

END LEGISLATED POVERTY

N E W S L E T T E R

62

June, 1993

Getting tired of welfare bashing?

For the last couple of months the media and Liberal and Social Credit politicians have been talking a lot about so-called welfare fraud. The government has hired new "fraud inspectors." The Young Socreds at Simon Fraser University distributed a "hate poster" against people on welfare.

People from Terrace to Vancouver have told End Legislated Poverty that this welfare bashing in the media is having an effect in welfare offices. People are afraid to ask for what they need. People are afraid to apply for welfare. People on welfare cringe everytime they hear this welfare bashing, assuming it applies to them.

If you need welfare, or are on welfare, remember that getting welfare is a right in Canada. The

government in Ottawa purposely kept interest rates high, knowing it would create unemployment. That government cut back UIC on purpose, knowing it would throw more people onto welfare. That government brought in free trade, knowing it would destroy jobs.

When TV and the papers and some politicians produce stories that paint people on welfare as fraud artists, they are guilty of bigotry and discrimination. The solution to this problem is to get them to stop. They are the ones that have to change, not the people on welfare.

Don't be afraid to demand your right to welfare. If you have trouble, or if you think you are being investigated for fraud, go to one of the groups on the back page for help.

An open letter to Joan Smallwood about welfare fraud

Dear Ms. Smallwood,

We are outraged and angered with the recent media coverage concerning welfare fraud and the negative implications this has had on people on welfare. We have discussed this issue and thought that writing a public letter to you would be a way to share our concerns.

From the information in the Report on Fraud, the actual incidence of fraud is about 1 percent. No fraud rate above that has been proven. How can the media jump from this report to allegations that welfare fraud is rampant? We suspect some of the people in the other political parties and media have sympathies with the last government, disagree with the new NDP policies you have brought in, and want to see a more punitive, repressive and controlling system brought back.

What is on these people's agenda? We suspect it is to make everyone think that all people on welfare are thieves and liars. Why would they want to have people think that , when in fact most people on welfare are children, single mothers, older people, people with disabilities, and people who can't find work that pays enough to live on. Why would people want to target and scare these already vulnerable and victimized people?

We have a poster on our wall at the ELP office that says: *Is the fear of poverty a form of social control?* If you have the public hating people on welfare, what happens? People in low wage, dead end jobs will work at all costs to their health and safety and dignity rather than stand up for their rights and risk being fired. Women stay in relationships that are abusive to themselves and their children rather than leave and see single parenting
(continued on the next page)...

Open letter continued from last page...

and welfare as an alternative.

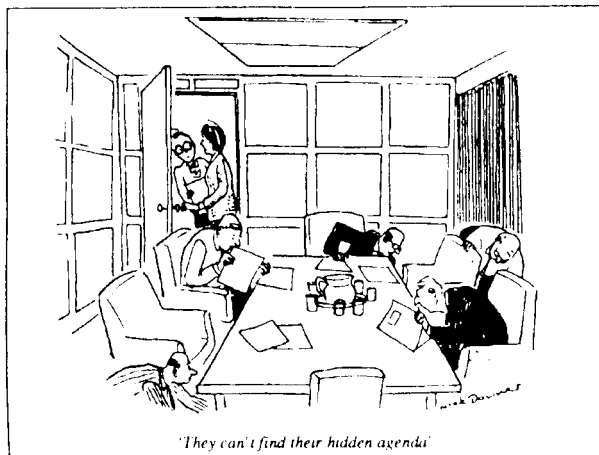
Disabled people are forced to further risk their health by having to beg and rely on charity and the goodwill of friends and relatives instead of having the independence and dignity of a stable income.

More than seriously trying to deal with a legitimate problem, we see the last month's media attention around this issue as a way to hurt poor people in B. C. and target people on welfare as scapegoats.

Blaming poor people for poverty is simplistic and wrong. Canada has been in the control of a federal government that has followed the corporate agenda of free trade, high unemployment, UI cutbacks, and social program cuts. This agenda has created poverty. Poor people have not created poverty.

(signed)

The ELP Wages and Welfare Committee



Help in the Downtown Eastside

You can now get the June, 1993 edition of Help in the Downtown Eastside in three languages, English, French and Spanish.

The guide is produced by the Carnegie Newsletter. It contains information on free food, cheap clothing and household goods, shelter and housing, crisis centres, health services, counselling, services for Native People and people with disabilities, advocates, learning places, social activities, and more.

Get your free copy at the Carnegie Centre, 401 Main St. in Vancouver.

Free Law Students' legal advice program

Summer schedule, 1993

(Clinics open from May 17, 1993 to August 20, 1993)

*(If there is a * by a name it is wheelchair accessible)*

Britannia

Make an appointment by calling 253-4391. 1661 Napier St., Vancouver. Open Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10 to 4, and Tuesday, 2 to 9.

Carnegie*

Drop in at Carnegie Centre, 401 Main St., Vancouver. Tuesday and Thursday 10 to 4.

Chinatown

Make an appointment by calling 687-0729. Chinese Cultural Centre, 50 E. Pender, Vancouver. Tuesday, 10-12 and 5-9; Wednesday and Friday, 10-4; Thursday, 2-9.

Frog Hollow*

Make and appointment by calling 251-1225. 2131 Renfrew, Vancouver. Monday and Friday, 10-4; Wednesday, 2-9.

Gordon House*

Make an appointment by calling 683-2554. 1019 Broughton. Vancouver. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 10-4; Monday, 2-9.

Langley*

Make and appointment by calling 534-7921. Langley Family Services, 5339 207th St., Langley. Monday, Tuesday, Friday, 9-5; Wednesday, Thursday, 2-9.

Little Mountain*

Make and appointment by calling 879-7104. 3981 Main St., Vancouver. Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 10 to 4; Wednesday 2-9.

Mt. Pleasant*

Make an appointment by calling 879-8208. 535 E. Broadway, Vancouver. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10-4; Tuesday, 1-8

More free law students' clinics...

North Shore*

Make an appointment by calling 987-8138. N. Vancouver Neighbourhood House, 225 E. 2nd St., North Vancouver. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 4-9.

Women only. Tuesday 10-1; Wednesday 10-4.

The Law Students do not do impaired charges.

Seniors*

Make an appointment by calling 980-2472. Silver Harbour, 144 E. 22nd St., North Vancouver, B. C. Tuesday and Friday, 10-4.

Persons with Aids

Make an appointment by calling 893-2250. 1107 Seymour St. Vancouver, Thursdays, 10-4.

South Van

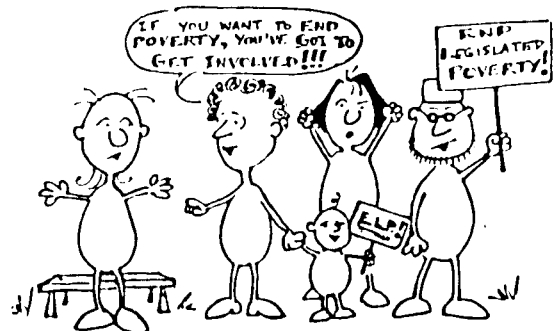
Make an appointment by calling 324-6212. South Van Neighbourhood House, 6470 Victoria Dr., Vancouver. Monday, Thursday, Friday, 10-4; Wednesday, 2-9.

Womens*

Make an appointment by calling 687-1868. Women's Centre.



CALM 6-92



Single Parents: Your opinion on housing is wanted

Does housing make a difference to a family's health and wellbeing?

We are a research group who wants to find out the effect of housing on single parents and their children. To do this we are surveying single parents who rent or share privately owned apartments, suites, houses or other types of accomodation that are not government subsidized. We want to know the real stories--good and bad--about living in rented accomodation in Vancouver's East Side.

Anyone who wants to be in the survey will be asked to fill out a questionnaire, which takes about an hour and a half. There is a \$15 honorarium for doing this--not enough for real payment, but at least to acknowledge your help. We bring the questionnaire to you and pick it up.

The area we are interested in is between Main and Boundary, and North of 49th Avenue. All the information gathered by this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential.

We welcome participation from any single parents in East Vancouver who can take the time to share their opinions and experiences about houses.

Help is available in filling out the questionnaire. Call Sheila Scott at 879-2504.



How much welfare fraud is proven?

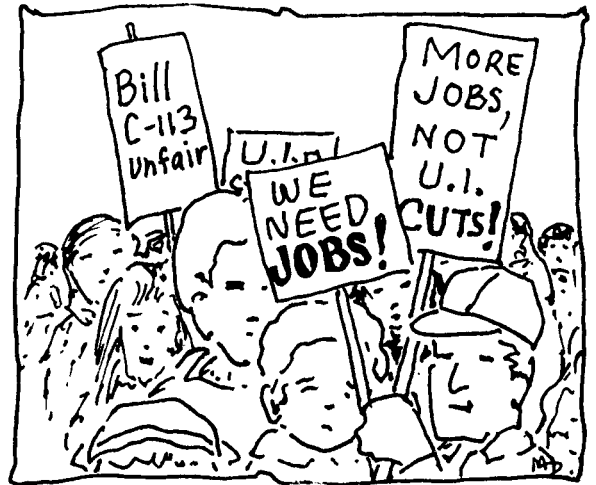
Ministry of Social Services claims that there were 669 complaints of welfare fraud in March. They say that only half of these were valid and that only 10 resulted in court convictions.

There are 323,000 people on welfare in B. C. These statistics mean that there was one conviction for welfare fraud for every 32,300 people on welfare. This is a very low fraud rate. It is certainly much lower than the rate of conviction for Sacred Cabinet Ministers in the last provincial government.

The government says that half of the 669 complaints are valid in spite of only 10 people being convicted. Why is this? They say it is because the Ministry staff cut off payments and made repayment deals with people "caught cheating". However, how many people on welfare are forced to sign repayment deals because if they don't, their cheques will be cut off, they'll be evicted and starve? Why isn't it assumed that people on

welfare, like other people are innocent until proven guilty?

However, even if half of the 669 complaints were valid, that would still be a fraud rate of about 2 tenths of one percent of the cases on welfare, far less than one percent.



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.

