

END LEGISLATED POVERTY

N E W S L E T T E R

#60

February, 1993

NDP increases welfare a teensy bit, and minimum wage by 50 cents

The NDP government increased welfare rates effective on Feb. 1st.

The new increase gives single, employable people \$10 a month more. Single people who are "unemployable" will also get \$10 a month more. A single parent with one child will get \$17 a month more.

The new increase amounts to less than 2%. People on welfare are still far below the poverty line. For example, a single person on welfare gets \$535 per month. The 1992 poverty line for a single person in a city is \$1285.50 per month.

The NDP government was listening to anti-poverty activists in one way, however. They put the increase in the support portion of the cheque,

not the shelter portion. That means people on welfare can get the money even if they don't give it to their landlords.

The minimum wage will go up to \$6 an hour on April 1st. The last increase was on Feb. 1st, 1992. End Legislated Poverty wants the minimum wage to be at least \$9.05 an hour. \$9.05 would give minimum wage the same value it had in 1975. Moe Sihota, the Minister of Labour, told ELP that he wanted to bring the minimum wage up that high.

But he is making the increases too slowly to reach that goal before the next provincial election. ELP is still collecting letters demanding that the government increase minimum wage to \$9.05 an hour and welfare rates to the poverty line.

Free law classes

Here are some free law classes you can go to. **Please register for the classes by phoning the number in brackets.**

Alternatives to Court

Franklin community school (298-3438). Tuesday, March 9th, 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

Divorce Law

Fraserview Library (325-4522). Tuesday, March 23rd, 7:00 to 8:45 pm.

Employees' Rights

Gordon Neighbourhood House (683-2554). Thursday, March 18th, 7:00 to 8:50 pm.

ICBC and Personal Injury

Kensington Centre (327-9401). Wednesday, March 24th, 7:30 to 9:30 pm.

Legal Help: Where do I get it?

Can I afford it? Mt. Pleasant Centre (874-8165). Thursday, March 25th, 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

Small Claims Court

Kensington Centre (327-9401). Wednesday, March 31st, 7:30 to 9:30 pm.

Unemployment Insurance

Mt. Pleasant Centre (874-8165). Thursday, March 11th, 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

Landlord and Tenant Law

411 Seniors Centre (684-8171). Tuesday, March 2, 1:30 pm.

Living Wills

411 Seniors Centre (684-8171). Tuesday, March 30, 1:30 pm.

Tenants' Rights

Carnegie Centre (665-3013). Wednesday, March 17th, 2:00 pm.



ELP committee needs YOU!!

End Legislated Poverty (ELP) has a committee called the wages and welfare committee. This committee plans events to raise poverty issues and justice solutions.

Last April the wages and welfare committee organized a Walk on the Rich in downtown Vancouver. About 50 low income people and their supporters walked to the buildings of three rich corporations and did skits showing that the corporations were not paying their fair share of taxes.

In December, the wages and welfare committee planned a Justice not Charity day in Vancouver. At this event, low income people spoke out about the need for higher welfare rates and wages.

The committee wants to plan another event where poor people speak out on our issues. We need you to be part of this!! Call ELP at

879-1209 to get involved. The committee usually meets every second Monday at 1 pm at the ELP office in Vancouver. Busfare and childcare expenses can be paid so you can afford to come and be part of the action for justice!!

If you don't live in Vancouver, call the Surrey office at 583-7363 or the Victoria office at 383-8778 with ideas for action.



Everything you wanted to know about crisis grants (but were afraid to ask)

What is a crisis grant?

CRISIS means an unexpected, sudden danger or trouble, something that you need to deal with right away. When you have a "crisis", you can ask for a crisis grant from welfare...

The GAIN regulations (law about welfare) say:

"An individual who

- a) is qualified to receive income assistance
- b) requires an unexpected item of need, and
- c) is unable to obtain the item of need due to
 - i) lack of money or assets, or
 - ii) inability to obtain credit,

may receive benefits in addition to those set out...where the Director is of the opinion that failure to obtain this item of need will result in

- d) imminent danger to the physical health of the individual, or
- e) apprehension of a child."

What can you get crisis grants for?

Some of the things that people get crisis grants for are: food, clothing, hydro, utilities, furniture, shelter, home repairs, and emergency transportation.

How do you get a crisis grant?

If you are going to ask for something (like a bed, stroller, or
(continued on the next page)

clothes), get 3 cost estimates first. This means, just go to, or call, 3 different places and ask how much it would cost for these things.

Write it down, or get someone to write it for you. Take it to your worker.

If you ask for more than \$250, it has to go to the Supervisor.

If you ask for more than \$500, it has to go to the Area Manager.

Each office has a budget. They may tell you that you've had your share of "crises", but it is your right to ask. They are going by their policy, which is not the law.

You don't have to pay back crisis grants.

Appeals

If you are turned down for a crisis grant, you can appeal. Tell your worker that you want to appeal. The worker must write down her decision to not approve a crisis grant on the top half of a form. You fill out the bottom half, and it

goes to the Area Manager. The Area Manager reviews the decision, and then lets you know in writing what their decision is. If you still do not get the grant, you can take it to a tribunal. Get one of the groups on the back page to help you out, and you'll have a better chance of winning the tribunal.

*(Thanks very much to the
Downtown Eastside Womens'
Centre for this information)*



More and more people have to go on welfare

If you're trying to survive on welfare, don't feel like you're the only one. The economy is so bad that over 300,000 people in B. C. are now on welfare. In fact, in December, 1992, there were 313,263 people in B. C. on welfare. 105,683 of these people were children. 19,309 were people with disabilities that the Ministry recognizes. 46,621 were single parents.



WE ARE RESTRUCTURING THE ECONOMY



Welfare Rights Workshop

Come and learn what your rights are with welfare. Gus Long of the federated anti-poverty groups of b.c. is giving these workshops.

Times:

- Tuesday, March 9th, 7:00 to 10:00 pm
- Friday, April 9th, 1:00 to 4:00 pm
- Tuesday, May 4th, 7:00 to 10:00 pm

Place: Vancouver Lesbian Centre,
876 Commercial Drive, Vancouver

Everyone welcome!

Need help getting your tax form filled out?

DERA, the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, is filling out tax forms for people again this year. The service is free!

Make sure you have collected all your information slips from welfare, GIS, CPP, etc. Then take the slips down to DERA at 9 E. Hastings between 9:00 am and noon, Monday through Friday.

Oops!!

Last month we put the wrong phone number in for the Mental Patients' Association advocacy service. The correct number is 738-2811.



Get help with welfare problems 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 327-6120.
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. Toll free number for people who are outside the Lower Mainland: 1-800-663-1278.

Law Students Legal Advice Program

For help with a wide variety of legal problems. Locations

throughout the Lower Mainland.
Call 822-5911.

For help with landlord and tenant problems:

Call the **Tenant's Rights Coalition Hotline:** 255-0546. If you are outside the Lower Mainland, call 1-800-665-1185 between 9 am and 1 pm Monday through Friday.

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.

If you are outside the Lower Mainland, for the advocate nearest you, call ELP at 879-1209.

