



VANCOUVER CONFERENCE ON REMEMBRANCE DAY

# Privateers scheme against medicare

Perhaps the starkest sign that medicare is in danger came at a high-profile conference in Vancouver organized by its enemies on November 11 and 12.

Ironically dubbed “Saving Medicare,” the conference was organized by a group called the Canadian Independent Medical Clinic Association. CIMCA is the brainchild of private clinic entrepreneur Dr Brian Day.

BCNU president Debra McPherson attended the conference. “If anybody doubted the determination of the enemies of medicare to destroy our public health care system it would be dispelled at this session,” she said.

Former Reform Party leader Preston Manning prescribed a grassroots organizing campaign to mould public opinion and dominate the media.

According to the *Toronto Star’s* Tom Walkom, the only reporter who covered the conference in a comprehensive way, “Manning’s strategy, borrowing from the terminology coined by Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, is to define two-tier medicine as the ‘third option.’ In this lexicon, the current Canadian system is redefined as one extreme and the US system another. A two-tier system similar to say Britain’s, is then presented as the middle way”, Walkom wrote.

“Once the battle over language has been won, Manning says, it will be politically easier to follow his substantive prescription: completely dismantle national medicare, have the federal government hand over more taxing power to the provinces and let them handle health as they please.”

But first, says Manning, politicians must be persuaded by the creation of a powerful single-issue movement, independent of political parties, to lobby the public during an election campaign. □



**PROTESTING THE PRIVATEERS** Left: Judith McGarth (UBC Hospital), Alice Edge (Children’s and Women’s), Anne Shannon (BCNU vice president), and Lynn Lagace (Burnaby Hospital) protesting for-profit health care. Right: Will Offley, VGH emergency room nurse.