

RESCIND WELFARE TIME LIMITS!

What is the 2-year Time Limit on Welfare!?!?

On April 1, 2002, a policy on time limits on welfare came into effect under the new Employment and Assistance Act. This policy stated that beginning April 1, 2002 all people on income assistance who are considered 'employable' are limited to 24 months (2 years) of income assistance out of every 60 months (5 years). Singles, couples and families who reach the time limit will be effected as follows:

- ★ No eligibility for singles
- ★ No eligibility for couples who have both reached their time limit
- ★ \$300 reduction for employable couples with one adult over the time limit
- ★ \$100 reduction for single parents
- ★ \$100 reduction for two-parent families where one parent is over the limit
- ★ \$200 reduction where both parents are over the limit

What Are the Key Differences Between BC & US Time Limits?

BC is the only province in Canada to have implemented time limits on welfare. The two year time limit on welfare has its roots in US 1996 welfare reform laws. However, key differences exist between US and BC time limits:

- ★ US programs had transition supports and training as key components of the social assistance plan when the time limits were first imposed. **HERE IN BC:** the government has eliminated earning exemptions and cut back childcare subsidies
- ★ In the US, when people reach their time limit on welfare, they are still eligible for food stamp programs. **HERE IN BC:** No such programs exist.
- ★ The US implemented time limits during a period of economic strength. **HERE IN BC:** Our economy is in serious trouble and unemployment rates are already rising.

BC Liberals' Assault on the Poor!

Since being elected in 2001, the BC Liberals have launched a campaign of attacks on poor and working people:

- ★ The introduction of the \$6 training wage
- ★ Gutting of unions through contract tear-ups and privatization
- ★ Cuts to Legal Aid
- ★ Cuts to women's shelters and women's centres
- ★ The Disability Review process

The introduction of the two year time limit is just one more example of Gordon Campbell's poor-bashing agenda.

The reduction of money to parents once they have reached the time limit will further impoverish many families. There will be more children living in poverty and more children being apprehended due to 'neglect.'

What are the Politics Behind Welfare Time Limits?

- ★ Welfare time limits are based on the poor-bashing assumption that welfare provides such a cushy life that people won't get a job unless they are forced to. In reality, the vast majority of people on welfare leave income assistance within a few months.
- ★ Time limits violate people's rights to security and a decent standard of living. They will have a devastating effect on people and will lead to increased poverty, despair and homelessness.

Why Should Workers Care?

- ★ We live in an economy that is not even designed to produce a job for every person. Yet every person has a basic human right to a dignified standard of living.
- ★ When people cannot get jobs either because they don't exist, because they are being discriminated against, because they don't have the accreditation or health to comply with work rules or for any other reason, they still deserve a decent standard of living.
- ★ Welfare time limits are one of a number of changes designed to force people to work at very low wage, casual, temporary, no-benefit jobs that are becoming the norm in our economy.
- ★ Time limits ultimately undermine the bargaining power of working people by flooding the labour market.
- ★ In the US a study found that if the low-wage labour market were to give jobs to former welfare recipients without displacing the current workers, pay would fall by nearly 12% for the bottom 30% of workers.