

THE LONG FIGHT FOR MEDICARE

(Reprinted from Update 2002, BCNU)

Canadians have struggled long and hard to create a publicly funded health care system.??

Numerous provincial and federal elections were fought on the issue until our politicians finally delivered a system that covered all Canadians, regardless of where we live or how much money we earn.

Today, 40 years after the introduction of our national Medicare system, poll after poll shows that Canadians overwhelmingly support our unique brand of public health care.

We see it as the most critical feature of our nation?s identity and want it expanded to cover the costs of prescriptions and home care.

But a small, well financed and vocal group want to destroy our most treasured social program by expanding the delivery of private care, which puts profits over patients.

Back in 1936 BC?s provincial government introduced legislation to establish a limited form of health insurance. The plan was widely supported by voters, but organizations such as the BC Manufacturer?s Association, the Board of Trade, the Chamber of Commerce, the media and private insurance companies were vehemently opposed.

A Vancouver Sun editorial at the time described the legislation as ?unsound morally and socially.? The government soon caved in to pressure from these business-oriented special interest groups and refused to proclaim the legislation.

It?s interesting to note that 66 years after helping to kill the legislation the Vancouver Sun continues to champion private health care.

The Board of Trade also continues to lobby loudly for private, for profit health care and last fall hosted a public forum with BC Health Services Minister Colin Hansen that called for more private sector involvement in Medicare.