

END LEGISLATED POVERTY

N E W S L E T T E R

#57

October, 1992

ELP opens new office in Surrey

Friday, October 30 from 1 to 8 pm, End Legislated Poverty will be celebrating the opening of our new Surrey office by having an OPEN HOUSE. The address is # 7 10667 135 A St. Surrey. That's in Whalley, one block East of the King George Highway opposite the Dell Hotel. Our phone number is 583-7363.

If you are in Surrey, White Rock, Langley or New Westminster drop in on October 30th and see our wonderful new office and meet the organizer, Linda Marcotte. Your transportation costs (bus fare or 25 cents a kilometre if you drive a car and childcare costs up to \$3.00 an hour) will be given to you if you are living on a low income. We'll have delicious food and a chance to meet other low income people and supporters.

End Legislated Poverty will be working with our member group

in Surrey, the Surrey Child Poverty Action Committee. We will be building on that group's amazing success getting universal, non stigmatizing lunch programs in several Surrey elementary schools. We want to end poverty in Surrey (do we think BIG or what?!) by organizing low income people to work together in anti-poverty action groups and putting out a monthly newsletter. We'll be training low income people to lead workshops and talk to groups about poverty.

**COME TO OUR OPEN
HOUSE**

MEET NEW FRIENDS

**COME AND JOIN US TO
WORK TO END
POVERTY IN SURREY.**

Single parents get choice on maintenance

Single parents on welfare received a special letter in October. The letter is from Joan Smallwood, Minister of Social Services. It says that single parents can choose whether or not to get maintenance payments from their ex-partners. The letter also gives them the option of using the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program, Legal Aid, Family Court Counsellors or private legal counsel (which they probably won't be able to afford).

The Federated Anti-Poverty Groups of B. C. worked long and hard to get this change in the law for single parents. They even took the issue to court.

The old law said that single parents on welfare must go after ex-partners for maintenance money. If they didn't, they could be cut off welfare.

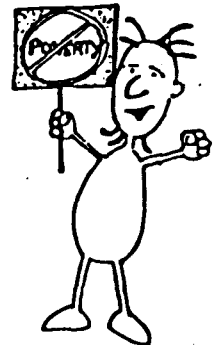
This was a bad law for single parents. Sometimes the parent didn't want anything to do with the ex-partner. Sometimes the ex-partner got abusive when faced with paying. The mother and children were at risk. Sometimes the mother and ex-partner had already worked out something on their own.

The new law says that single parents can withdraw from the Family Maintenance Program after Oct. 15th. They just have to tell their family maintenance worker, in writing, that they want to withdraw.

Parents can also stay in the program if they want. If you have questions about the new law, contact your worker or one of the groups on the back page.

The new law shows that hard work by FAPG paid off for single parents.

Smallwood's letter says: "The changes are a result of the ministry's commitment to ensure that the independence and self-determination of people receiving income assistance are respected by, and reflected in, all programs delivered by the Ministry of Social Services."



Changes in WCB Act could help B. C. widows

By Ellen Zimmerman, community advocate, Golden Family Centre)

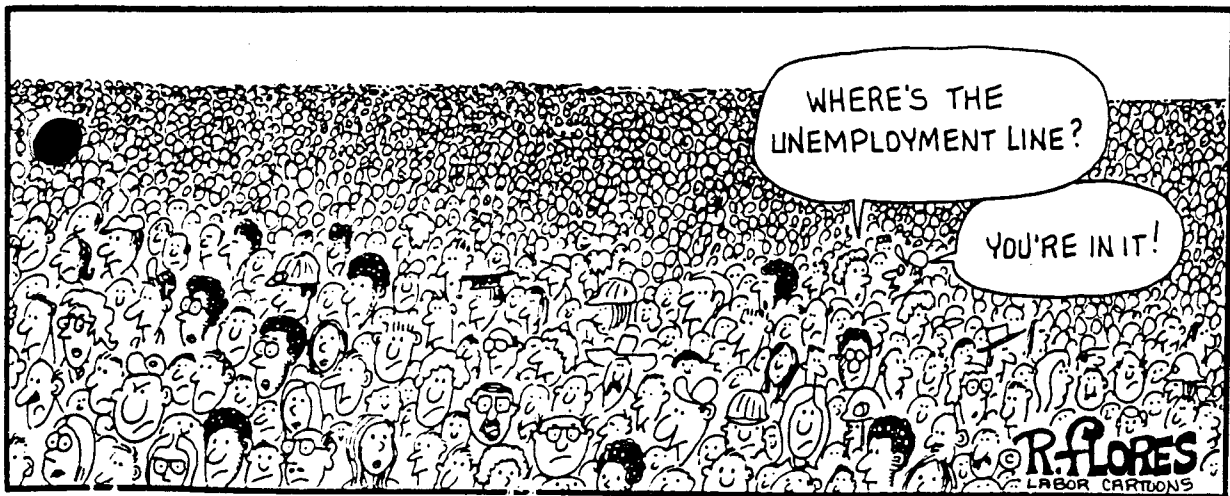
Currently, section 19 of the B. C. Worker's Compensation Act says that pensions to the widows and widowers of those killed in work related fatalities will cease as soon as the survivor remarries or enters into a common law relationship.

The vast majority of these survivors are women. In 1991 96% of workplace fatalities were men. While society urges these women to live normal lives and to get over their grief, the WCB Act condemns them to the difficult choice of forfeiting their pensions

and accepting poverty and dependency, or living their lives alone. This section of the Act is outdated, unnecessarily punitive, and discriminatory.

In 1985 Ontario brought about changes to their WCB Act. In Ontario widows continue to collect their pensions regardless of personal lifestyle choices.

Your support can help bring about changes to the B. C. WCB Act. Please write to Jim Dorsey, Chair of the Board of Governors of the WCB, Box 5350, Vancouver, B. C. V6B 5L



NDP job and training changes will help

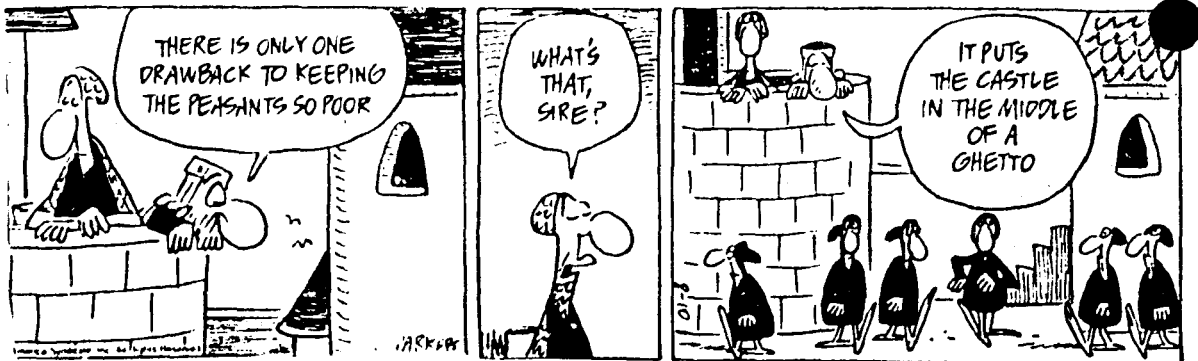
On Oct. 5th Joan Smallwood announced some changes to job and training programs for people on welfare. Some of them will help people on welfare a bit.

The old Employment Opportunity Program is being changed. This is the program that subsidizes employers to hire people on welfare. Under the old way, employers paid up to \$3.50 an hour and the Ministry paid up to \$3.50 an hour. The most a worker could get was \$7 an hour. Under the new program, the employer has to pay the minimum wage of \$5.50. The government will top that up by up to \$3.50 an hour. The most a worker can get is \$9 an hour.

Transportation for single parents: Single parents may now receive up to an additional \$50 per month to meet transportation expenses to child care when they start a job. This can be used for gas money.

Job start up costs: Benefits of up to \$200 will be provided when a person accepts full time employment to cover miscellaneous expenses.

Work clothing expenses: People who are on Income Assistance or job training programs who have confirmed job interviews or are beginning work may receive assistance with work clothing expenses.



Help people on welfare a bit

Alcohol and drug counselling: People who need alcohol or drug counselling as part of their re-training can get up to \$500 for it.

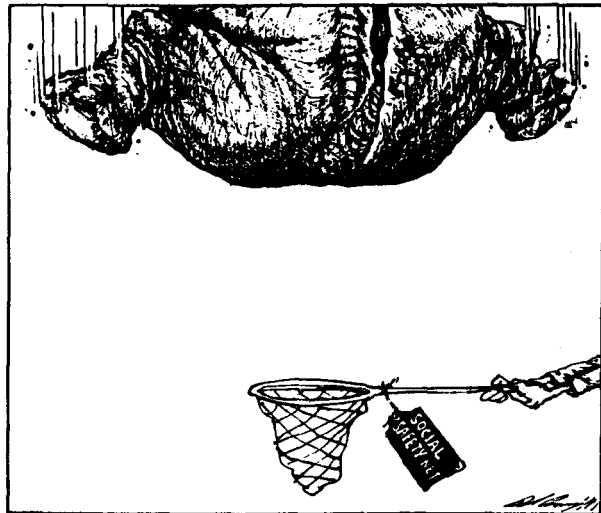
Part time training: This can now be approved to help accommodate single parents.

Volunteer incentive: The ministry will pay \$100 a month to income assistance recipients who volunteer in non profit organizations to gain work experience. There is no 12 month limit as before. Also people have to work a minimum of 10 hours per month, down from 40 hours per month from the old regulation. This change could raise the allowance for non profit volunteers from \$2.50 an hour to \$10 an hour.

According to Glen Tadsen, a Ministry official, the Ministry hopes these changes will create flexibility at the local offices to help people get what they need.

Remember: Training is now appealable. So if you ask for training and your worker says "no", go to one of the groups on the back page for help.

Even though these changes are small improvements, we should keep up the pressure for higher welfare rates and wages.



Everyone on GAIN should have a bus pass

By Lynne Gemeroy

Last year at this time I was struggling with bureaucracy and medical red tape to attain my rights and receive GAIN for Handicapped. I was so stressed out that one day when asked why I wanted GAIN for Handicapped, I quipped back: "Because I want the buspass." I thought it a good joke and used it several times.

But the joke was on me! Of all the added benefits my handicapped status gives me, in these last 6 months, the best of all continues to be my buspass. It gives me **FREEDOM**. I can go anywhere, anytime.

Such mobility feels like a miracle. A am now able to go shopping (utilizing sale times), see the doctor if needed, and visit friends during the last 2-3 weeks of every month, which I couldn't do before. The \$20 that I formerly put aside each month for busfare now gives me a week's food--especially helpful in the 5-week months to eat healthfully.

But the best of all is the golden opportunity for self-improvement that my buspass has given me, helping me erase my own poverty

mentality, leading to less "I can't's" in all areas of my life. More than money, what feels empowering is my shift in attitude from apathy and fear to hope. There is a wealth of free learning activities that I can now "afford" to get to: art exhibits, concerts, classes, seminars, therapy groups, volunteer help, etc.

This past month, helping a friend with no pass has felt like a nightmare again--that hardship to put together \$1.35 for each necessary appointment. It's insane! I appreciate my buspass anew--all on assistance using the bus need passes! Please!



Incentive allowance should be increased

(This is a letter that Lorraine Gardiner is planning to send to Joan Smallwood, Minister in charge of Social Services)

Dear Ms. Smallwood,

I'm presently on the incentive program through Social Services. I enjoy doing this volunteer work. It's brought back my self esteem a little. However my esteem would be better if the incentive

allowance was raised to \$200 from \$100. I'd like to know why the incentive allowance was not raised when the exemption allowance was raised. Also could you please let me know when we are going to get a raise in our monthly cheques? Could it be raised? Always by the third week of the month I'm broke and I have two children. I'm waiting to hear from you soon.



FLORES / CALM 1-92

LABOR CARTOONS

Get help with welfare from these groups

Downtown Eastside Residents' Association
9 E. Hastings St. Phone 682-0931. Open Monday through Friday.

First United Church
320 E. Hastings. Come Monday through Friday, 9 to 11 am.

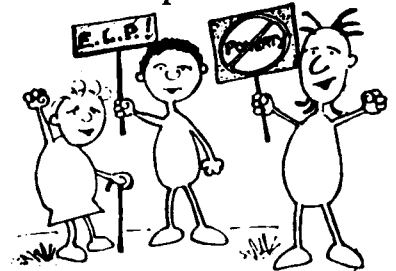
Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants' Association.
#105 E. 37th. Phone 321-6120. Open 9 to 4 Monday through Friday.

B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities
#204 456 W. Broadway. Phone 872-1278. Open 9 to 5 Monday through Friday.

Little Mountain Tenants' Association
125 E. 37th. Phone 324-0555. Open 10 to 3 Monday through Friday.

Law Students Legal Advice Program
For help with a wide variety of legal problems. Locations throughout the Lower Mainland. Call 822-5791.

Surrey Legal Service Society helps with landlord, UI, WCB, welfare problems. #102 15225 104th Ave., Surrey. Open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9-11 am and 1:30-3:30 pm. Call 584-8535.



For help with landlord and tenant problems:

Call the **Tenants' Rights Coalition Hotline: 255-0546.**

For help with welfare, serious criminal problems or urgent family problems related to the law:

Go to the **Legal Services Society**, 191 Alexander St. Open 9 to 3:30 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Open 12:30 to 3:30 on Wednesday. Legal Services may be able to help with child custody and restraining orders.