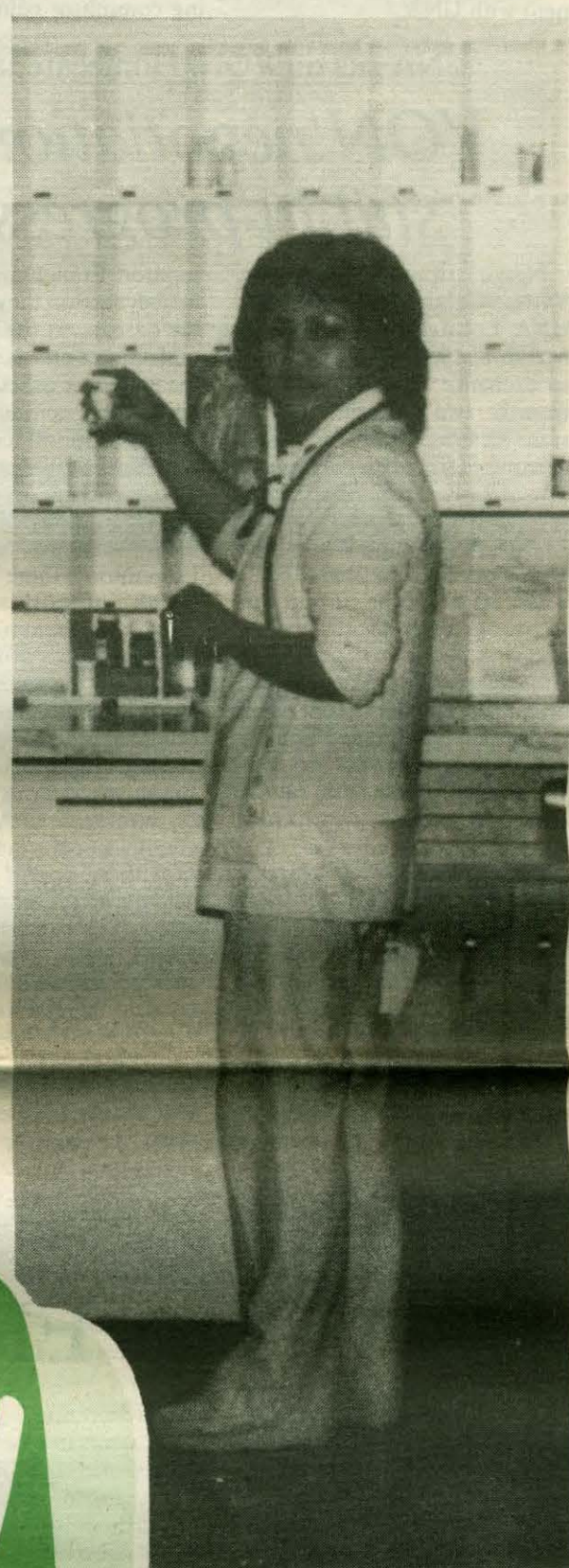
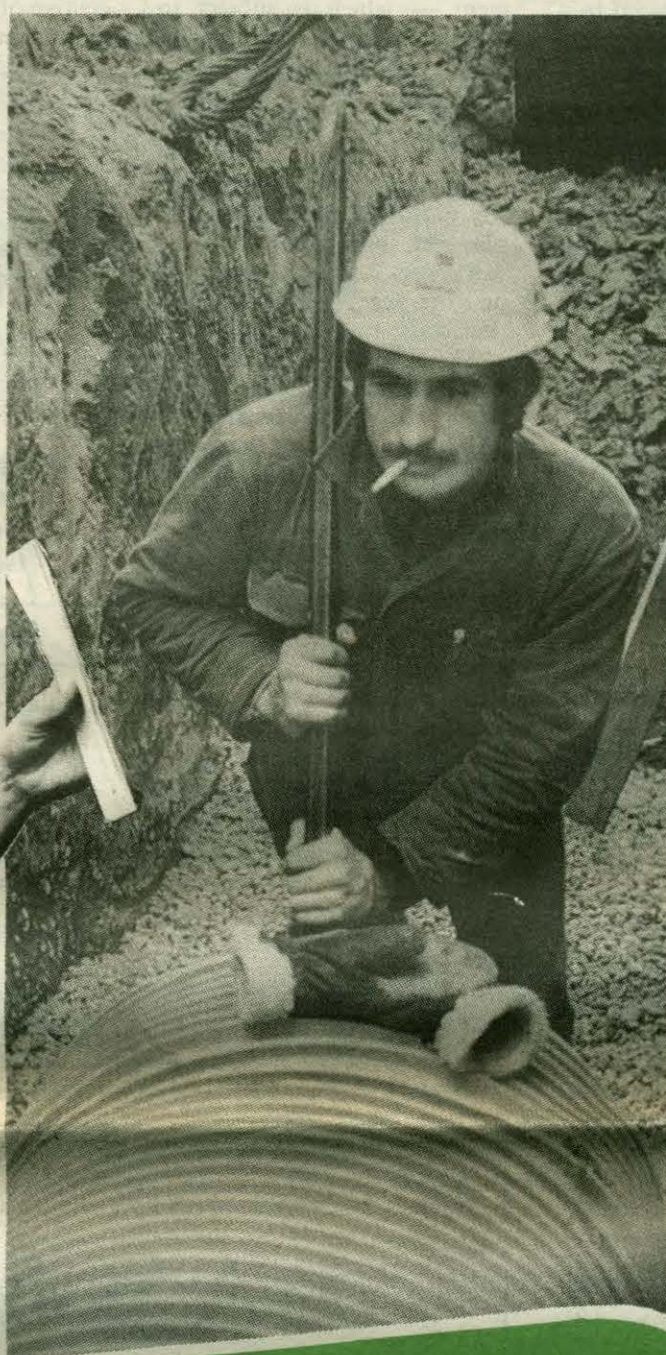


# NEWSBULLETIN

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 2



APRIL - MAY, 1984



## Solidarity ALBERTA

Solidarity Alberta has grown out of people's expressed need to get together and fight against an economic crisis they did not create.

More and more people are without work, unemployment insurance is harder to get, the benefits run out after one year and people face going on welfare.

In 1983 the Edmonton Food Bank distributed food to 74,000 people. The government has reduced social assistance programmes. Services in health care and education have been cut with government threats of more to come.

to budge from positions of zero wage increases, wage rollbacks and cuts in benefits and working conditions.

People are looking to Solidarity Alberta to fulfill two tasks. First, people want an organization in which they can act with the strength of numbers. Second, people want a forum with which to define and address important social issues.

Alberta employers are exploiting the tension created by unemployment to intimidate workers from seeking better contracts. Employers are refusing better contracts.

*continued on page 11*

*Act with solidarity on May 12*



# NEGOTIATIONS

## Edson: Alberta West Central Health Unit settles

One health unit not represented by the Health Unit Association of Alberta has concluded a 1984 collective agreement with UNA.

Negotiations between Alberta West Central health unit, based in Edson, and UNA's provincial health unit negotiating committee culminated in a

signed memorandum of settlement March 31. The settlement averted a planned strike vote.

Under the proposed settlement — which is subject to ratification by the members of UNA Local No. 98 — the existing contract will be continued for one year, each full-time nurse will receive a one time payment of \$400.00 (prorated for part-time and casual employees), and a new "5-5-4 work week" will be introduced on a one year trial basis for full-time staff.

The "5-5-4 work week" involves extending daily hours from 7 to 7 1/2 in exchange for an additional day off (normally a Friday) every three weeks.

UNA's executive director, Simon Renouf, who acts as spokesperson in health unit bargaining, said: "Our negotiating committee is certainly not enthusiastic about the monetary terms of this settlement; however, we do believe that this contract may set a useful precedent for other health unit negotiations. And we are pleased that one health agency, at least, has recognized the reality that zero wage increases or negative settlements are unacceptable to UNA members. Now we have to convince the other health units of that fact."

Renouf also noted that there has been a strong demand from all UNA health unit locals for the 5-5-4 work week. "The executive of Local No. 98 will be monitoring the implementation

of this new work week with care," Renouf said.

Negotiations for the 10 other UNA health unit locals will resume May 8.

### UNA sits on VON/Homecare talks

## VON negotiations still in progress

Negotiations between the VON, Calgary Branch and UNA Local No. 53 began on March 8, 1984, with a meeting to exchange proposals. Subsequently two negotiating sessions have been held. At the last meeting of the parties on March 30, 1984, the Employer presented the members of the Local's Negotiating Committee with its "final offer". The "offer" of the current collective agreement, with a twenty dollar increase in the uniform allowance and an increase in premium payment for work performed on a named holiday from one and one-half to double an employee's basic rate of pay represents a nominal overall increase in the employer's operating cost of one-thousand dollars per year. The parties have agreed to extend the terms of the current collective agreement. This will allow the Local's negotiating committee to report back to its members and conduct a vote as to whether the members of Local No. 53 wish to accept or reject this offer. The date of such meeting and vote has not as yet been decided.

Negotiations between UNA Local No. 61 and the VON, Ed-

monton Branch are being held in abeyance on the agreement of the parties. At the last negotiating session on March 26, 1984, the employer asked the Local's negotiating committee to consider a proposal to hold off on contract negotiations until such time as the employer concluded its negotiations regarding the fee for service of the VON with Edmonton Home Care. After much consideration the negotiating committee decided to agree to this proposal on the basis that; the terms of the current collective agreement will be extended indefinitely, salary increases negotiated between the Employer and the Local would be retroactive to April 1, 1984, and the Local would be provided with an opportunity to participate in the discussions between VON Edmonton and Home Care. Conditions for such participation were discussed and agreed to. Amongst others they include a rebirth of the Labour Management Committee Meetings which will provide the Local's members with a means to have input into decisions about the services provided by VON, payments for such and strategies to use with Edmonton Home Care.

Come to  
Peter Loughheed's \$125 per  
plate supper

The Grande Prairie Unemployed  
Action Centre's parallel supper

Free coffee and doughnuts

#### Speakers:

Pam Barrett — Solidarity Alberta  
Norm Dodson, Local 1325 — Carpenter's Union  
Grant Notley, —Leader of the Opposition

May 1, 1800 hrs., Grande Prairie Motor Inn

MAY 1

Crucial strategy  
meeting for  
hospital delegates

UNA's hospital negotiating committee has called a special meeting of delegates from hospital locals to take place Tuesday, May 1, 1984, at the Edmonton Inn. The meeting will discuss negotiations and strategy options.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## A politician's dream... more for less



by Simon Renouf

Why is it that we in UNA keep having to remind the Alberta government of the obvious: that there is no free lunch?

Throughout bargaining for the past six months, we have had to stress repeatedly that it is simply not realistic for the Government, or for the public it purports to represent, to expect nursing services for less money in real terms in 1984 than those services cost in 1983.

The cost of living has gone up for nurses as it has for other groups. That trend wasn't helped by the 13 percent increase in provincial income tax effective January 1 this year. Where would the government get the idea that nurses don't need a wage increase?

Perhaps the issue of nurses' needs simply hasn't occurred to the politicians. Perhaps they expect that nurses will reduce their standard of living in a growing economy just for the asking. The only rationale advanced by the government or by the hospitals is that they and the management staff and trustees they represent believe that nurses are worth less.

At least such a blunt declaration may be regarded as frank. But it is hardly the way to ask for a charitable contribution. If the hospitals want handouts from UNA members, they should start by learning some manners.

In March, provincial treasurer Lou Hyndman joined the chorus of those calling for something for nothing. Hyndman announced an infusion of \$300 million dollars into hospital's capital budgets: capital budgets represent the money that pays for buildings, murals, greenery and hardware. Even hospital operating expenditures are projected to increase by 7% in the budget; yet, at the same time, Mr. Hyndman supports the government's targets of a zero increase in wages.

The government's hospital building plans are truly immense: a "multi-year hospital construction and renovation program, which will see 103 hospitals built or renovated in 73 centres across Alberta at a total cost exceeding \$2 billion dollars. In 1984/85 ten new hospitals will be opened."

Mr. Hyndman's plans include the questionable addition of major acute care facilities in Edmonton and Calgary.

Yet while new hospitals continue to be built, Mr. Hyndman wants nurses in Alberta to get by on less money in real terms than they had last year.

In other words, the government wants nurses and other hospital workers to accept a cut in real wages. No doubt it would be convenient to Mr. Hyndman and his cabinet colleagues if nurses were prepared to do that. But there is simply no logical argument why they should.

Politicians derive considerable political benefit from huge expenditures on shiny new buildings. But with \$300 million dollars of new capital expenditure in 1984/85 the government is simply not in a position to plead poverty. That money could be used to enhance the operations of hospitals we have right now. The government's choice is to spend it on new buildings.

The problem is not dollars. The problem is priorities.

## UNA's new ERO



Trudy Richardson comes to the ERO job in UNA with a strong interest in working to improve the status of women in Alberta. She was previously employed in the Boyle Street Community Services Co-op and is a teacher, social worker and

counsellor. She has extensive involvements in women's groups, third world solidarity organizations, social service activities and civic politics. As a member of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, she helped organize support rallies in both the 1980 and 1982 UNA strikes. Her interests in organizations which promote fair and safe working conditions for women are the primary reasons for her desire to work for and with the UNA. She is presently the Alberta and NWT representative on the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and chairs the NAC national health committee.

## NEWSBULLETIN

The UNA Newsbulletin is a bimonthly tabloid published by the United Nurses of Alberta on the advice of the Executive Board and its Editorial Committee.

Stories appearing in the Newsbulletin have been produced by the UNA staff or are reproduced from other union publications and news services.

All letters to the editor should be addressed to Gail Dalglish, Editor, UNA Newsbulletin, UNA Provincial Office, 10357 - 109 Street, Suite 300, Edmonton, Alberta.



# FIGHTBACK

UNA defends  
the contract



## FOOTHILLS

### You can't fool me, I'm stickin' with my union rep

A nurse who filed a grievance recently at the Foothills Hospital in Calgary ran into some unexpected trouble. Having had the Step I discussion in the grievance procedure she filed at Step II in writing as prescribed in Article 32.03(b). The nurse then arranged to discuss the grievance with the Director of Nursing at a meeting. When the nurse said she would be accompanied by Mike Mearns (ERO providing union services to Local 115), the DON made the meeting contingent on Mearns' absence.

This action spawned two more grievances, one individual and a policy grievance filed by the local. The clause cited was 32.03(e) which states:

"When a meeting is held at either Step 2 or Step 3, an employee shall have the right to be accompanied by a representative of the Union."

The employer quickly conceded both grievances. Locals and individual members should be aware that the purpose of Article 32.03(e) is to ensure knowledgeable representation at grievance hearings and to redress any power imbalance resulting from a one-on-one meeting between an individual employee and management.

## ROYAL ALEX

### Extended sick leave no reason for loss of seniority and benefits

The grievor was involved in a car accident in September of 1982, thus did not qualify for coverage under the health benefits plan. Having been employed full-time for only a year, her sick time was quickly used up. At that time the hospital put her on a leave of absence without pay. The grievor was off work until June, 1983. As the hospital considered the employee to be on a leave of absence over one month, they adjusted her increment date and reduced her vacation and seniority.

UNA took the position that the grievor was under Article 19.10 and did not come within the provisions of Article 22.08. UNA also stated there was no provision in the agreement allowing the hospital to take an employee from Article 19.10 to Article 22.08. As a result the grievor was entitled to keep her salary increment date, seniority and named holidays. In addition the employee would continue to earn vacation credits.

The employer made two arguments. The first was that sick leave was a leave of absence and therefore 22.08 did apply. The second was that in fact the grievor was on a leave of absence and therefore falls within 22.08(c).

The arbitration board ruled that "In the absence of clear language to the contrary, an employee's seniority rights should not be abrogated and we find that the grievor was on sick leave within the meaning of Article 19.10 and does not suffer the loss of benefits which are the subject matter of the grievance."



## GRANDE PRAIRIE

### Casual, part-time, temporary full-time — it all adds up

A UNA member had periods of employment beginning in October 1977 as follows: casual, part-time, casual, part-time and temporary full-time. There were no breaks between the periods of employment.

It was UNA's position that since there were no breaks in the periods of employment, the grievor was entitled to vacation pay calculated at the rate of twelve percent (12%). UNA also argued that Article 17 could be used to define continuous service even if the benefits of the article did not apply to casual employees.

The hospital argued that a casual employee should be considered as being "employed" only when she is actually working regardless of whether she is defined as being an employee under Article 2.05 and further that as casual employees are excluded from benefits under Article 17, it is inappropriate to refer to that article for an explanation of vacation entitlement in the context of 30.08.

The arbitration board accepted the union's position that the grievor was, from October 1977, an employee who was continuously in the employ of the Employer or in the words of Article 17 "of continuous service". The hospital was directed to calculate and pay to the grievor an amount equal to twelve (12) percent of her regular earnings in lieu of vacation and named holidays.

## GRANDE PRAIRIE

### Knock, knock — Who's there? A supervisor, pay me please

Three UNA members had, at various times in 1982, replaced their unit supervisor while she was on vacation. The hospital had paid each nurse 75¢ per hour for the time in charge pursuant to Article 16.01. The grievors claimed to be entitled to payment of \$1.50 per hour pursuant to Article 16.02. During the vacation period none of the grievors had performed their normal duties.

The hospital contended the grievors had simply been placed in charge of the unit and that they had not done all the duties of the supervisor.

The arbitration board, in ruling in favour of the grievors, accepted UNA's argument that the grievors were replacing the unit supervisor and were not simply "in charge." This was evident from the fact that the grievors did not continue their normal duties and that in fact they had performed the "core duties" of the unit supervisor's job. The arbitration board, in allowing the grievance, stated that the hospital does not appear to use Article 16.02(b) at all.

### Feedback On Fightback

Send any comments  
on Fightback to:  
Editorial Committee  
c/o Provincial office

## ST. PAUL

### Judge quashes arbitration decision

In the October-November, 1983, issue of the Newsbulletin, we reported the success of our arbitration challenging the improper lay-off of all full-time nurses at the St. Therese Hospital in St. Paul. At that time, all of the approximately 20 full-time nurses had 15 minutes chopped from each shift and were reclassified as "maximum part-time" employees. The arbitration board had ruled that this was indeed an improper lay-off and ordered the Hospital to reinstate the affected employees into their full-time positions and pay back all the monies lost due to the Employer's violation of the Collective Agreement.

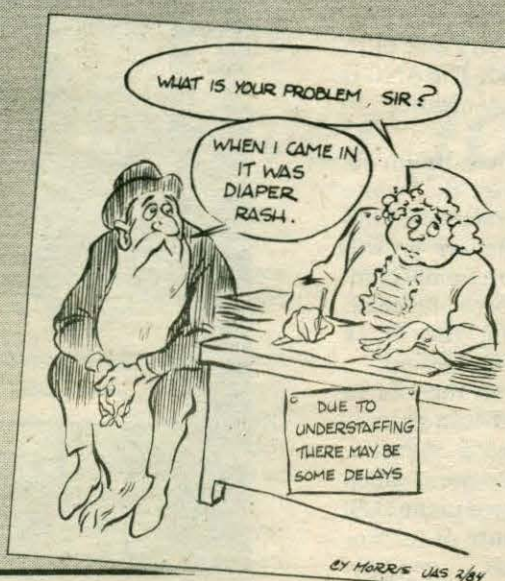
The Hospital appealed this decision on the ground that the Union's nominee to the board, Chris Rawson, was not a proper appointee as she was an employee of UNA. In fact, a decision of the Alberta Court of Appeal had ruled that UNA employees could not sit on UNA arbitration boards because of an "appearance of bias", but this decision was not handed down until after the St. Therese decision.

Nevertheless, the learned Judge of the Court of Appeal, Justice J.J. Stratton, agreed with the Hospital's position and quashed the decision of the Arbitration Board ordering that the matter be remitted to an entirely new Arbitration Board for hearing.

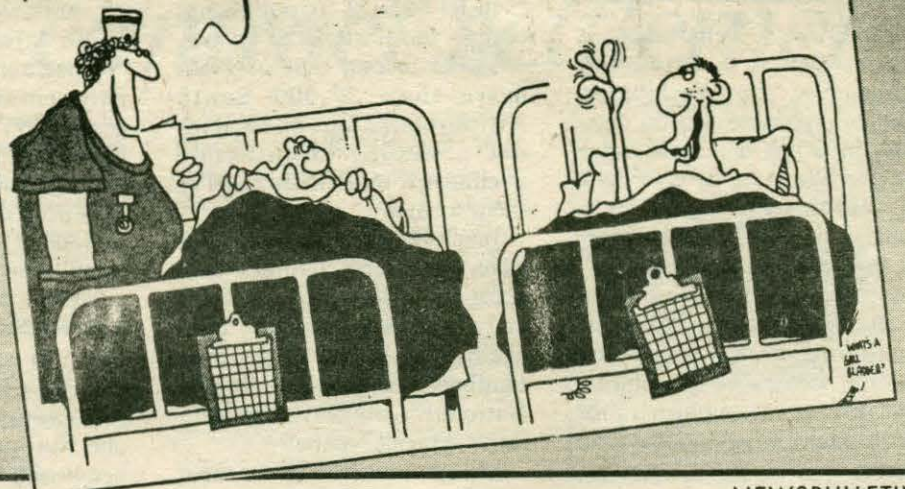
The irony of the whole situation is that the Judge never once referred to the way the lay-off itself was handled.

The UNA will be submitting this matter to a new Board of Arbitration since the monies lost during the period of "maximum part-time" employment have still not been paid by the Hospital.

## FUNNYBONE



OWING TO BUDGET CUTBACKS, WE'RE ASKING OUR PATIENTS TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO HELP EASE THE CHRONIC STAFF SHORTAGE..... MR. JONES IN THE NEXT BED WILL BE PERFORMING YOUR GALL BLADDER OPERATION....





# UIC parental benefits slightly improved for adoption

OTTAWA — It is now possible to claim up to 15 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits to cover periods off work when workers become parents — by having their own child or adopting one.

"The government is finally coming around to the idea that it's all right for workers to be parents, too, and not have to apologize or be penalized for it," says Carol Aitken, Women's Bureau of the CLC.

There are some 16,000 legal adoptions in Canada every year. Federal unemployment officials expect to receive as

many as 7,500 claims for the new benefits.

Aitken says the new adoption provisions, which came into effect in January, will do more than make life easier for adopting couples. "It's another step toward ending the idea that

'you don't bring your home life into work.' Men and women have a right to a life away from work."

Some adoption agencies require parents to spend time at home to help children get acquainted in their new surround-

ings. For some workers who could not get leaves, the choice was have a job or have a child.

Adopting couples must convince unemployment insurance officials it is "reasonable" to remain at home with the new child. Adopting a pre-schooler

or a child with emotional or physical problems would be a reasonable cause to stay home from work.

Only one spouse can claim the benefits. But it can be the father or mother.

Aitken says the idea that parental care is a right has always been accepted by unionists. Some unions have been successful in negotiating such rights. The British Columbia Government Employees' Union contract with the province provides up to five years unpaid leave to allow for child rearing, with no loss of seniority when the employee returns to work.

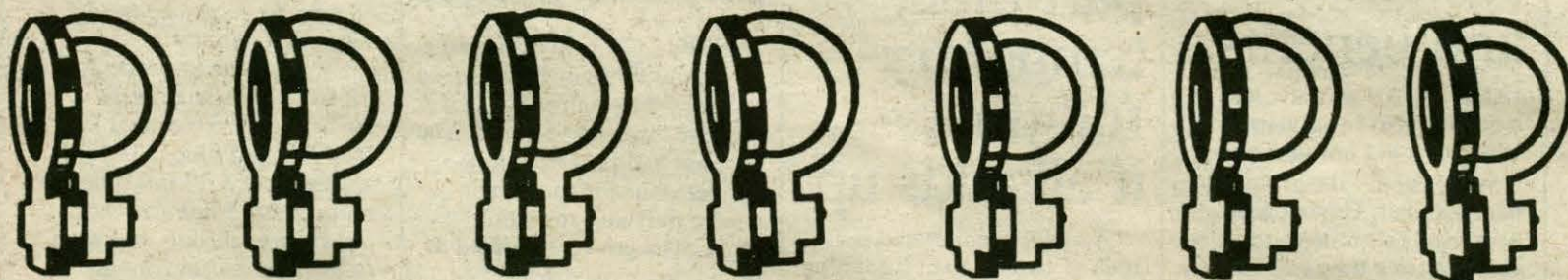
Provincial labour standards, however, lag behind the new federal provisions. Only four provinces (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan) have legislation dealing with adoption leave.

The best of them only requires the employer to grant six weeks leave for adoption. The worst provides only two day's leave. Except for Saskatchewan, it is only the mother who may apply for the leave.

The government of Ontario has placed a bill before the legislature that will require employers to grant up to six weeks unpaid leave to female employees should they adopt a child six years old or younger.

— CALM

## WOMEN'S ISSUES



### Saskatchewan welfare cuts will hurt poor women

People receiving welfare in Saskatchewan are having their hardship made even more severe by their provincial government.

In a budget speech delivered late in March Social Services Minister Gordon Dirks delivered his plan to relieve the province of the cost of people on social assistance.

Single people who are able to work will have their allowances drastically cut. Single mothers under the age of eighteen will be cut off entirely.

The government will institute a job creation programme. The plan is have the private sector hire workers and the government pay the minimum wage for a specific length of time. This a direct subsidy to business, not a job creation scheme. Business gets free labour but the worker gets no protection. There is no guarantee of continued work once the subsidy ends, likely after twenty weeks. People will be forced back into the unemployment insurance expenses picked up by the federal

government instead of assistance from the province.

The government is trying to cover up the causes for high unemployment by blaming people themselves for being out of work. The minister said that where an appropriate job is not immediately available, the welfare recipient will be "encouraged" to participate in community service work. Volunteer placement services are being set up to channel people into the programme. This plan is an overt threat to the poor on welfare that if they fail to do "volunteer" work, they will lose their benefits.

A single person on welfare who receives the maximum dollar amount on every applicable item receives a monthly income below one-half the minimum wage. And yet the minister announced he was introducing harsh methods to prevent fraudulent use of welfare benefits and to prevent people from earning more on welfare than they would earn working. Now these same people are having their income fur-



ther reduced by up to 40%.

In the past year in Saskatchewan the case load for social assistance has increased by 50%. During the same period provincial funding decreased by 5%. The newest cuts are expected to have very serious effects on young people and the older unemployed.

Both Saskatoon and Regina have formed Welfare Review Committees to organize welfare

recipients. They are finding that people 50 years and older are very vulnerable to the welfare attack. These people, when laid off their jobs, will probably never find work again. But the government categorizes them as single and employable. Many older single women fall under this category, women who have worked in low-wage job ghettos all their working lives with no benefits and no pensions. In a similar poor situation are widows who have limited work experience outside the home.

Youth are also in trouble. They have no work history and therefore have a particularly tough time finding work. The percentage of unemployed in the 20 year old age group has grown dramatically.

The government is trying to convince the public that cuts are necessary to avoid of the welfare system. However, research by the Welfare Committees and by government sponsored self-help groups say that fewer than 1% of the welfare cases can be proven to abuse the system.

### Pension case pending

An important legal case, affecting all Canadian women, is now underway. Mrs. Joy Irving, who filed for pension credit splitting under the Canada Pension Plan Act, 25 days late, is now at the stage where a previous decision in her favour is being appealed by the Minister, Monique Begin.

After a divorce one has three years to apply for pension splitting. However, few know about this rule resulting in only 3% of those eligible applying.



The Justice Department is reportedly considering challenging the Washington state comparable worth decision, in which a federal judge ordered the state to give back pay and raises to employees in female-dominated job categories that pay less than comparable "men's jobs." An official of the department's civil rights division claims that women are not the victims of discrimination just because women's jobs traditionally have paid less than men's.

### Black women — a double battle under apartheid

VIENNA — Black women are doubly disadvantaged victims of racial and sex discrimination, says United Nations secretary general Javier Perez de Cuellar.

His report was released during the 30th session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women.

Most of his report centred on South Africa, which doesn't even let 80% of its population vote — those who aren't white.

In the second half of 1980, more than 37,000 South African blacks were arrested for not possessing identification documents, more than 7,000 of them women.

Black South African women have seen their families torn apart by relocation programs and they are joining the fight against apartheid in growing numbers, according to African National Congress representative Abigail Ngobe.

Many women on "home-

lands," where 11 million people live in severely limited housing, are separated from their husbands and must assume total responsibility for their children, the ANC delegate reported.

Health conditions on the homelands are so poor that many women feel fortunate if half the children they give birth to survive, she said. The ANC is an outlawed organization in South Africa.

The South African health department believes the white population is threatened by uncontrolled population growth among blacks. So a family planning project has been launched, aimed at cutting the black population growth rate.

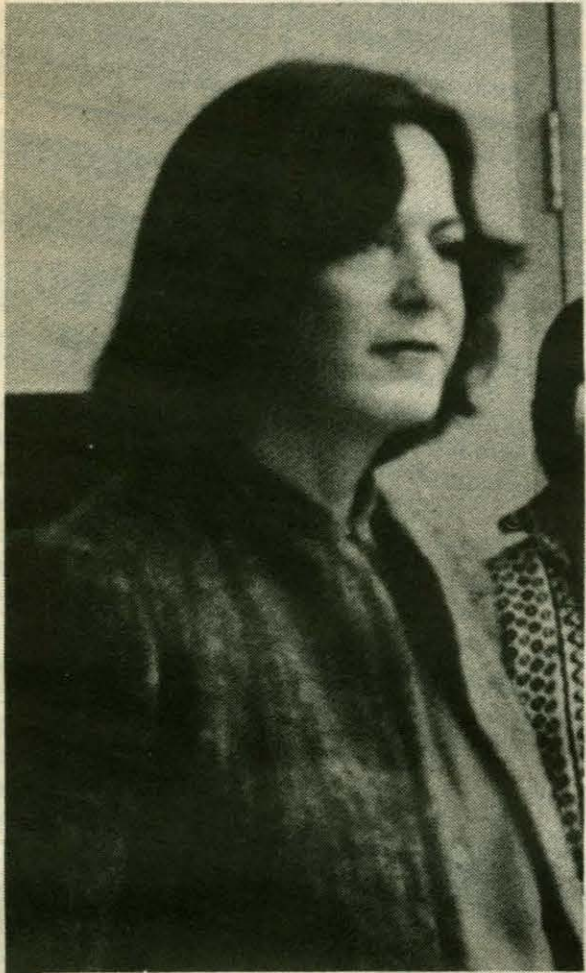
Ngobe called on the UN to urge the South African government to stop using the contraceptive Depo Provera, which is already prohibited in the U.S. and Europe because of its proven health hazards. — CALM





# "We defined ourselves as workers..."

Photos: Top: Samantha Ral Bottom: Trish Heink



UNA's president, Margaret Ethier, was a featured speaker in Calgary on International Women's Day. She spoke about the progress women have made and the fights we are still engaged in. Following are some highlights of her speech.

**V**iolence against women, on the street and in the home; sexual harassment, health and safety hazards, lack of daycare, pensions, equal pay, the list goes on. The common denominator for these issues is the economic dependence of women and the lack of power exercised by women. . .

**W**hen women dare to step out of a role someone else has designed for us, we're going to receive pressure to stop. Because it is more comfortable for other people. But it has not been as comfortable for us. . .

**N**urses are not different from other women. We too have been taught the traditional expectations that society has for women. Nurses seem to have a double dose of this. At home the needs of our families come first, at work the needs of our patients. . .

International Women's Day in Calgary. Ethier as keynote speaker, and a march through city centre.



**W**hen we realized we were being hoodwinked out of proper wages, bought off with the tag of being called "professionals", we decided to define ourselves as workers. After all, we were working pretty hard.

We decided to form a trade union. . .

**H**aving tried confrontation and conflict, we found the world did not come to an end as predicted. In fact we found our working world was considerably improved. . .

**L**ike other trade unionists, we know we have to fight to win a contract, fight to keep it, win one battle and fight it all over again.

**W**e know we probably will have a confrontation relationship with this government for some time. They know that with each of our strikes we have gained. They have to stop us or other women might get the same idea. Equal pay for work of equal value sounds pretty logical to us. But it strikes fear in the hearts of those in power who know if women achieve this, the whole economic system will come tumbling down. But an economic system that is dependent on exploitation of a group of people doesn't deserve the right to be maintained. . .

**I**n UNA we made the decision not to let fear of conflict and loss of approval by others, detract us from our goals of respect and fair value for the work we do.



# INTERVIEW



The successive military regimes governing El Salvador have consistently refused to implement a national health system. Legislation maintains a "run-for-profit" system which most Salvadoreans cannot afford. In the rural areas access to medical care has been almost non-existent.

As a result of widespread poverty, the lack of services such as health and education, extremely low wages and bad working conditions, the people of El Salvador have been organizing to overthrow their military rulers.

A priority of the popular movement is to bring decent health care to the peasants.

Health brigades have been trained, field hospitals set up and preventive medicine is practised. The care programme is run by doctors and nurses who have left the city hospitals.

Recently Esther Ramirez toured Canada. She is an official representative of the El Salvador Women's Association (AMES). Ramirez was forced into exile with her family when the death squads published their names on the condemned lists. Ramirez had been teaching in a Catholic School, her husband a professor at the University. She had worked with Archbishop Romero who was assassinated by the military in 1979. Says Ramirez, "I first became socially aware of the conditions of my people through participation in active Christian groups which went to the slums, the hospitals and the rural communities."

NEWSBULLETIN editor Gail Dalglish spoke with Ramirez about nursing, health care and women in El Salvador.

**Gail:** Tell me about how women are treated in El Salvador and what kinds of work they do.

**Esther:** Women in El Salvador have certain roles to play. In the cities they are street vendors or market sellers. They are nurses, teachers, secretaries and workers in the stores, or maids in the houses. To be social workers is also a role for women. There is no law that says women cannot study medicine or engineering but it costs too much. Plus, ideas of what women must do or must not do still play in people's minds.

**Gail:** In El Salvador, are nurses changing the outlook on women or are they accepting the traditional role of women?

**Esther:** What happens is that women enter nursing school or teaching school because they need a job. They need to have a better preparation in order to earn more money. There is a larger opportunity in nursing and teaching for women. It is short training so they can start earning money sooner.

**Health care in El Salvador is awful because the majority of the people don't have any money for private medicine.**

**Gail:** So what you are saying is that they seem to be entering nursing more because they need a job and less for what the work involves?

**Esther:** Teachers and nurses in our society don't have social prestige. And that is something that affects their attitude to the job they do.

**Gail:** So they don't feel as if they are productive people?

**Esther:** They know people don't respect what they are doing because our society has all the values mixed up and won't appreciate that teachers and nurses have important roles. And they are mostly women's jobs.

**Gail:** What would their pay be like compared to the wages that the men would earn in industry?

**Esther:** Very low wages. Mostly they work to complete the family budget. And if they are the head of their family, well they have it pretty

**Our children die from disease caused by our living conditions and our poverty.**

tough. That is why I say society must have a change of values to acknowledge the important social tasks that women perform. Right now our society underestimates that. The rich people who can pay for private care think they are like servants.

**Gail:** What is the situation of health care in El Salvador?

**Esther:** It is very awful because the majority of the population doesn't have any money for private medicine. Until three years ago we had just one children's hospital in the whole country. There are five million people. And just one children's hospital. It was donated by a rich man who left all of his fortune to do it.

**Gail:** And what are some of the children's diseases, what kind of illnesses are most prevalent in the population?

**Esther:** Diseases caused by our living conditions, our poverty.

Children die from under-nourishment, diarrhea, bronchitis and respiratory infections. After that all kinds of infections and parasites in the stomach and skin diseases. Also accidents, many, many accidents, because children are alone and not cared for because their parents are at work. Many severe accidents like burns, broken bones, those kinds of accidents.

**Gail:** What about adults?

**Esther:** There is a lot of cancer. Like in women in their reproductive organs. Lots of it. And we even have leprosy. We have it. We have other sicknesses but once you get old in El Salvador you have survived so many things that you are kind of strong. Only you die of those serious diseases, cancer or heart attacks.

**Gail:** You are saying there is one hospital in the whole country for children. What about hospitals for adults?

**Esther:** Well, we had for a long, long time one public hospital for adults. All of this was concentrated in the capital city. We had another social security hospital for private enterprise employees in El Salvador but not for state employees. They would not have any medical care services.

**Gail:** What about care for people who do not live in the city?

**Esther:** It is tough because they have just the clinic in the nearest town. Just a clinic, not a hospital at all. And in three important cities they built hospitals, but just buildings. A hospital takes a lot of equipment and nurses and doctors and they did not have any. So many patients still have to be referred to the capital city hospitals.

**Gail:** And of course, when they go there, they are away from their families.

**Esther:** Many people are sleeping in the streets in order to visit their

sick persons in the hospitals.

**Gail:** The hospitals are crowded?

**Esther:** Yes, sometimes you reach the hospital and they say, well, it is not so serious a case, go back. You cannot enter.

**Gail:** That must be very hard for nurses and doctors when they have to turn away sick people. They must get tough almost, it must be really hard to work like that.

**Esther:** Yes, they get tough and tough maybe because the reality they have to face is so awful. There

**Nurses traditionally could be very hard and uncaring because they didn't value their own work as a result of not being socially recognized... That does not happen in the villages and regions under the control of our people.**

is one maternity hospital too. A public one. And there are lots of troubles there too. Not enough beds for women and no place they can do their labour work. Just when delivery starts, then they give them a bed. All of their labour work — they would be sitting on a wooden bench and would stay like that all of their labour time. Whether it is two hours or five or 24 or whatever. They are bleeding and watering or whatever in the benches — without clothing. It is really humiliating for them.

**Gail:** Why isn't health a priority in your country? Why isn't there better health care for people?

**Esther:** Because the government just doesn't care. When they consider our people, I mean they have such retarded minds, such a misconception of human life and human beings — the people in power just care about power and property and profits and they don't care about the people.

**Gail:** Who runs your country?

**Esther:** Well, the military, backed of course by the oligarchy. When AMES started working in 1983, nurses were one of the first groups

we reached out to because we were aware of their importance. Under the military repression we would take our people to the hospital and the death squads or the paramilitary would take them out and kill them. Nurses started taking the people out of the hospitals first and so came to be of great help to save our peoples' lives.

**Gail:** What is the difference between the kind of health care that they're giving in the liberated zones and the kind of health care that you were getting before?

**Esther:** As I told you, nurses traditionally could be very hard and uncaring because they didn't value their own work and that's directly the result of nurses not being socially recognized. But that does not happen in a revolutionary movement. That does not happen in the villages and regions that are under the control of our people. Now nurses are aware of the important social role they can play and are doing it well. They give medicines to the popular movement and attend people outside the hospital. They train popular health brigades to serve in the liberated zones where we have popular hospitals. Nurses now are assisting all the population. Of course in our areas everything done has to be in accordance with decisions made by people at local meetings. The demands of our population becomes the most important thing.

**Gail:** So a nurse not only gains more respect for herself but is given more respect for her work?

**Esther:** They have been discovering they are serving human life. They are saving the lives of their compatriots. Before they were taught by our class society to treat poor people as animals.

**Gail:** You were talking about a nurses' association. Do nurses unionize?

**Esther:** Yes, they do. But no union is very successful in El Salvador due to repression. As I told you all the organizing has been taking place underground under very heavy

security measures. The education, political education, is taking place so nurses can really play the role our liberation movement needs. It is necessary for the nurse's associations to do conscienteness-raising work on them so they will really understand and discover the importance of their careers.

**Gail:** Is the role of women changing in El Salvador?

**Esther:** Well, we can generalize that women are discovering how useful they can be. They are able to do lots of things to change society and

link their situations, their specific problems as nurses, teachers, housewives; they have such a national view of this. They can overcome the problems of the whole society because they understand that the causes of the specific problems are different and are more general than just a union problem. It is a government, an economic system that makes such a class division, makes such poverty and rough relations among human beings. In El Salvador we are fighting for a new government, for a new country and that is why we are being so successful.

**Gail:** Tell me about that success. Because you must know we hear very little about El Salvador from your point of view.

**Esther:** In 1970 we started organizing sectors of the population according to their economic interests and material needs. All these sectors have been developed and have acquired a political conscience. They have gathered together a front of many mass organizations, many sectorial unions or organizations and started showing solidarity with the fights of other unions. For example, some industrial workers had problems in one factory and all the peasants, teachers, students and industrial workers in other factories went on a strike or demonstrated in solidarity. They raised money and food to maintain the people in the strike. The same happened when students had some cause to fight and when the people from slums had to fight for water supply. All of the sectors of the population would support that fight. That way our social training made the government tremble. That is why repression is starting to be so strong. The government started killing everybody. They started to shoot at demonstrations. Popular leaders were shot and people disappeared because people got a clue of their way to freedom. What happens now is that the repression is getting every time more massive. We have

lost 45 thousand people in the last three years.

**Gail:** What you are really saying is that everybody in El Salvador knows somebody who has been tortured or knows somebody who was murdered. Every family.

**Esther:** Of course, in many suburbs, in many villages you are very aware of that. It is just a general phenomenon.

**Gail:** What keeps the people fighting? They must be so afraid. The terror must be so great.

**Esther:** We are defending our lives. This same terror feeds your fighting because it becomes so extreme that whether or not you fight you are dead. It comes to a point that your terror has to be put aside because if you don't fight, you get killed.

**Gail:** You know what we have here is the idea that women shouldn't be militant. We are taught that women don't fight. Here, when the nurses have gone on strike a lot of people thought it was a terrible thing. People think nurses, or women, should not take such strong positions.

**Esther:** Well, women must fight is what I say. Our women have grown so much. They are very good fighters, not only in military struggles, but they are very efficient organizers. As popular organizers and in political education they are very effective. Our women are participating in combat and in the most dangerous and most delicate operations with the popular army. They have reached political and military leadership too. They are commanders in the army and also in people's leadership. We are half of the population and we are the people. I believe in El Salvador women respond more aggressively maybe or more urgently than men facing hard situations. Well, she is the mother. Most of the time she is the head of the family. She wouldn't be indifferent.

**Gail:** How much of the territory of El Salvador is yours?

**Esther:** Well, it must be a quarter of the territory that is under the control of the people.

**Gail:** And how real do you feel an American invasion is?

**Esther:** It is real, let me tell you. They have occupied all Honduras. That is a whole country and much bigger than El Salvador and it is a very strategic one. Honduras has an entrance to the Gulf and Pacific Ocean and also the Atlantic coast. It is a border country with Guatemala, where there is a guerrilla movement and a popular movement, and with Nicaragua where they have a popular government. El

Salvador has such a successful liberation movement too. So for the U.S., the area is very strategic. They can invade three countries from Honduras and if they do they will do it to all of them, not just to one, because they don't like what is going on in any of them.

**Gail:** What would you like to say to the nurses in Alberta?

**Esther:** I believe that people in Canada and the United States must relate their fight to the struggle of other people of the world. They must deepen their understanding of the causes of their own problems. They must not be narrow in the scope of their demands and fighting. Because here you have poverty, you have discrimination, you have lots of injustice going on and no justification whatsoever for it.

**Gail:** Also here we have a government that is trying to take away health care.

**Esther:** You have the same situation in a smaller degree but with less justification because your country is well off. You don't need to have any social problems.



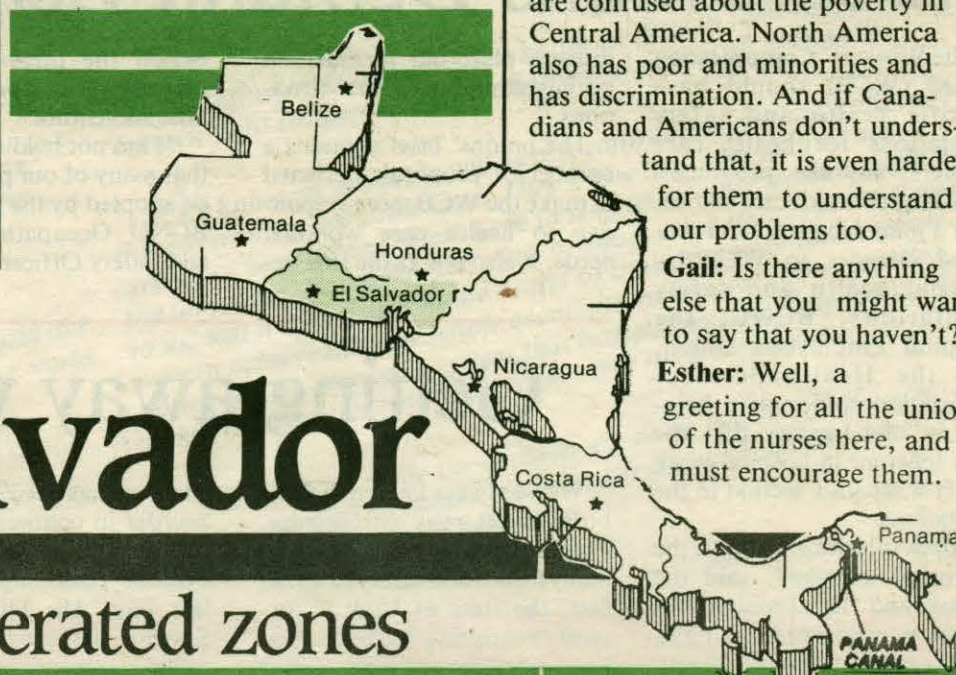
**The government has such a misconception of human life and human beings — the people in power just care about power and property and profits, and they don't care about the people.**

**Gail:** The nurses here are beginning to see that one of their roles is to be what we call patient advocates, nurses who are close to the patients are the ones becoming most vocal for making better changes in health care.

**Esther:** You know what happens when everything becomes a business, when private health is a business, so what really matters is not life but taking money out of the patients. I believe that Canadians are confused about the poverty in Central America. North America also has poor and minorities and has discrimination. And if Canadians and Americans don't understand that, it is even harder for them to understand our problems too.

**Gail:** Is there anything else that you might want to say that you haven't?

**Esther:** Well, a greeting for all the union of the nurses here, and I must encourage them.



## The battle for health care in El Salvador

Nurses, people and preventative medicine are priorities in the country's liberated zones



# Companies keep dangerous secrets

It's hard to know whether you're handling a chemical safely — or whether you should be handling it at all — when technical information on it is skimpy or non-existent.

The number of workplace chemicals is growing by the minute. While some provinces have made workplace health and safety committees legally responsible for checking possible hazards, the lack of a nation-wide information base on hazardous products is a major problem.

Since June, 1982, a number of national unions have been arguing for just such an information base. The forum is a tripartite project group set up by the federal government, in which industry associations and the Canadian Labour Congress were invited to participate.

Most provinces have supported the call for more detailed and accurate labelling and data sheets. But industry claims that the composition of some chemicals must remain a trade secret. The federal government has been wavering somewhere between the labour and industry positions.

Dave Bennett, the CLC's health and safety officer, says the scope of available information is the main issue in the project group's still-confidential discussions. "There are bona fide trade secrets," he says, "that's quite clear. The ques-

tion is, how can that notion be reconciled with the right of workers to know what they're working with? That's yet to be decided."

Some answers to that question are already being developed at the Canadian Union of Public Employees, where health and safety officer Colin Lambert has little time for the industry argument. "I think it's a red herring, quite honestly," he states. "Trade secrets can be broken in any half-assed laboratory. We're not asking for process secrets, and I don't think there's any such thing as a trade secret in terms of substance."

CUPE is calling for use of comprehensive data sheets to describe workplace chemicals. "The ones out there now are completely useless as far as really having enough

information," Lambert says. Workers should be able to ascertain "whether there are special handling requirements and what they need to know to be able to handle it safely or not handle it at all if need be."

Jim Gill, health and safety officer at the United Auto Workers, says his ideal data sheet would avoid "vague generalities" and "list each and every chemical in the compound with percentage com-

positions, so that we know the relative danger levels of each constituent part."

He says he's not sure why the chemical industry has resisted this idea, although safety committees often have been able to replace hazardous chemicals with safer substitutes once they know what they're working with.

Gill and Lambert agree that

industry has been responsible for blocking the work of the tripartite labelling project. "The only impasse is that I think we've gone as far as we can go in giving stuff away, and the employers have gone as far as they want to go," Lambert says. "Now the feds have to bite the bullet, and I don't think they know how to handle it."

— CALM



Public water contaminated

*Workplace health pioneer fingers widespread hazards*

## HEALTH & SAFETY

### VDT users have birth problems; Employers want more VDTs

Fifty percent of a group of airline reservation clerks using video display terminals suffered problems when they became pregnant, reports District 925 of the Service Employees International Union. The problems included miscarriages, birth defects, premature births, and

newborn deaths. Because of these and other fears about VDT safety, at least nine states have begun to consider legislation to regulate VDT use. But a new group, the Coalition for Workplace Technology, has been formed to lobby against such bills which, it says, "would

needlessly restrict the introduction and use of computer technology." Organizations involved in the Coalition include the American Bankers Association, American Electronics Association, American Insurance Association and American Newspaper Publishers.

NEW YORK — Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, one of the pioneers of the occupational health movement, says public water supplies are a potential danger. In the U.S. about one-third of the underground water used for drinking and home use is contaminated "to a greater or lesser degree by chemicals that have leached from our industrial society into our water supply."

He says toxic chemical wastes are a hazard to workers on the job and at home. Bulldozer operators clearing toxic waste dumps "have been much more heavily exposed than householders living 100 or 200 yards away," Selikoff observes.

He was interviewed recently by Press Associates Inc., the American union news service, at his office at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Buried industrial waste (a vast problem in Canada, too), can be a hazard to gas-pipe workers who lay pipe in areas near underground chemicals.

Selikoff says another problem still not solved is the condition of many schools and other public buildings. Like Canadian postal workers who discovered crumbling asbestos in an Ottawa postal station, American school employees are at risk from asbestos in the ceilings of aged schools.

Exposure to even small amounts of asbestos has been linked to cancer and chest cancers.

But Selikoff is optimistic that occupational disease can be conquered, especially by unions. "Looked at in a historical perspective, the labour movement has accomplished more in this area in the past 10 years than it has in its history."

— CALM

### B.C. Nurses Identify Workplace Hazards: Three Unions Demand Better Standards

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) should have specific health and safety regulations for health care workers, say the province's three largest health care unions.

In a joint submission on proposed changes to WCB industrial health and safety regulations, BCNU, the Hospital Employee's Union, and the Health Sciences Association told public hearings in mid-January that the risks inherent in hospital work justify a separate section in the regulations:

"Back injuries are double the provincial average", said the unions, and "the proximity to radiation, exposure to bacteria, and contact with many chemicals used in treatment of

diseases place our members in potentially dangerous situations."

The unions' brief contains a number of proposals designed to make the WCB more responsive to health care workers' needs. It also marks the first oc-

casion the three health care unions have co-operated on this kind of venture.

"I am not holding my breath that many of our proposals will be adopted by the Board," said BCNU Occupational Health and Safety Officer Peter Dent.

"On the positive side, we are seen by the labour community to be, for the first time, part of the struggle by the labour movement to improve the health and safety of B.C. workers, at a time when existing standards are under intense attack."

### Getting away with murder?

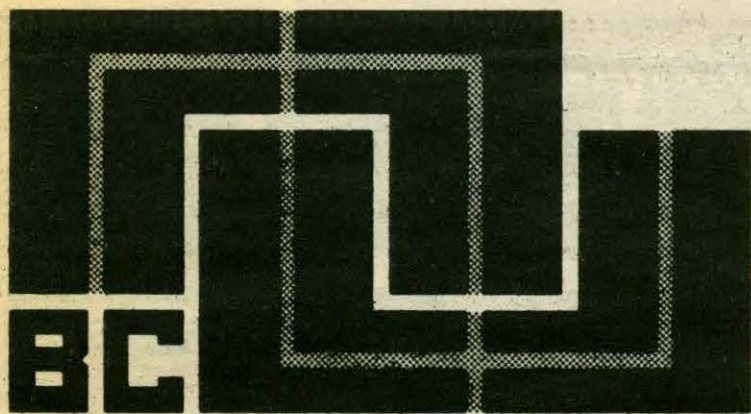
We've always known that the boss can get away with murder. That's quite literally true in many health and safety cases. In fact, the state of Utah is currently protecting Michael MacKay, who the governor called "a respected businessman."

MacKay has been charged with murder in connection with the death of one of his employees of cyanide poisoning in Chicago last year. His Film Recovery Systems Inc. used cyanide and other hazardous chemicals to recover silver from used x-ray

film and did not take proper safety precautions. In contrast to Utah, the state of Montana honored an extradition warrant for the company's president, Steven O'Neal. Three other company officials are also charged with murder.







15 months later

## New contract within reach of govt nurses

Government nurses are within sight of a new collective agreement, following release of an arbitration award that rejects a provincial government plea of 'inability to pay' in favour of an industry-wide standard for nurses.

The award affects about 2,700 registered and registered psychiatric nurses employed directly by the provincial government. Represented jointly by BCNU and the Union of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of B.C., the nurses have been without an agreement since their previous contract expired, December 31, 1982.

If the Compensation Stabilization Commissioner approves the award, the government nurses' will be in line with those of nurses in the general hospitals.

"There must be an industrial standard, and that standard ... must be that of the general hospital nurses", says the award, upholding the unions' position at hearings held in October and November.

The unions argued that the increased cost of living, the average level of other settlements in the health sector, and the historical relationship with the general hospital agreement should be the main factors governing the award.

The major issues raised by the employer, ability to pay — under the Compensation Stabilization Act — and productivity were not, said the unions, valid reasons for denying wage increases. How the government chose to spend money reflected political priorities.

Citing the "almost identical tracking of the government nurses with the general hospital nurses", the award specifies wage increases that would preserve this relationship.

The employer also argued that hospital nurses have a 2 1/2-hour longer work week, but the board held that government nurses "have a poorer vacation package", and "what they lose in the swings, they make up in the roundabouts".

What it all boils down to, says the award, is that "a nurse is a nurse" and "... it is in the interests of all concerned that all nurses be treated, roughly speaking, alike."

The board rejected the employer's argument that it could not afford the increase: "... there is an ability to pay. It has already been given to the general hospital nurses."

Conciliation efforts directed at resolving the bargaining impasse between SUN and SHA have broken down. SUN brought forth two different offers, both significantly reducing the union's original salary requests. SHA made no substantive counter offers in either wages or working conditions. As a result SUN withdrew those proposals from the table.

SHA's refusal to increase its wage offer beyond two per cent means nurses' wage settlement may be the lowest in the province. Its continuing resistance to consultations with nurses on

# BCNU warns government: labour relations are fragile

The 17,000-member B.C. Nurses' Union has cautioned Labour Minister Bob McClelland against legislative moves that would upset the province's fragile labour relations environment.

In a brief to the minister, BCNU addresses three issues: arbitration of contracts for essential services workers, the make-up of the B.C. Labour Relations Board (LRB), and the right to strike of nurses and others involved in essential services.

The union predicts more strikes if the government gives essential services employers the right to opt unilaterally for binding arbitration when negotiations fail. Speculation on anticipated labour code amendments includes this possibility.

The outcome would be de facto compulsory arbitration, according to BCNU. "The

employer's incentive to negotiate would virtually disappear — and with it any semblance of free collective bargaining.

"Faced with the equivalent of compulsory arbitration, unions more quickly and more often would be forced to the resort of a strike. No government concerned with public welfare would enact legislation with such obviously dire consequences."

BCNU also opposes changing the LRB to include members who are not labour relations practitioners. The result would be to inject inconsistency and uncertainty into a legal process than can tolerate neither condition.

"The LRB's success rests largely on its members' backgrounds. Addressing labour relations realities in their professional lives, board

members know first-hand what is and is not workable.

The labour code now requires LRB panel members to reflect equal numbers "representative of employers and employees".

The third issue covered by the brief is the need to "enshrine in law, explicitly, the basic human right to strike of nurses and other essential services employees". BCNU notes that the law does not forbid such job actions and declares, "The time is long past to make explicit what the statutes now imply".

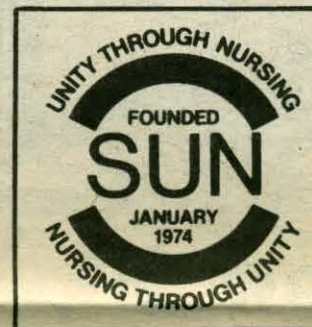
The union cites its own experience as part of "the record (that) demonstrates clearly that BCNU and other unions do act responsibly in conducting job actions around essential services." In the 1980 strike of nurses employed directly by the provincial government, 500 stayed on the job to maintain essential services during the 10-day job action.

### Conciliation Breakdown

## Nurses offered 2%; SUN withdraws proposals

working conditions illustrates a retrogressive management philosophy. SHA has said that nurses must "make reconciliation" for the 1983 increase of 11.2 per cent, as it exceeds the government wage guidelines.

When SUN signed a two year agreement in 1982, wage guidelines did not exist. Inflation was rampant, and the 1981 consumer price index was almost twelve per cent. At the time SUN had the foresight to vigorously bargain for a two year contract which protected its members from double-digit inflation. Following the ratifi-



cation of the contract, the provincial government imposed wage guidelines suggesting the need for "consideration" in future contracts, if 1983 wage

settlements were higher than the guidelines. SHA has interpreted this guideline to mean SUN's 1984 wage increase must be deducted by five per cent. What began as guidelines has become strict wage controls with no room for adjustments. Gains made in the past can now be taken away and future wage increases are dictated at levels guaranteed to be less than the inflation rate. As the guidelines are applied retroactively, they discriminate harshly against SUN members.

SHA's rigid bargaining position is based on the view that it has public opinion and government policy on its side. SHA is convinced nurses will accept its offer because nurses are unable to take any unified action which will change government or public opinion. SHA's recent ad campaign is directed at developing government and the public's support. Its confidence in obtaining an easy victory is exemplified in its unwillingness to amend its wage offer, the refusal to respond to non-monetary issues and its threat to withdraw retroactive pay.

SUN is faced with a most difficult situation. To accept an offer, which has been virtually dictated, will severely discredit and prejudice nurses in future bargaining. A two per cent increase means a declining standard of living over the next two years and no improvements in job security or working conditions.

## OTHER NURSES



An update  
on our  
sister  
unions  
across  
Canada

# Long wait is over for contract settlement

The new year has witnessed the resolution of collective agreements for three of NBNU bargaining units.

The settlements were reached nineteen months (Nursing Homes), fourteen months (Part I), and nine months (Nursing Instructors) after the expiration dates of their predecessors. In all cases, the elongated period was without a doubt a tedious and frustrating one for the

bargaining committees and the membership. A period of satisfaction and fanciful planning for the new wage increases is well deserved.

For the Nursing Home and Part I bargaining units the outcome was as anticipated: a wage increase of 14 percent over the two year term. Since the previous Agreements for these groups expired in 1982, the wage increase was subject to the

Provincial Government's July 1982 wage restraint program namely:

- Contracts which expired in 1982 will have to reflect wage increases under 10%
- In every case the objective of increases of 5% by the end of June 1984

The Nursing Instructor bargaining unit whose previous

collective agreement expired in March of 1983, found their wage settlement determined by the 1983 version of wage restraint as proposed in the Province's May 1983 budget. The restriction of the first year wage freeze was unavoidable.

The bargaining committees held their ground saying no to rollbacks while realizing moderate improvements to their Agreements.

**New  
Brunswick  
Nurses  
Union**



# NATIONAL

## ATA kicks out Keegstra

EDMONTON — It took a long time, but the union representing Alberta teachers has decided there's no place in the organization for a racist.

Rural teacher Jim Keegstra, who was also until last year his town's mayor, has been expelled from the Alberta Teachers' Association.

The ATA had to act slowly and appear at times to be defending Keegstra to make sure he — or any teacher — had a fair hearing before being fired.

The ATA has recommended

to the provincial minister of education that Keegstra's teaching certificate be suspended indefinitely. His students said he told them there was no plan by the German Nazis in the Second World War to exterminate millions of Jews.

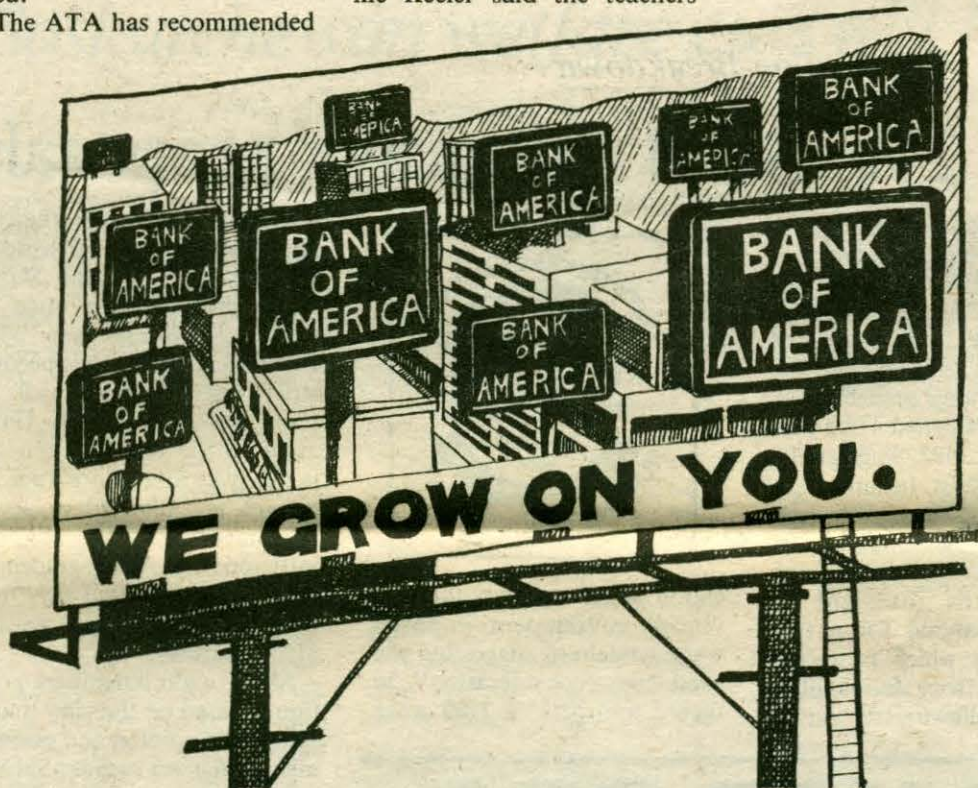
Despite books, movies and TV shows on the concentration camps and gas chambers used to murder European Jews, Keegstra said it never happened.

ATA executive secretary Bernie Keeler said the teachers'

organization expelled Keegstra for bringing discredit to the teaching profession.

Most unions, however, don't have the power to expel members who are bigots. And the ATA's decision to discipline its member for spreading anti-Jewish propaganda was in the union's role as a self-regulating professional association. Like other unions, it probably couldn't expel a member for racism.

— CALM



## Banks use tax breaks to fund huge take-overs

OTTAWA — Give a corporation a tax break and what will it do with the money? Invest in Canada? Create jobs?

For the Bank of Montreal, which paid no taxes at all in 1982, tax breaks meant a chance to buy another bank.

The bank's takeover of the Harris Bank Corp. of Chicago for \$673 million was used by New Democratic Party leader

Ed Broadbent to show the folly of massive corporate tax breaks.

Broadbent reminded federal finance minister Marc Lalonde in the House of Commons in February that Lalonde had claimed more than 200 loopholes in the tax system would have "a trickle down effect and create jobs."

Investment by companies in Canada, however, was down in

1983 and is forecast to decline again this year and in 1985, said the NDP leader.

Lalonde said in defence of his policies that "more money came into Canada last year than went out." He said he raised the Harris take-over with the president of the Bank of Montreal and "was assured that the funds used for this purpose came out of money they had earned in the United States."

— CALM

## Bennett stomps workers' comp

VANCOUVER — Organized labour here is preparing to fight a battle unions thought they won in 1917.

The fight is for workers compensation — an insurance plan that was supposed to balance the interests of injured workers and their employers. The Social Credit government under premier Bill Bennett recently announced plans to shift that balance to favour employers.

Bennett plans to eliminate boards of review and will not increase employer contributions to cover a shortfall in the dangerously under-financed scheme.

The compensation system has been run on a "no-fault" basis. A worker injured on the job received money without resort to courts to determine who or what caused the pain.

Keith Graham, safety director of the B.C. Federation of Labour, says Bennett appointments have made the board pro-employer. Consequently workers have come to rely on appeals to independent review boards to get a fair break on disputes over whether injuries or illnesses really are related to jobs.

Proof the WCB rulings had become biased in favour of employers is the fact that 40% of those rulings were being overturned by the boards of review in favour of workers.

Continually resorting to the appeal process created a logjam



of 5,000 unresolved cases. The obvious and fair solution, says Graham, would have been to change the board so fewer appeals would be launched.

The government's solution to the backlog is to eliminate the appeal procedure. The only appeal under the new policy will be back to the same people who made the first ruling — the board itself.

Socred policies have restricted the number of WCB inspectors and their inspections, says Colin Gabelmann, NDP labour critic. The government's reluctance to raise the assessment on employers to cover the costs of more accidents and illnesses has led to an unfunded liability of close to \$500 million, adds Gabelmann.

This means the fund could run out of money to pay awards to injured or sick workers and to survivors of workers killed on the job.

Gabelmann's call for a public inquiry into the WCB was rejected by the government. "They told us they intend to change the legislation without consultation or discussion," he says.

Graham says the labour movement intends to put forward a massive fight-back.

— CALM

## LABOUR



## UAW workers win company paid child care

Members of the United Auto Workers at Canadian Fab, a subsidiary of American Motors Canada, are the first industrial workers in Canada to win a company-paid child care provision in their contract. Ninety percent of the Stratford, Ont. company's 1,400 employees are women. The company agreed to put 2¢ an hour into a childcare fund, and to work with the union in setting up the program.

## It's from bad to worse in Newfoundland

ST. JOHN'S — Things are going from bad to worse for public employees in Newfoundland thanks to premier Brian Peckford and the Conservative government.

Peckford recently announced a two-year wage freeze for all provincial government workers.

Peckford first moved against provincial public employees last August with the passage of a law (Bill 59) designed to undercut the effectiveness of unions

representing provincial government workers.

The law limits the legal right to strike and the right to belong to a union.

Fraser March, president of the 12,000-member Newfoundland Association of Public Employees, says the government plans to restrict the right to strike of 30% to 40% of the workers in most bargaining units by designating them as essential in the event of a strike. This will be the first time any provincial workers have been

designated essential, says March.

Bill 59 also permits the government to re-define the meaning of employee. This could strip as many as 2,000 NAPE members of their union rights and benefits, says March.

NAPE has challenged the law in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland. The union claims it violates constitutional guarantees of freedom of association. (The Ontario Public Service Employees'

Union was successful last year in the Ontario courts with a challenge to a similar law).

The National Union of Provincial Government Employees, of which NAPE is a component, has lodged a complaint against Newfoundland with the International Labour Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

Tom Mayo is a national representative in Newfoundland for the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Mayo expects many of the 5,000 CUPE members who work for hospitals, universities and school boards to eventually be affected. And he is certain that if workers decide the government position is unacceptable, a major strike will be unavoidable.

Will the public sector unions join in common cause against the government? "Various bodies are now examining the situation to see if there is any reason or logic to a common front," says Mayo. — CALM



continued from page 1

It has become apparent that all groups must increase their knowledge of how the economic crisis affects everyone. To this end labour unions, organizations of the unemployed, church and community groups, women's organizations, social service groups, farmers and small business representatives have met to create a broad base of understanding and solidarity.

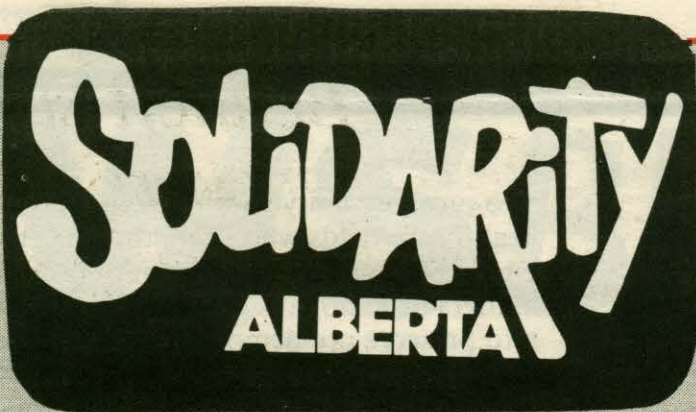
Solidarity Alberta is beginning to grow province-wide with plans for fightback actions and to develop policy positions to get Alberta out of the economic depression.

On May 12 several communities will be sponsoring events under the banner of Solidarity. The purpose is to make visible just how many sectors in Alberta are affected by the political and economic

priorities set by this provincial government.

The Edmonton region is planning an afternoon parade and fair. On the fairgrounds each organization is invited to put up an information booth. There will be on-going music, food available and games for children.

Calgary and Medicine Hat are also organizing public fairs.



Lethbridge will have a march to city hall and the provincial building. Marchers will distribute Solidarity "calling cards" and will plant a Solidarity banner on provincial grounds.

All centres request that people bring donations for the food banks.

The UNA executive board is encouraging members to be active participants in Solidarity Alberta.

Contact these people in your area:

#### Edmonton

Doug Elves  
426-1751 (h)  
426-7744 (w)

#### Calgary

Susan Keeley  
243-2356 (h)  
233-2700 (w)

#### Lethbridge

Brian Trimble  
328-7459 (h)

#### Medicine Hat

Dave Durning  
526-5747 (h)  
527-2424 (w)

#### Red Deer

Clarence Lacombe  
343-3353 (w)

#### Fort McMurray

Linda Huebscher  
791-4609 (h)

## Renault hunger striker re-instated

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM — a hunger striker who protested his dismissal for defacing a sign on company property has been returned to work.

Fred Comminne, a chief steward with the Belgian Metalworkers' Union, was fired in 1982 for altering a sign that gave credit to management of the Renault car plant for the year's production level.

Comminne changed the sign to read "thanks to the workers," and he was fired.

Protests "poured in from all

over the world," according to the International Metalworkers' Federation, a global congress of unions in steel, auto and other metal industries. Comminne staged a hunger strike to draw attention to his case.

Renault offered Comminne seven years' pay if he would drop his grievance and abandon his job. (Belgian law requires that much pay if a company fires a worker without cause). In February Renault offered him another job. — CALM

## INTERNATIONAL

### No "hard times" for corporate profits

While wage freezes, give-backs and other concessions are helping to hold down union wages, the employers' profit parade has begun to roll. General Motors has announced the largest profits in its history \$3.7 billion for 1983. Ford chalked up a record of \$1.86 billion. Chrysler is also expected to post substantial profits. One of the reasons for this big buck bonanza is that the auto companies have been able to keep costs down — even while stepping up production. And one of

the big cost cutters has been automation. One industry analyst estimated that GM can build as many cars today as it could four years ago — with 100,000 fewer employees.

Also showing big profits for 1983 was the bankrupt Manville Corp. Manville filed for bankruptcy in 1982 to avoid paying

claims of workers who had contracted cancer and other diseases from the company's asbestos. The company hopes to get the bankruptcy court to accept a plan that would sharply limit Manville's liability for such claims. Meantime, Manville reported a profit of \$67 million last year.

### Lots of robots, but it's oh, so lonely here

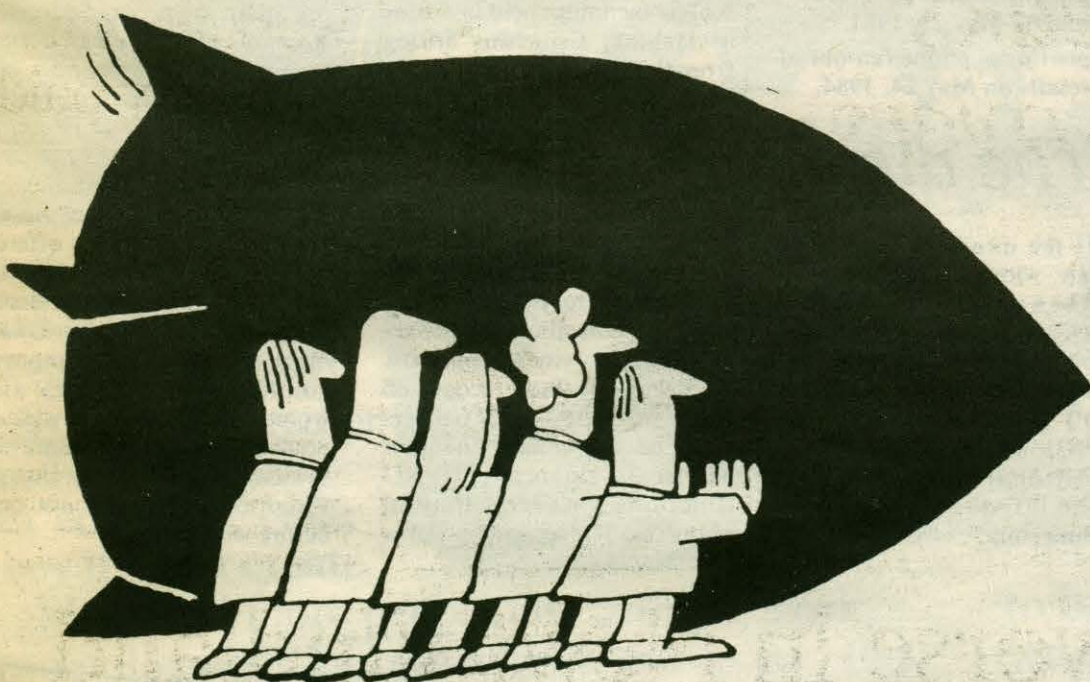
TOKYO, JAPAN — Nearly 1 job in 8 has been eliminated by new technology in recent years in Japan, according to research recently released by unions in the consumer electronics and electrical equipment industries. More than 90% of the businesses sampled had introduced micro-electronic devices to do production work, and 56% reported a decrease in the

number of production workers because of the new technologies.

Among employees still at work on the automated production lines, however, up to 80% said they felt there aren't enough humans left to handle the increased output. More than half also complained of too much compulsory overtime.

— CALM

## NOTES



### Peace-niks get jobs back

HAMBURG, WEST GERMANY — A labour relations board has reinstated the captain and two members of a ship's crew who were fired for adopting a peace motion on the ship.

The Transport and Public Service Workers' Union took their case to the labour court. The captain and

two crewmen had helped the union pass a motion protesting the decision to permit U.S. cruise and Pershing missiles on German territory.

The union campaign to reinstate the three included a petition signed by 40,000 people submitted to the owners of the ship, Hapag-Lloyd Lines. — CALM

### Carolina teachers dramatize low wages

Teachers in Summerville, South Carolina found a unique way to dramatize poor salaries. About 100 members of the National Education Association lined up to apply for a janitor's job at the post office. That job pays \$19,867 — nearly \$8,000 more than a starting teacher's salary of \$12,000.



### Air traffic controllers win back right to strike

PARIS, FRANCE — While many governments are taking away the rights of public employees to strike the French government is returning the strike weapon to air traffic controllers.

Controllers' strikes were ban-

ned by the previous government. But the social democratic government of Francois Mitterrand has approved a law letting controllers strike if they agreed to provide emergency services and give at least five days' warning of a walkout. — CALM



# NFNU



## To join or not to join the question for UNA

The National Federation of Nurses' Unions was established in Winnipeg, Manitoba on May 1, 1981, following a series of meetings which began in 1978. As nursing unions evolved, it was recognized that a structured association was needed at a national level so that nurses' unions could speak with one strong voice, share common concerns and interests and work for improved health care systems in Canada.

The objectives of the National Federation of Nurses' Unions are:

- to advance the social, economic and general welfare of its members.
- to act on national matters of significant concern to the National Federation of Nurses' Unions

### The case AGAINST

Isabelle Burgess, president of Local 33, was directed by her local to vote against joining the NFNU at the annual meeting. "The main thing that swung our local was the report of two of our nurses who went to the last NFNU Biannual meeting. They felt very strongly that it would not be a good idea for UNA to join at this time," explained Burgess.

Burgess says that nurses at the Edmonton Royal Alexandra Hospital think the NFNU is wooing UNA in anticipation of the additional revenue that UNA's membership would provide. "The main reason we're voting *no* is because of the expense of joining. We'd have regular dues to pay, plus sending delegates to the meetings.

UNA doesn't need those extra costs right now," says Burgess.

Burgess also explained that the cost factor could possibly be overlooked if the NFNU was better organized. She says the national group is not set up to be a strong voice and they are not structured to act on issues important to nurses and the health care system. Local 33 regards the organization as primarily Manitoba based when it should be based in Ottawa.

"I see them primarily as a lobby group," Burgess says, "and they need UNA's skills in order to become more effective. UNA would not gain from joining and the costs don't justify what we would get in return," concluded Burgess.

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### The process

The decision to affiliate will be made based on the vote of the entire UNA membership.

The following schedule for the vote process has been approved by UNA's Executive Board:

- local information meetings to be held prior to May 21, 1984.
- local ratification vote to be held on May 22, 1984.
- call in vote results to UNA provincial office by 1600 hrs. on May 23, 1984.
- provincial phone fan-out of results on May 24, 1984.

### The dues

If the member's vote to affiliate with the NFNU, there will be a resulting dues increase. Each dues payer will be contributing in addition to regular union dues, an extra sixty cents (60¢) per month, to cover NFNU membership dues and additional UNA expenses associated with NFNU membership.

- to promote unity within the nurses' unions and other allied health care fields who share the objectives of the NFNU
- to provide a national forum to promote desirable legislation on matters of national significance which affect nurses' unions
- to preserve pre-democratic unionism and collective bargaining in Canada
- to support other organizations sharing NFNU objectives.

Kathleen Connors, the President of the NFNU, addressed UNA's 1983 Annual Meeting. At that Annual Meeting the delegates voted by a 2/3 majority in favour of UNA's affiliation with NFNU. This motion was subject to ratification by a vote of UNA members at the local level.

At its February 1984 meeting, UNA's Executive Board decided that prior to the membership vote on the question of NFNU affiliation, the UNA Newsbulletin should contain articles pro and con the question of affiliation. On this page are articles setting out the key issues of interest to UNA members in determining this important question.

To ensure that your voice is heard, make sure that you participate in your local's information meeting on the NFNU (which will be held prior to May 21, 1984). The ratification vote will be held on May 22, 1984.

### The case FOR

by Heather Smith  
President UNA Local 79

It is very difficult to objectively analyze the performance of other organizations when using UNA as the measuring stick. UNA must be cautious and not allow smugness to result in harsh, swift condemnation of other organizations less perfect than UNA.

I see great value in sharing information between provinces; sharing strategies, achievements and failures in dealing with health and safety, professional responsibility, grievance, collective agreements and government legislation.

In the past year NFNU has evolved from a feeble wimper in Newfoundland into a recognized voice addressing national issues, primarily due to the effects of NFNU president Kathleen Connors.

On two occasions I met with nurses at NFNU functions. I admit I was disappointed by the NFNU biennium held last June in Halifax. Criticisms arising from the observers included the infrequency of executive meetings and the national convention. UNA identified the need for increased information sharing via the newsletter, which is presently published every six months. Observers feel it necessary to put more emphasis on education and active sharing provincial concerns. To overcome these recognized faults in NFNU, two barriers must be overcome. The first barrier is financial; NFNU functions on very limited resources. The second barrier is

direction. The confusion as to what issues are properly addressed by the association and not the union is a necessary growing pain. (NFNU now has established a Liaison Committee with the Canadian Nurses Association). The financial benefits of UNA affiliation are obvious. Membership is 40¢ per member per month. An additional 20¢ is required by UNA for administration and to fund UNA delegates to meetings, conventions etc. When it comes to "direction" UNA has much to offer. We have developed organizational skills, expertise and awareness much needed by our sister organizations. Not all nurses have had the advantage of battling a dictatorial, callous, insensitive government. I believe we have a little spirit to share. Instead of criticizing others for failure to embody the wisdom of unionism we should be assisting sister unions to draw on their own strength, the strength of the membership. Some Alberta nurses may one day work in a sister province; I know what sort of work conditions I'd like to expect.

I do not believe in waiting for the NFNU to change to suit UNA. The NFNU has offered us a challenge, to change by participation. I have confidence in UNA's ability to work with other organizations to improve conditions for nurses and women in Alberta as well as across the country. If we are not satisfied we have the option of withdrawing, but let's not quit before we even try.

Calling UNA Office  
From outside Edmonton  
Call 1-800-252-9394