

Further Concentration of Wealth in Forestry Sector
Workers Demand a New Direction
for Their Industry



In March, forestry workers, allies and community members took part in meetings in five cities and towns in northern BC to discuss problems in their sector and the way forward.
Pictured here is Mackenzie, March 14, 2017.

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May Day 2017

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Record of the BC Liberals

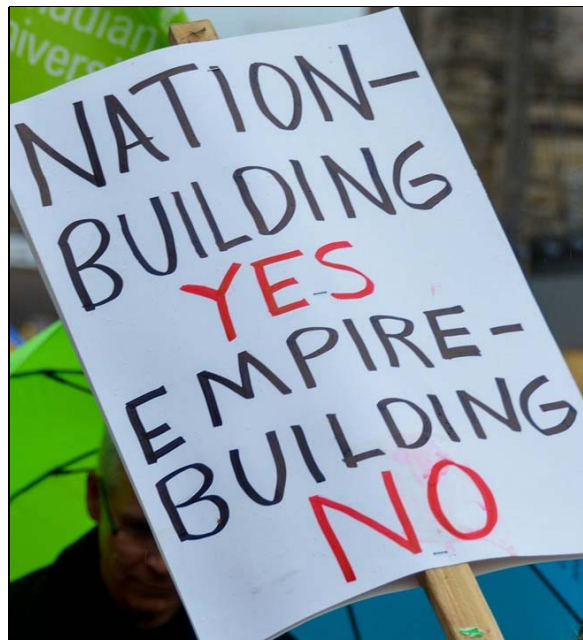
- **Enough is Enough! Wrecking Public Health Care - Barbara Biley**

Further Concentration of Wealth in Forestry Sector
Workers Demand a New Direction for Their Industry

Lumber oligopolies manipulate the sector for a big score and to expand their domination and control

Canadian forestry workers in the softwood sector are under siege yet again. The dominant forestry oligarchs in North America have unleashed yet another fraud to increase their profits and grip on the sector. Led by the Weyerhaeuser oligopoly, the lumber barons are manoeuvring for increased market prices for lumber and the collapse of smaller Canadian companies to strengthen their domination. Under the hoax of a challenge to unfair pricing and dumping of Canadian lumber in the U.S. market, the lumber barons who operate throughout Fortress North America want to inflate artificially through tariffs the market price of Canadian supplied softwood lumber to make a big killing with higher prices for all lumber. The fraud is such that Weyerhaeuser and others that are poised to profit from the inflated prices, such as the big three lumber companies in BC, control mills throughout North America. The victim is not just the U.S. housing market, which will be forced to pay thousands more per new house making it unaffordable for many, but Canadian forestry workers whose livelihoods and incomes are gravely threatened and smaller companies whose existence hangs in the balance.

Canadian softwood lumber supplies over 30 per cent of the U.S. market. Mills in the U.S. are not capable of making up the shortfall if Canadian supply is curtailed putting further upward pressure on lumber prices. The U.S. Treasury department is imposing an average 20 per cent surcharge on lumber at the border that most companies in Canada will have to pay in advance forcing them to seek higher market prices to make up the difference if they can find buyers willing to pay. Experts predict that in the short term the U.S. market will be disrupted with an orchestrated shortage of lumber and buyers hesitant or unable to pay higher prices. Small companies in Canada may have to curtail production, close their mills or sell their facilities to the oligopolies that already dominate the sector.



Weyerhaeuser and other big producers will reap the benefit of higher prices for lumber supplied from their U.S. mills, and from the greater concentration of production in Canada in the hands of the empire builders, as smaller producers are squeezed out of business.

The fraud is presented as a softwood lumber dispute between the U.S. and Canada but it is nothing of the sort. The so-called dispute is a well-orchestrated assault of a section of the financial oligarchy on other sections, those who buy lumber, smaller lumber companies and on forestry workers and their communities. The oligarchs have conspired and unleashed a scheme to pay the rich from higher prices and greater market share, and to concentrate lumber facilities and social wealth in the hands of the dominant oligopolies.

Forestry workers and their allies in their communities are discussing how to turn the situation around in their favour. The central issue is how to exercise control over their lives for which they need to exercise control over their sector of the economy and its direction. Without the actual producers having a say over the decisions which affect their lives and a say and control over the production and distribution of the forestry social product, as well as over the value workers produce and how and where the added-value is invested, the domination of the financial oligarchy will continue regularly to wreck havoc in their lives.



Control means at its core the ability to make the decisions on those issues that affect the lives of the working people, their communities and economy. This begins with control over the governments which take the decisions and control of the forestry sector and its direction, along with control over production, distribution, the price of production according to set norms and science, and retention and investment of the added-value workers produce within the local and Canadian economy for extended reproduction. Control means the ability of the people to decide, and to say no if needed to defend their rights based on full information and

discussion. In the case of softwood lumber, it begins with saying No! to the plunder and exploitation taking place at the expense of the workers and their communities in not only Canada and the U.S. but any other country slated to receive softwood lumber from Canada.

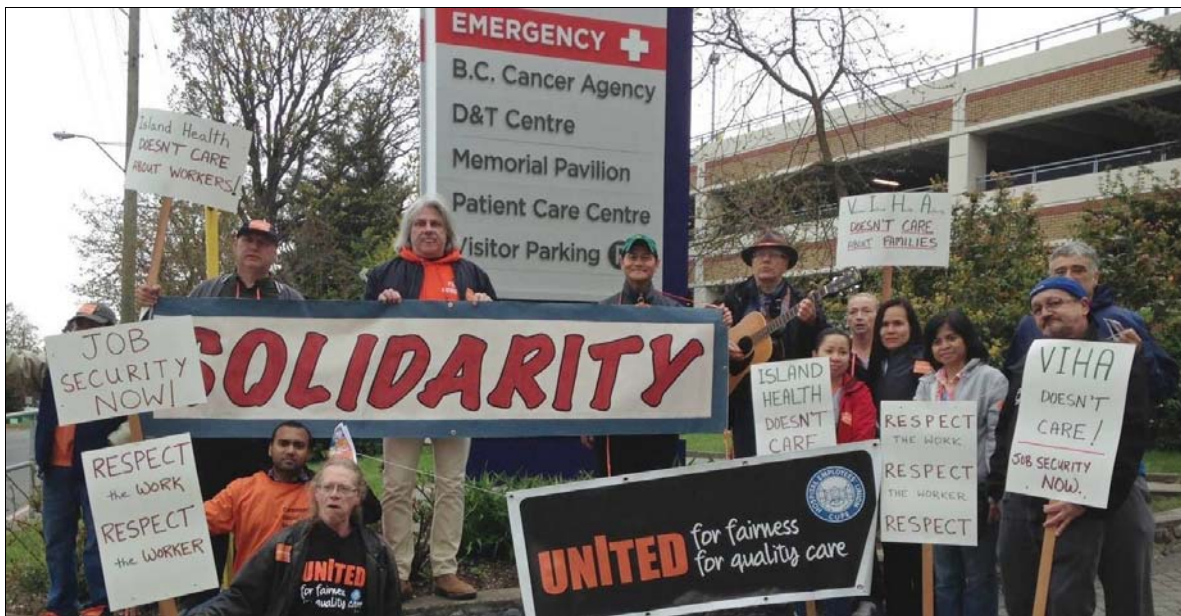
Enough of this constant disruption and wrecking by the oligarchs in control!

The time is now to organize for a new direction for the economy under the control of the working people!



May Day 2017

Province-Wide Actions in Support of Contracted-Out Health Care Support Workers



Royal Jubilee Hospital, Victoria.

On May Day 2017 the Hospital Workers' Union organized events at hospitals throughout the province in support of the demands of contracted out food service and housekeeping workers who

are currently in contract negotiations with the multinational corporations Compass, Sodexo, Acciona, Marquise and Aramark.

Over 8,000 workers who were employees of the Health Authorities lost their jobs in BC hospitals in the 2003-2004 period when the BC Liberals contracted out housekeeping and food services to the global monopolies. Since that time the workers have been fighting for wages, pensions and working conditions commensurate with the vital work that they do. In current contract negotiations they are fighting for wage and benefit increase and for pensions and job security.

One of the effects of the Liberals' Bills 29 and 94 was the loss of successorship rights which means that when, in the competition between the monopolies, contracts with the Health Authorities change from one multinational to another, all the workers lose their jobs and are forced to reapply. Those who are re-hired start with nothing, no seniority, lower wages and benefits, and have to fight the same battle all over again.

The theme of the May Day actions was "Respect the Work, Respect the Worker" and the events organized were characterized by the unity of all health care workers in support of the demands of the food service and housekeeping workers for job security, pensions and improved wages and working conditions.



Vancouver General Hospital



St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver.



Surrey Memorial Hospital.



Royal Columbian Hospital, New Westminister.



Successful Celebration in Prince George



The 8th Annual May Day celebration and banquet was held May 1 in Prince George, BC, at the Coast Inn of the North. More than 130 workers, retirees and youth participated in an evening of presentations, songs and lots of food.

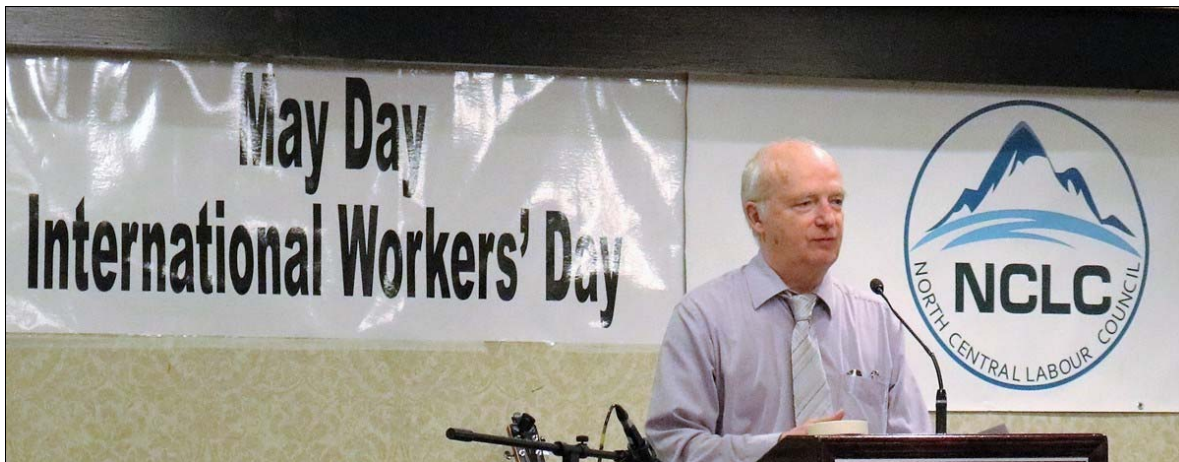
In attendance were large contingents of university, education, food and restaurant, forestry and public sectors workers from the Prince George area. Seventeen unions and organizations sponsored the event (see list below).

Singer, songwriter and university professor Kevin Hutchings led the crowd in well-received labour songs throughout the evening.

Event emcee Dawn Hemingway, a social work professor and member of the Stand Up for the North and May Day Organizing Committees, began the evening declaring: "It's exciting to be here -- all of us from a wide range of sectors and experiences, coming together to uphold what we know is right -- for justice, basic human rights and peace in this world. It is our voices, our work, our struggles that can make the difference."

Mayor Lyn Hall, joined by three City Councillors, then welcomed the attendees and spoke to the central role of workers in our society; specifically, about how valuable the workers in Prince George, including those working for the municipality, were for the well-being and livelihood of the community.

Next, Peter Ewart, retired college instructor and columnist, welcomed everyone on behalf of the May Day Organizing Committee. He emphasized that, at the core of May Day and the modern workers' movement, "like a sheet of steel," is the unity and solidarity of the working class. Workers in Northern BC have a proud tradition of building that unity going back many decades.



He pointed out that, today, when we could very well be on the eve of a major trade war in the world, this unity and solidarity is being challenged by the corporate and financial elite who use every tactic to attempt to split and divide Canadian, U.S. and Mexican workers.

In that regard, he said that the workers of this continent have "a special role to play in opposing the unjust aggressive wars launched by the fortress North America corporate elite," and standing with the workers and people of all countries. He concluded his remarks by emphasizing that "united we can move mountains."

The keynote speaker for the evening was Teri Mooring, First Vice-President of the BC Teachers' Federation. Teri grew up in a working class and union family, walking the picket line both as a young worker with her father, and, more recently, as a teacher.

A key demand for BC teachers over the years was to have provisions regarding classroom sizes, conditions and supports as part of the collective agreement. This was finally achieved several decades ago, only to have the BC Liberal government (with Christie Clark as Education Minister) strip these provisions from the collective agreement in 2002 and impose its dictate on teachers. As a result, an entire generation of students was deprived of education supports and proper classroom conditions for 15 years. In addition to massive cuts, during this same period of time, the BC Liberal government closed 257 schools across the province, including 22 in Prince George and region. It has also burdened parents and teachers with themselves having to fund even such basic things as textbooks and bussing services.



Teachers fought a spirited battle against this arbitrary dictate and, in so doing, garnered wide support and solidarity from workers and worker organizations, as well as community members, from around the province. As Teri said to the May Day audience, "The BCTF did not do it alone. You walked with us."

In 2016, after a long court battle, BC teachers emerged victorious in a landmark Supreme Court decision which ruled that the BC government had bargained in bad faith, and that it must restore the former classroom conditions and supports, as well as class sizes. Teri Mooring noted that this was a "hard fought victory," but that the struggle was not over with this government.

She concluded her presentation by emphasizing that "when labour stands together, we see the results," and called upon everyone to get out and vote in the upcoming May 9 provincial election to defeat Christie Clark and the Liberal government.

After dinner, in keeping with tradition of the May Day Organizing Committee, candidates for the provincial election in attendance were offered the opportunity to speak. Two NDP candidates -- Bobby Deepak (Prince George-Mackenzie) and Natalie Fletcher (Prince George-Valemount) were the only candidates present and each highlighted why it was in the interests of workers and communities to defeat the current government.

Another valued feature of the May Day celebration is sponsoring unions and organizations sharing experiences of the past year -- including accomplishments as well as issues and challenges. This year, the North Central Labour Council also provided a brief presentation on the historical origins of May Day. The hall was buzzing for the entire evening with discussion, singing, connecting and, of course, organizing.

The celebration concluded with the singing of "Solidarity Forever" and "The Internationale."



List of Sponsoring Unions and Organizations

BC Government and Service Employees' Union; Canadian Union of Postal Workers; CUPE BC; CUPE 1048; Construction, Maintenance & Allied Workers, Local 1998; Faculty Association of CNC; Hospital Employees Union; MOVE UP (Movement of United Professionals); North Central Labour Council; North Labour Law Corporation; Prince George District Teachers' Association; Public and Private Workers of Canada, Local 9; Public Service Alliance of Canada (North East BC Area Council); Stand Up for the North Committee; United Food & Commercial Workers Union, Local 1518; United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1-424; and the UNBC Faculty Association.



Maritime Transport Workers March in Vancouver



Maritime transport workers, including members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the BC Ferry and Marine Workers Union marched in Vancouver on May Day. Maritime workers in the lower mainland have been holding mass rallies in recent months to oppose the adoption of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) neo-liberal free trade agreement with Europe as well as anti-social reforms to Canada's transportation system being considered by the Trudeau government. The maritime workers marched to join the annual Vancouver District Labour Council May Day parade at Clark Park which then marched along Commercial Drive.

For more information on the fight being waged by maritime transport workers, see [TML Weekly, March 4, 2017](#).



March and Bean Supper in Cumberland



On May Day 2017 the third annual May Day March in solidarity with workers throughout the world took place on the main street of Cumberland on Vancouver Island. Following the march there was a bean supper, an annual event that celebrated its 20th anniversary this year with music that reflected the struggles of workers, especially coal miners on Vancouver Island. The bean supper is organized by the Cumberland Museum and Archives and the Campbell River Courtenay and District Labour Council.

The announcement from the Cumberland Museum and Archives explains that the bean supper, which began as an annual tradition in 1997, commemorates "a walkout, 85 years earlier, over the firing of a safety committee reporting explosive gas. It's a tragic paradox: mines that deliver the best coal produce the deadliest gas. Cumberland's mines produced superb coal; they killed, on long-term average, a man a month. In the 1912 strike, as a negotiating tactic, the owners evicted strikers from company housing... During this strike, coal miners and their families were turned out of company housing, migrating to the local beaches where they set up tents. Seeing the destitute and starving conditions of the miners, the government sent boxcars of drive navy beans for them to eat; either as an act of 'compassion' or as a way to deflate some of the rising tensions."

The annual bean dinner this year was attended by over 130 people, including students, teachers, health care workers, postal workers, many youth and children and local descendants of the Cumberland miners.



Record of the BC Liberals

Enough is Enough! Wrecking Public Health Care

- Barbara Biley -

On all aspects of health care, the record of the BC Liberals over the past sixteen years is one of wrecking and of facilitating the entry of foreign-based oligopolies into the lucrative "health care industry," to the detriment of patients, workers and society as a whole.[1]

Seniors' Care



Townhall meeting on Sunshine Coast, September 12, 2016 rejects privatization of seniors' care.

The recent purchase of Retirement Concepts' 25 seniors' care homes, 22 of which are in BC (plus two in Alberta and one in Montreal) by Beijing-based Anbang insurance, approved by both the federal and provincial governments, sharply illustrates the outlook of the BC Liberals on public health care. Retirement Concepts is the largest private operator of publicly funded seniors' care homes in British Columbia. In the 16 years that the BC Liberals have been in power there has been a marked decrease in the number of seniors' homes operated by the government through the health authorities or by various non-profit societies including churches, community-based benevolent societies and others. Virtually all the new residences that have been built since 2006 are privately owned but publicly funded. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) reports that "The number of residential care beds operated by BC health authorities and non-profit organizations declined 11 per cent while beds in the for-profit sector increased 42 per cent between 2001 and 2016."

In many communities new privately owned facilities have replaced publicly owned seniors' care residences. In most cases the private owners subcontract staffing to another private company, so the public funds that should be invested in care for seniors is reduced by what is demanded as profit by both the private owners and the subcontractors. In a survey in January of 2016 the BC Senior's Advocate found that 80 per cent of the residential care homes for seniors in the province were not meeting the Ministry of Health objective of 3.36 hours of direct care per day per resident.

In January of 2017 a followup survey found that 91 per cent of seniors' residences were not meeting this standard, including 100 per cent of the privately owned facilities. The result is not only substandard care for seniors, but increased injuries, illness and stress for health care workers. A recent investigation by the CCPA found that between 2001 and 2016, access to residential care declined by 32 per cent when measuring beds relative to the population of people 75 and over. In 2001 the Liberals said that the 103 residential care beds per thousand British Columbians 75 and older was not enough, but by 2016 there were only 82 residential care and assisted living beds per thousand seniors, a 20 per cent decrease.

Home Care

One of the arguments that has been used to justify not investing in more residential care beds is that it is better for seniors to remain at home as long as they are able, with home care support, but the home care that is provided free of charge covers only nursing care and even that is not keeping pace with the need. If help is needed with cleaning or cooking or to get out to shop or go to appointments or for recreation, that has all been privatized and families have to pay for those services. Home care narrowly defined as nursing care is not covered by the *Canada Health Act*, not to mention the broad social supports that seniors need to be healthy, secure and safe in their homes.

Hospitals

All new hospital construction in the province in the last 16 years has been privatized through P3s, public-private partnerships. In all but two of the P3s food services, housekeeping, maintenance and laundry are contracted out.



Hundreds of millions of dollars has been spent on electronic patient records systems and other IT projects handed out to companies like IBM, Cerner and Nuance, US-based multinationals. Aside from the problem of private foreign companies having control of confidential health records, it is virtually impossible to disengage once an electronic health record service has been created and is in the hands of a private company. The Vancouver Island Health Authority paid over \$184,000 for an electronic system, IHealth, that has repeatedly been rejected by doctors and other hospital staff as dangerous to patient safety, but the Health Authority has said that in spite of a commitment to suspend its use, it is too "entrenched" in other parts of the electronic health record to suspend.

In 2016 the Interior Health Authority, under orders from the Ministry of Health, privatized laundry services. The successful bidder was Ecotex. Ecotex and K-Bro were the successful bidders when laundry services in the Lower Mainland were contracted out over a decade ago. The Hospital Employees' Union reports that "in 2014, these health authorities paid the companies \$36,623,025, up from \$13,582,006 in 2007 -- the earliest year for which data is available online."

In 2013 transcription services in the lower mainland were contracted out to an American company, adding to what had already been outsourced to Accentus by the health authorities. An investigation by the Hospital Employees' Union of health authorities' financial documents showed that

"Ontario-based Accentus Inc. -- a for-profit medical transcription firm -- increased its billings to PHC and the three other health authorities by 151 per cent between the fiscal years 2006/2007 and 2010/2011." Accentus was subsequently purchased, in 2012, by Nuance, an American multinational that purchased Accentus in order to gain access to the Canadian market. Private surgical clinics

Private surgical clinics specializing in the least complex surgical procedures have proliferated over the past 16 years. Instead of investing in education and health care to ensure diagnostic and surgical staff and facilities and expanding services to meet the needs of patients, the government has contracted for ICBC and Worksafe clients to have their surgeries at the private clinics, has turned a blind eye to extra-billing of private patients and double-billing (both the province and the private patient are billed for a procedure), and has directly contracted out to private clinics for some procedures. In 2016 the Vancouver Island Health Authority announced that it was contracting out 55,000 surgeries to private clinics.

Jobs

The Clark government claims to be the champion of "good jobs." The record says otherwise. Eight thousand workers lost their jobs in the 2002-2003 period following the Liberals' Bill 29 which stripped provincial contracts negotiated between the Health Employers' Association of BC and the associations of health care unions or all language prohibiting privatization of their work. The first target of the multinationals was housekeeping and food services in hospitals and seniors' residences. The multinationals Aramark, Sodexo, Compass and Acciona control that aspect of health care in most of the province now, under five year contracts with the health authorities. The monopolies compete for the contracts, driving down wages and working conditions. In 2015, 900 housekeeping workers in Lower Mainland hospitals lost their jobs when the contract previously held by Aramark was awarded by Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to Compass. Most of the workers who lost their jobs were re-hired by Compass, but those who had been outspoken or otherwise deemed 'undesirable' were not re-hired.

The privatization of seniors' care has created a situation of constant insecurity for workers. Another piece of legislation, Bill 94, the *Health Sector Partnership Act*, which exempted the health care sector from successorship legislation. Now, when workers organize, join a union and negotiate a contract, the employer can sell the business or change subcontractors ("contract flipping") and lay off the entire staff who have no status at all with the new employer. In one Retirement Concepts facility on Vancouver Island this contract flipping took place three times in a four year period before a determined resistance by families of residents put a halt to the practice. Three times the entire staff were laid off. Each time those who were re-hired started with zero seniority, lower wages and benefits. With the sale of Retirement Concepts to Anbang, the Globe and Mail reported that "the province received a commitment that the company will continue delivering existing services for a minimum of three years under the new ownership," which further intensifies the insecurity of the workers.



Over 150 laundry workers will lose their jobs in the Interior when Ecotex takes over hospital

laundry for most sites this year. Over 130 workers lost their jobs in the Lower Mainland when transcription services were contracted out. Over 200 workers at St. Joseph's General Hospital in Comox and Glacierview Lodge in Courtenay face an uncertain future as their employers plan to merge with Providence Health Care which contracts out all its food service and housekeeping services.

Every health care worker in BC in 2017 faces job insecurity.

Enough!

The health care record of the BC Liberals over the past 16 years is a record of wrecking -- failing to invest in both health care facilities and the education of health care staff, while overtly and covertly facilitating privatization of all aspects of health care services. Patients in hospitals, residents in long term care facilities, and those who cannot access community care, are suffering the consequences of one scheme after another to satisfy the demands of the multinationals for unfettered access to the health care sector in BC.



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