James Flett got \$36,000 more, or 28 percent, hiking his salary from \$129,304 to \$165,254. He also received two year expense payments of \$74,455, including a \$35,538 contribution by VGH to Flett's registered retirement savings plan.

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available) that by law must be filed with the Ministry of Health each year. The hospitals are required to make these reports available to the public.

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This HEU survey shows hospital bosses have taken care of themselves

eral, St. Paul's, Kelowna General, Trail Regional, Prince Rupert Regional, and the Greater Victoria Hospital Society.

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And the law allows you to inspect the documents at the hospital itself, or lets you obtain a complete copy of the information for a nominal cost. Simply contact the hospital's financial office.

In fact, the public can obtain the same information for a host of public bodies such as municipal governments, school boards, colleges, universities and crown corporations.

But despite the legal guarantee of access, most hospitals had to be dragged kicking and screaming into compliance with HEU's request for the information used in this study.

Some administrators feigned ignorance of the act, while others were downright hostile and refused to turn over any information. A quick call



to senior Ministry of Health officials forced reluctant administrators to comply.

In Terrace, however, administrators for Mills Memorial Hospital stonewalled both HEU and the ministry.

Remember, don't take no for an answer to your request for hospital financial information. Contact the HEU provincial office if any problems arise.



ASTONISHING FACTS

Some unusual items from B.C.'s recent health expenditures include:

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Dir. Phys. Plant		Asst. VP	



BARGAINING BACKGROUNDER

Bargaining goals: a fair contract and repeal of Bill 82

*There's some progress on
pay equity but Bill 82 blocks
the way to a fair contract*

By CARMELA ALLEVATO

It's been four long months since HEU's Bargaining Committee began negotiations for new collective agreements, but the unity and strength of the union's membership is starting to show results.

In a series of meetings early in June, HEU won agreement from the Health Labour Relations Association (HLRA) on some important aspects of the union's pay equity proposals.

That means HEU will have two goals during the coming months: negotiating a fair contract and defeating Bill 82, the Social Credit wage controls which stand in the way of real bargaining.

An essential part of HEU's fightback strategy is to continue to press for our six steps to fairness at the bargaining table. They include pay equity, an adequate wage increase, improved working and caring conditions, better job security, improved benefits and strengthened union rights.

Pay Equity — Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

Until this month, the employer has tried to confuse the issue of pay equity, trying to make it into a complicated and bureaucratic issue.

The issue is straightforward: pay equity, or equal pay for work of equal value, means more money for our members. HEU members have been discriminated against, underpaid and undervalued for decades.

In key meetings in June, it became clear that HLRA has accepted some of HEU's pay equity proposals. Specifically, the employers have accepted the union's principle that wage increases will be in the form of across-the-board dollar amounts rather than percentage increases.

HLRA also has agreed there will be no red-circling or freezing of some workers' wages while others catch up.

We have tabled other specific proposals to achieve equal pay for work of equal value.

We are seeking an industry-wide adjustment for all health care workers in recognition of the fact that all health care workers are underpaid.

There's more. We've proposed a gender-neutral base rate. In the existing agreement, women entering the least-skilled jobs earn less than men entering least-skilled jobs traditionally performed by men.

We want to make the rate for each the same. We have identified the Maintenance Worker I as

the male entry level job in health care. No HEU members, whether male or female, in whatever job category, would earn less than \$14.22 an hour.

Talks are continuing on these and other detailed proposals.

The Fight Against Concessions

All three health care employers — HLRA, CCERA and PriCare — have tabled significant contract rollbacks. Not satisfied with 10 years of wage controls, including rollback of the 35-hour work week (which HEU won in 1982 and was taken away from us by provincial wage control legislation) and wage increases below the rise in the cost of living, the employers now want to take away other rights in our collective Agreement, including:

- by restricting your right to post into other jobs, and attacking the classification system;
- getting rid of your bumping rights in the event they reduce the size of the workforce;
- attacking those injured on the job by reducing the benefits and wages of those on injury-on-duty leave;
- attacking those of our sisters and brothers on

long-term disability by making it more difficult to establish and appeal a claim;

- encouraging favouritism in the assignment of casuals' work through the end of seniority and making it easier to fire casuals;
- cuts in special leave for a household emergency;
- in CCERA and PriCare Locals, the employers have proposed additional rollbacks that amount to cuts of \$1,000 per employee per year.

At every step of the bargaining process, the employer continues to claim that it doesn't have the ability to pay for the fair contract that we have proposed.

The truth is that there is an ability to pay, but it's a question of priorities.

The 1991 Provincial Budget, that is leading to the latest rounds of hospital layoffs increased the budget for doctors' fees by 19 percent for 1991-92. That's a \$228 million increase for doctors in one year — more than enough to meet our contract demands. (Details of the budget are on page 11)

What's more, an HEU investigation into senior hospital administration salary increases is being published. It reveals shocking increases in their salaries of between 20 percent and 50 percent over two years (1988-1990) when HEU members were kept to only 9.4 percent.

Why Are We in Bargaining?

Although we are making modest progress in bargaining, there is a serious block to any settlement: the Socreds's Bill 82.

Bill 82 is more than wage controls and it is helping the employers at the bargaining table. They are saying that such basic proposals like the right to Hepatitis-B vaccine and the right of a pregnant worker to transfer away from a computer terminal is covered by Bill 82.

If we want a fair contract, Bill 82 has got to go.

The HEU Provincial Executive has adopted the following program of action to repeal Bill 82. We're working with BCNU and the Health Sciences Association to ensure all health care workers are registered to vote. In some of our locals, up to 40 percent of our members are not registered.

We'll be supporting the B.C. Federation of Labour's information program on Bill 82. And we'll be coordinating a regional lobby campaign against Bill 82, combining special membership meetings, with contacts with other unions and a lobby of local politicians over the summer months.

This program of action is designed to take us through the summer, highlighting the issue of public sector wage controls and stressing the importance of voting for a change in the late summer or fall election.

The goals are clear. We're out to win a fair contract and repeal of Bill 82.

• Allevato is chief spokesperson for the HEU's bargaining committee.



The human cost of toxic gas leaks

By BRAD TEETER

TERRACE — The shutdown of the Mills Memorial Hospital gas sterilizer may have come too late for Central Supply Room workers who have long suffered the consequences of sloppy toxic gas management.

For years, CSR workers — all women — complaining of EtO relat-

ed health problems were told their concerns were imaginary or rooted in other causes, such as their brand of hand soap.

But the hospital has not explained why serious health disorders associated with EtO exposure have been suffered by four primary operators of the Mills Memorial EtO machine over the past decade.

"It was like beating my head against the wall," recalls Joan Ziraldo, who has worked in the Central Supply Room since 1975. Ziraldo, who suffers chronic nose and throat irritation, nausea and general nervous system disorders, is thankful the sterilizer finally is closed.

"At least no one else is going to

get sick because of it," she say. "It's a pleasure not to be short of breath after a day at work. Too bad it's 14 years too late."

Betty Horth, who shared EtO duties with Ziraldo for several years, is also grateful for the shutdown decision but, she too, says the order came late. "It bothers me that I was never given the benefit of the doubt." Horth suffers respiratory health problems and has a serious heart condition.

Horth was told her hand soap was at fault after her face was burned in an EtO accident Jan. 28, 1983. The morning after an EtO leak in the sterilizer exhaust system, Horth woke up with a blistering face. A subsequent WCB report ordered the hospital to make EtO safety improvements, including a proper venting system.

Former HEU member Linda Perry, a part-time nurses' aide in CSR for a three-year period starting July 1980, was sick for most of the period she worked around the gas sterilizer.

"I developed a blistering rash on the neck which would come back periodically." She also suffered itchy eyes, scabs in the nose, shortness of breath and a rapid heart beat that she is still on medication for.

Perry says she could never understand why engineers were equipped with masks and gloves whenever they worked on the sterilizer but CSR staff members were given no protection.

Veronica Williams, a fourth CSR member who suffered health problems after working with the gas sterilizer, was not available for comment.

Although CSR staff members have been unable to prove all of their health concerns are linked to EtO, their symptoms are consistent with health problems shown in numerous studies to be caused by EtO exposure.

Medical studies have demonstrated that high vapour concentrations (above 100 parts per million) may cause serious adverse effects such as severe irritation to the upper respiratory tract and lungs, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Cardiac arrest has also been linked to EtO exposure and long term exposure has been shown to cause cancer. Exposure may also cause adverse effects on the lungs, liver, kidneys, adrenal glands, testes and blood.



VICTIMS OF DENIAL: Betty Horth (left) and Joan Ziraldo both are suffering the long-term effects of repeated exposure to ethylene oxide (EtO) in their work at Terrace's Mills Memorial Hospital. Despite repeated illnesses and WCB orders regarding the gas sterilizer at Mills, administrators deny any shortcomings in their safety program.

Charlie Lindstrom's stubborn denial

By BRAD TEETER

TERRACE — Charlie Lindstrom is a stubborn man. Nothing, it seems, can shake his belief in the safety of the toxic gas sterilizer at this community's Mills Memorial Hospital.

Like his counterparts in many other facilities around B.C., Lindstrom rejected suggestions that health workers were at risk from leaks of deadly ethylene oxide gas.

But action by HEU members, backed by Workers Compensation Board orders, is forcing Lindstrom and others in B.C.'s health care system to undertake a major effort to make gas sterilizers safe.

The heavy-set Mills Memorial Hospital plant maintenance director isn't swayed by thoroughly documented evidence of dangerous exposure ratings and an assortment of ethylene oxide (EtO) related illnesses and burns suffered over the years by operators.

Even after the sterilizer was shut down March 9 because the hospital opted not to make safety changes recommended by the Workers Compensation Board (WCB), Lindstrom remained unmoved. "You know that it was only shut down because your people would not work on it," Lindstrom told *The Guardian* in a brief telephone interview.

As a result of HEU members' action, the hospital's gas sterilizing now is done in Prince George.

"I've always done everything humanly possible to ensure its safe operation," says Lindstrom.

But that view isn't shared by Ron Mackenzie, a maintenance engineer who worked under Lindstrom at Mills Memorial for several years after the installation of the EtO sterilizer.

Mackenzie, who left the hospital in 1986 after disagreeing with Lindstrom's handling of several hospital matters, including EtO, recalls shocking EtO exposure levels in the area used by CSR staff in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In an interview from the Quesnel hospital, where he is currently employed, Mackenzie told *The Guardian* that he routinely advised

Lindstrom of high exposure ratings over a lengthy period.

He cites as central to Mills Memorial Hospital EtO concerns, a dangerous fault in the gas sterilizer's design. In a 1988 letter chronicling his EtO concerns, Mackenzie wrote that a two-part system requiring operators to handle instruments still covered in EtO residue was a serious problem.

Mackenzie wrote that tests later showed that CSR staff were exposed to EtO residue 50 times above the acceptable level.

Nevertheless, Lindstrom maintains the EtO sterilizer was safe to operate and would be running today if staff would only agree to work on it.

EtO leaks plague HEU members

Dangerous EtO gas leaks continue to threaten the safety of B.C. health workers, who have been forced to insist on sterilizer shutdowns. Suspected toxic gas leaks were reported at three hospitals during the past two months.

On May 2, alarms warning of a leak of the gas used to clean heat-sensitive surgical equipment forced the evacuation of Surrey Memorial Hospital's central processing department. Hospital engineers reported EtO exposure in the department ranged as high as 70 parts per million at the time of the alarm.

About 25 surgical sterile supply department workers at Vancouver's St. Paul's Hospital evacuated their work area May 1 when alarms indicated an EtO storage tank leak. The gas leak came on the heels on an incident earlier in the week when two workers became ill after apparent exposure to the gas.

HEU has pressed St. Paul's management for several months to upgrade safety precautions in the area as recommended by an internal review.

In Nanaimo April 29, the Work-

ers' Compensation Board ordered major changes in the operation and testing of the gas sterilizer at Nanaimo Regional Hospital in the wake of two toxic gas leaks and the evacuation of the hospital's sterile supply department.

The HEU demanded the inspection after a chaotic experience April 25 when alarms twice indicated EtO leaks. The problems were traced to a defective ventilation system. The WCB inspection led to orders requiring improvements in training, record-keeping, testing and ventilation.

WORDS ON WORKING

cleaning up history

i am raising a subscription
to erect a statue
to the unknown janitor —

to the slave wiping the blood
from the republic's marble walls
while Marcus Antonius praises
his good friend Caesar.

it will be a monument
to the rest of us,
to those who must follow,
armed with mops and buckets,
after the great men of history
have tracked their muddy boots
across the kitchen floors of our lives.

no expense will be spared; this memorial
will be stronger than the wrath of heroes,
more durable than the tantrums of kings.

not even the most sycophantic
of scholars will be able
to ignore this concrete proof
that history itself requires
a regular spring cleaning.

By M.C. Warrior

Companion

This machine is advertised
as a companion: personal
computer
or perhaps I misunderstand
and the innuendo implies
status.

Neither interpretation is real:
it takes up space in my office
but it is in fact, mere
mechanical apparatus,
a replacement part in the false
hierarchy of jobs

an absence
of someone else's hands
sharing the full range of work
side-by-side with mine.

By Sandy Shreve

• Mark Warrior fishes commercially and keeps house when not writing poetry. Sandy Shreve spent many years as a clerical worker and now is Program Assistant for the Women's Studies Program at Simon Fraser University. Both poems are from the new anthology entitled *More Than Our Jobs*, edited by Glen Downie and Pam Tranfield, published by Pulp Press. It is highly recommended.

The Guardian welcomes submissions from its readers of either poetry or fiction.



PUTTING ON THE PRESSURE: HEU members, nurses, doctors and other community members concerned about the future of Mount St. Joseph Hospital travelled to Victoria May 21 to press the government to restore an \$800,000 loan suddenly withdrawn in March. The cut produced lay-offs and bed closures. NDP health critic Tom Perry addressed the delegation.

Mt. St. Joseph takes jobs protest to Victoria

Two busloads of hospital workers from Mount St. Joseph Hospital in Vancouver went to Victoria on B.C. budget day to protest cutbacks that mean the closure of 12 acute care beds and layoffs of 17 workers, including 12 HEU members.

Mount St. Joseph was loaned \$800,000 last year by the Ministry of Health to help stave off a \$1 million budget deficit. The ministry carried out an operational review of the hospital, but in late April, the ministry ordered payback of the loan this year.

The ministry refused to release the results of the review to the hospital when it demanded the payback, which sparked the layoffs and bed closures.

Sixty workers from the hospital were addressed by HEU secretary-

business manager Carmela Allevato, B.C. Nurses' Union president Debra McPherson, Vancouver councillor Libby Davies, and NDP health critic Tom Perry.

As part of the rally on the legislature steps, workers sang a special song about their concerns.

Allevato said Mount St. Joseph is a unique facility because it serves the Chinese and East Indian communities in the Lower Mainland.

"These bed closures are punishing the sick and the ill in order to meet some bureaucratic bottom line at the ministry of health," she said.

Finance Minister John Jansen, Health Minister Bruce Strachan, and Vancouver-Little Mountain So-cred MLA Grace McCarthy declined to meet with the workers.

New West dietary crew grieves to stop the clocks

NEW WESTMINSTER — The assignment had all the ingredients of a TV game show, but, in a hospital setting, it was anything but funny.

Hard-working St. Mary's Hospital dietary aides, outfitted with stop watches around their necks and a chart in hand, were ordered in early May to beat the clock in a dash to see how fast food trays could be distributed to patients.

They've filed a grievance against the scheme, which was the brain-storm of a private contractor managing food services.

A new food tray distribution system was to be time tested for efficiency, dietary boss Filomena D'Stasio told workers the morning of the experiment.

Although dietary aides are fully qualified to deliver trays to patients, the task has traditionally been done by LPNs and Registered Nurses. The three-day test demanded that the dietary aides not only perform a new task, but do so with little explanation and under the pressure of stopwatch timing.

The workers were directed to use the stairs of the four-floor facility to free up elevators for food carts. Their supervisor was also equipped with a stopwatch to monitor their performance.

Feeling "degraded and angry" at the end of the ordeal, dietary aide Christine Barnes asked not to repeat the exercise the next day but the request was denied. In fact, management changed staff rotation to ensure that the fast-moving Barnes would serve the runner role.

Dietary aide Denise Jansen found the exercise humiliating. Jansen, who is deaf, said the stopwatch was handed her with almost no explanation. "It was stupid, not fair. People were looking at me and I didn't have any idea what it was all about."

Cost cutting experiments have become old hat at the hospital since Versa Services, a privately owned management company, was hired to manage several departments, said St. Mary's local chairperson Lynn Halstead.

"These workers were treated like race horses, ordered to put clocks around their necks and then . . . on your mark . . . get set . . . go! Wouldn't it make sense when trying something new to go easy and make sure no mistakes are made?"

Halstead says Versa likes to cut costs to increase its profits, regardless of the impact on staff. She says Versa managers are planning a stop watch follow-up involving the cleaning of water jugs.

Social Credit's latest budget has money to build new hospitals but none to staff existing ones

- **B.C. Budget at a glance:**
- **Spending on buildings up \$285 million.**
- **Medical Service Plan premiums up to pay for doctors' settlement equivalent to an increase of 19.3 percent or \$228 million.**
- **No new money to improve staffing.**
- **Freeze on spending for new equipment.**
- **Increased Pharmacare charges will gouge seniors.**



Coffee Break



More lies from Tory lips

Former finance Minister Michael Wilson said in early March that "federal public service wages have equalled inflation over the past four years." This isn't true, according to the government's own figures. Here they are:

	Wage increases	Inflation
1985	3.3	4.0
1986	3.6	4.1
1987	3.4	4.4
1988	3.5	4.1
1989	4.2	5.0
1990	5.3	4.8

Women suffer job stresses

About 40 percent of U.S. working women suffer frequent job-related stress. It's caused by changes at work, pay inequity, and overwork, according to a business research group.

Although many of the women reported job stress, most of them keep it to themselves on a day-to-day basis.

The survey also found that sexual harassment on the job can be a stress factor. Twelve percent of the women surveyed reported some form of "physical or verbal advances from men at work". But among the stressed-out women this figure was 18 percent.

That bear is in the bag

When residents of Keithville, Louisiana, believed they had spotted a bear high in a pine tree, they called on authorities to tranquillize the beast and remove it. Sheriff Watson Taghoo told reporters he arrived at the scene eight hours after the incident began to find that a crowd of some 800 had gathered to watch the capture. A game warden and a veterinarian armed with tranquillizing darts shot dose after dose into the bruin. It wouldn't fall. Finally, someone was ordered to climb the tree to investigate. He returned with a large, very sedated plastic garbage bag.

Zero tolerance a costly policy

Drug testing costs the U.S. government \$77,000

THE AMERICAN CYCLE OF STOCKBROKING...



for every positive test result, says a sub-committee of Congress. Of nearly 29,000 employees at 38 government agencies tested, only one out of 200 was positive. Could this money be better spent on prevention?

Free trade hits U.S. shoe stores

Purchasers of Herman Survivors boots are congratulated on their buy with this tag: "You've come upon a pair of Herman Survivors, the finest boots to be found. We've been making them in New England since 1879 and take great pride in pointing out the superior quality." Then down at the bottom, the tag reads, "Product of Korea."

Just the facts, ma'am?

A police officer had been sent to patrol a nudist colony, and called the station to file a routine report. "Officer Smith reporting," he said. "How are things out there, Smith?" asked the dispatcher. "No prob-

lem," he answered. "Except my badge is killing me."

Fishermen: always thinking

Three would-be fishermen rented a boat and one of them caught a large fish. "We should mark the spot," he said. The other man drew a large X in the bottom of the boat with a black marker.

"That's no good," said the third man. "Next time out we may not get the same boat!"

Lining up for McJobs

Low-wage service sector jobs often get generically referred to as "McJobs" these days. But you can bet McDonald's doesn't like how the word has come to be slang term for dead-end work.

In fact, McDonald's has its own definition of "McJobs". According to Canadian assistant vice-president Roy Ellis, "McJobs" is a registered trademark owned by McDonald's Corporation and is a term we use to describe the employment of mentally or physically challenged people in our system.

40 pages a day, no stretching

Word processing operators at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre in Toronto must achieve a daily rate of 10,000 words — about 40 pages — or else. They're required to send a memo when they have time off, and another one when it is made up. And for three months, they've had to log everything they do, including trips to the toilet.

Now their manager has given them a revised list of acceptable and unacceptable work interruptions. Stretching is strictly forbidden.

The local union newsletter is campaigning for changes in their working conditions.

Don't speak up, please

The winner of the 1990 Shouting Contest sponsored by the Ausuda Cough and Throat Preparation Co. of Japan was Mr. Yoshihiko Kato, a 35-year-old osteopath who bellowed "If you want a war, you go to Iraq" at a world record level of 115.8 decibels. Runner-up was Miss Miyako Shimizu, a trainee veterinary surgeon, who managed to deliver "Sit down, you fool" at 113.8 decibels. Their prizes were not reported.

Strong response to HEU survey on political issues

With major reforms due in the B.C. health care system, this year's provincial election will be crucial to the interests of every member of HEU.

As one of the first steps in HEU's participation in the election, a mail-in survey was sent to 5,000 HEU members living in every part of B.C. asking for comment on political and union issues.

This survey, one of the first of its kind carried out by a union in B.C., asked HEU members about wage controls, health care funding, integrity in government, fiscal management, Native land claims, multiculturalism, and the environment.

As well, members were asked for their opinions on bargaining issues such as pay equity, trade union rights, work week and workplace safety.

The answers from the multiple-choice questions are being tabulated at the HEU Provincial Office. They will not be used to guide policy, which is established by convention, but will assist in determining which issues are foremost in HEU members' minds as balloting nears.

Nearly a quarter of HEU members who received a survey form replied, which is a very high rate of return for mail-in surveys. The survey also asked for comments, and more than 40 typewritten pages of comments on HEU and political issues have

been passed to the HEU Provincial Executive.

Individual responses to the survey questions are confidential. Most of the members who responded to the survey included their names, and the names were put into a draw by HEU President Bill Macdonald for two HEU jackets. The winners are Nishi Sahota of Victoria and Sheri Veenhof of Maple Ridge.

Poll tests HEU performance

HEU members are generally satisfied with the union and its performance, according to the results of a province-wide telephone survey conducted for the union in May.

The survey was one of two sponsored by the union during the spring. A mail survey focused on members' views on current political issues. The telephone survey tested the union's communications program and membership views on collective bargaining.

Preliminary tabulation of the telephone survey results indicated that 60 percent of the membership is "somewhat satisfied" with the union and 22.4 percent is "very satisfied."

The survey was based on a large random sample of the membership drawn from HEU records.

Cedarview hearing to rule on use of 'agency personnel'

A vital arbitration hearing on the right of health care employers to use non-union "agency personnel," rather than HEU members hired from the casual list opened in Vancouver May 15.

The arbitration, which is being heard by a three-person panel headed by former B.C. Provincial Court Justice Nancy Morrison, arises from a rash of grievances filed by HEU members at North Vancouver's Cedarview Lodge in 1988.

The HEU workers, including care aides and housekeeping workers, were fighting the employer's practice of hiring casual labour from an employment agency rather than off the casual seniority list.

As a result, the HEU members

pointed out, residents were cared for by non-union workers who received no contract benefits, were paid a lower rate and often provided inferior care because of their lack of familiarity with the facility.

Employers argue the practice is necessary because of the difficulty of finding casual workers, said HEU counsel Conni Kilfoil, but the real motive is the cost savings and administrative convenience.

If the use of agency workers is allowed, the HEU believes, the door will be open to widespread privatization of patient care.

The case is based on eight of 29 grievances filed in 1988. Hearings were scheduled to continue in mid-June.

VGH plumbers first to feel sting of the free trade agreement

Plumbers at Vancouver General Hospital have the dubious honour of being the first HEU members to feel the direct effects of the Canada - U.S. free trade agreement.

Six U.S. plumbers appeared at VGH to work on a project to replace 2,500 steam traps, work that could be done by HEU plumbers.

A VGH spokesperson claimed that the U.S. plumbers were brought in because of a patent held by an American firm on the steam traps.

HEU plumber Frank Laleune said all the work could be done by HEU members, and added that HEU members are in fact working on the replacement project in a subordinate role.

When the use of the American plumbers became public, Immigration Canada announced that it would investigate.

Under the U.S. - Canada free trade deal, certain groups of professional workers have temporary access to work in the other country.

BLOW ON THIS DOT!



IF IT TURNS RED, IT MEANS WE'D GET RAISES EVEN IF WE DIDN'T HAVE A UNION.

DAVE
© 1990 UGE

PUZZLE

Unscramble these five jumbled words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.
Now arrange the circled letters to form the answer suggested by the cartoon.

REENVE



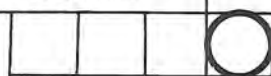
TAAKCT



YEPLR



NAME



SOER



Print answer here



Answers: VENER, REPLY, ATTACK, MEAN, ROSE — "NEVER TAKE ANY"



CALENDAR

The Guardian welcomes insertions for Calendar. Mail to 2006 West 10th Ave., Vancouver or phone 734-3431. HEU notices will get priority in the space available.

JUNE

10-14

Vancouver, B.C. Supreme Court hearing of HEU's Charter of Rights case demanding provision of same-sex benefits by the Medical Services Plan. At Court House on Smythe, look for case called Tim Knodel vs HM The Queen.

11

TUESDAY, Victoria, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Victoria Labour Centre, 7 p.m.

13

THURSDAY, Courtenay, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Washington Inn, 7 p.m.

Vancouver, videotaping of The Heart of Health Care, HEU's musical and theatrical revue, Vancouver East Cultural Centre, 1895 Venables, 8 p.m.

18

TUESDAY, Prince George, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Holiday Inn, 7 p.m.

Vancouver, HEU bargaining with CCERA.

19

WEDNESDAY, Fort St. John, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, Pioneer Inn, 7 p.m.

25

TUESDAY, Kitimat, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, CPU Hall, 7 p.m.

26

WEDNESDAY, Trail, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-Mexico Free Trade Deal, location to be announced, 7 p.m.

25-28

WEDNESDAY TO FRIDAY, HEU Provincial Executive meeting in Vancouver.

27

THURSDAY, Vancouver, B.C. Federation of Labour and Labour Council forum on Canada-

Mexico Free Trade Deal, location to be announced, Vancouver.

JULY

7-14

Health unions voter registration campaign.

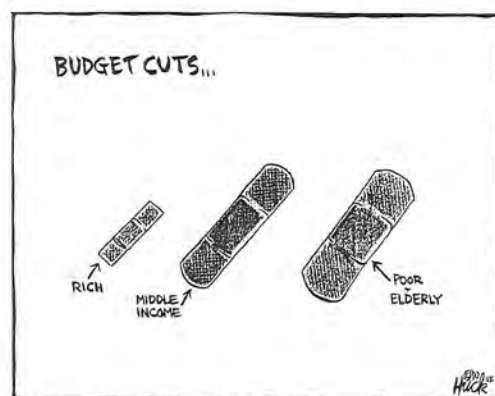
AUGUST

5-16

Vancouver, HEU Summer Leadership School, University of B.C.

6-16

Vancouver, HEU Provincial Executive meeting, University of B.C.



ON VIDEO!



CHECK OUT THESE
FREE VIDEOS FROM
THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Available this summer, this 30-minute video will capture all the drama, music and fun of HEU's Heart of Health Care musical revue, which toured B.C. during the spring.

ALSO AVAILABLE FREE!!!

Pay Equity: The Time Is Now

In this keynote address to HEU's 17th Biennial Convention of the HEU, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president Barb Byers makes a compelling case for pay equity in the health care field. 29 minutes.

HEU: Fight for Democracy

The union's battle against Bill 19, Social Credit's repressive labour legislation. 15 minutes.

HEU: Working for Better Health Care

The union's submission to the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs - a summary of where we stand on the crisis in health care. 9.48 minutes.

HEU 11th Biennial Convention

Originally produced as a film, this 26 minute review of the 1978 convention gives us a sense of our union's roots.

On the Move for Victory - 1199

In 1989, beleaguered New York city hospital workers ended a period of division in their union and mobilized to shatter their employers' united front. This 20-minute tape, which features appearances by Jesse Jackson and Local 1199 president Dennis Rivera, is an inspiration and a guide to action. Highly recommended.

call **734-3431** or your nearest
regional office to get your copies today

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION
video



Health bosses in the money

While the Social Credit government is preaching restraint for health care workers, it has allowed their bosses to take raises of up to 54 percent in the last two years.

PAGE 1



Bargaining: slow progress

HEU's Bargaining Committee reports some progress as talks with health care employers go into their fourth month.

PAGE 10



The bad news budget

Social Credit's latest budget has money to build new hospitals, but none to improve staffing at the ones we already have.

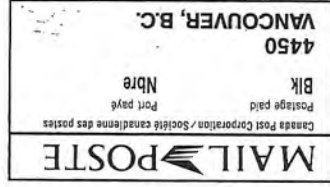
PAGE 13



Turning off the gas

Terrace HEU members are paying with their health for management's stubborn refusal to improve safety on gas sterilizers.

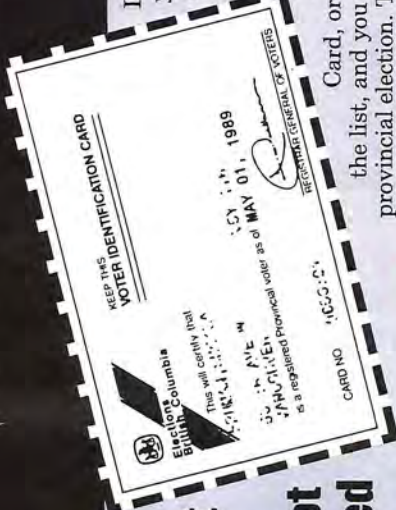
PAGE 11



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The future of BC's health services is in your hands

600,000 voters may be left off the voters list



You can't vote if you're not registered

If you have a Voter Identification Card, you're all set to vote in the upcoming provincial election.

This card confirms that you're on the voters list. It must have your current name and address.

If you don't have a Voter Identification Card, or if you have moved, then you're not on the list, and you won't be able to vote in this year's provincial election. That's the new rule.

- 1 If you don't have a card, look under "E" in the Government of B.C. listing in the blue pages of your phone book for "Elections."
 - 2 Call the Registrar of Voters telephone number you see there and ask them to mail you a registration application form.
 - 3 When you receive the application in the mail, fill it out and send it back in the postage-paid return envelope provided.
 - 4 Wait for your Voter Identification Card to be sent to you.
 - 5 Remember to make sure your entire family is registered. (Everyone 19 years and over is entitled to vote and should be registered.)
- You have until 10 days after the provincial election is called to be registered. Anyone trying to register after that date will not be able to vote.

