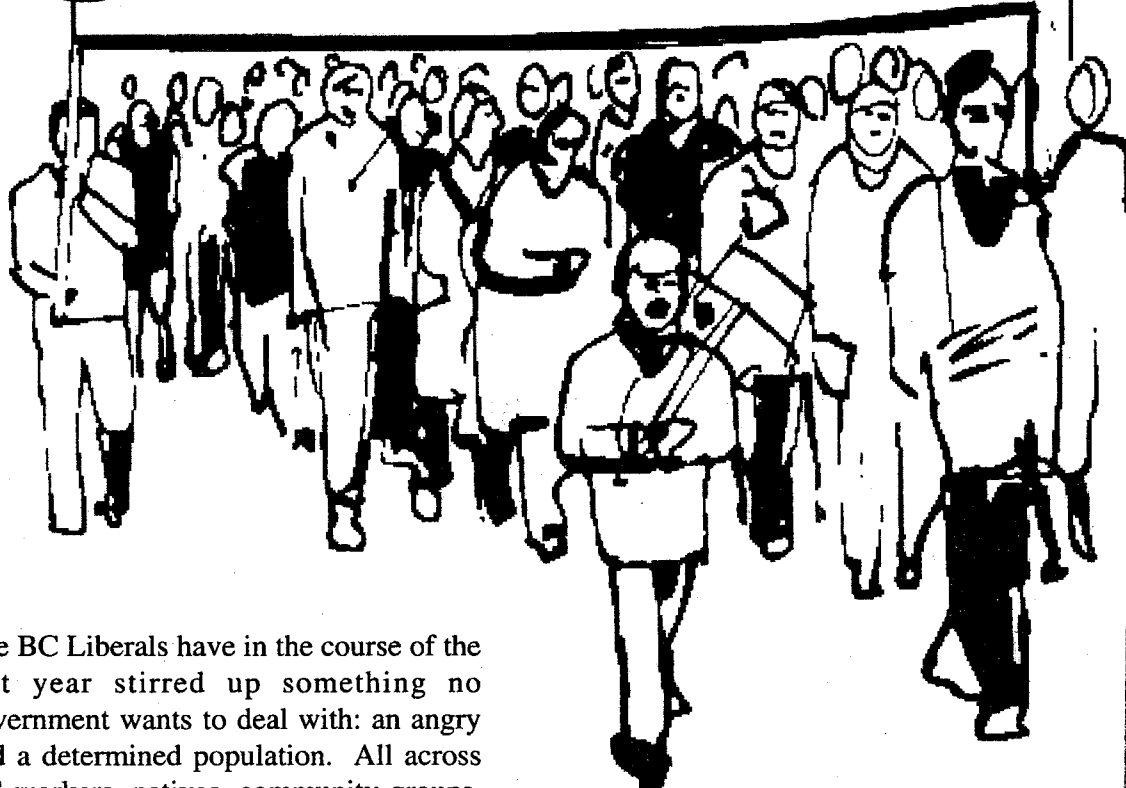


#4
May
2002

anti-poverty committee
newsletter

Defeat this government!



The BC Liberals have in the course of the last year stirred up something no government wants to deal with: an angry and a determined population. All across BC workers, natives, community groups, anti-poverty activists, women's organizations, even churches are challenging the Liberal agenda. From Victoria to Chilliwack, activists are knocking on doors and demonstrating in the streets, with the one overriding goal: stop this government in its tracks.

But some may be missing the political forest for the trees. Why? We can wait and hope that the Liberal government has outraged so many people that they are voted out in the next election. But, they could lose almost half their seats in the next election and still command the government for another four years. A legal challenge will take years. Recall legislation can be amended. The corporate press, peddling Liberal party propaganda in the most brazen fashion, will be there to confuse people when we are successful and denigrate us when we fail.

The reality is that we are facing the real possibility of seven dark years of Liberal rule. Relying solely and explicitly on the ballot box or the recall campaign will give the Liberals the advantage. They won the election because they had the initiative and money. Why give your enemy the time? Why wait to strike? We are not attacking just a government, but a class of men and women who view this province as theirs to rule as they see fit, without interference from poor and working people. They are militant too. They will not give up easily. Neither should we.

No single tactic has enough power by itself, and no single organization by itself can bring them down. We came close to bringing down the Socreds in the summer of '83. Strong alliances between working people and community organizations are needed.

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Unions have to support the mobilization of non-union workers and the unemployed. The long neglected task of organizing with non-union workers must be undertaken. Poor people are powerful constituency in their own right and their participation in the movement is essential for those who have nothing to lose and have everything to gain. It is their militancy and their disruptive protest that is missing. We are the fastest growing constituency under the BC Liberals, and we will be the last ones standing. This struggle will need the largest mobilization of ALL people with a stake in the fight.

How can we strike back now? We need to mobilize on an unprecedented scale all those who did not benefit from the tax cut. Those who will be evicted from their

homes when rent increases start coming through. Those who see their paycheques cut, and those that are already struggling to raise a family while getting thrown off welfare. The war is on the poor and working people of this province. It's a war on natives fighting for their cultural survival against racism and state-sanctioned robbery. We have to mobilize these people to fight back.

We have to take the fight to the real enemy, the ones who overwhelmingly benefited from the tax cut. Take it to the robbers of public assets, the businesses hiring at the new slave wage. We have to take this struggle to their offices, to their affluent neighbourhoods, to their homes. We have to hit their bottom line, and make it impossible to make a buck in this province on the backs of the most vulnerable. We can beat them back now. Why wait?

St. James and Direct Action Casework

St. James Community Services is an agency in the Downtown Eastside that acts as a "third party" to welfare. They are supposed to help welfare recipients manage their money by administering their monthly cheques in increments once a week, twice a week or even every day. Financial Aid workers send their clients to St James as punishment for "acting out" - ie. raising their voice, demanding too many crises grants - or if they suspect them to be drug users, prostitutes or mentally ill. Once a recipient is sent to St. James they cannot talk with their regular worker and they are forced to collect their cheques under the intimidation of security guards.

On Friday May 10th an APC advocate went to St. James with one of these so called "hard to handle" women. She had only been a St James client for one month and already they were punishing her for the "unacceptable behavior" of bringing in a doctor's note requesting a crisis grant for bottled water. Her St. James worker, "Susan", had restricted her to a daily cash administration of \$6. Within half an hour the APC advocate convinced Susan that the client should not be punished for her uncompromising strength and independence. The client was allowed to choose the way her monies be administered to her and she left satisfied. APC will take on your case and fight your worker.

Need help with welfare? Meet on Tuesdays at noon. at VANDU - 50 E Hastings.

The BC Liberals attack on workers

BC workers will see their work lives in constant struggles due to three bills introduced on May 13, 2002 in the BC legislature. These bills will especially affect less protected workers, including women and visible minorities.

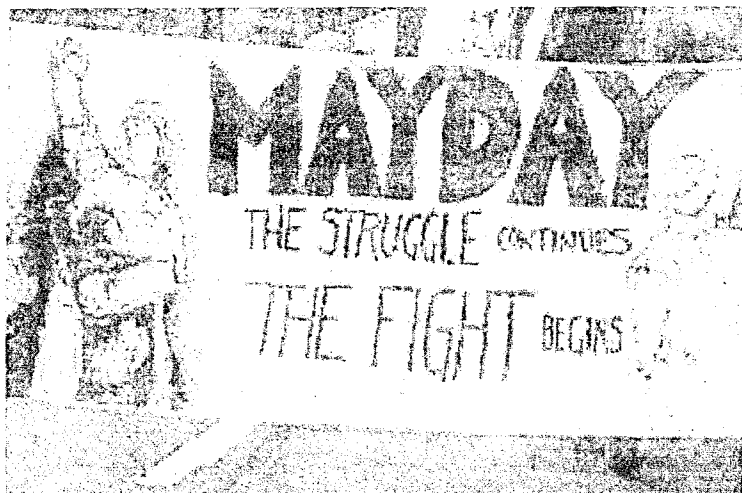
These bills will reduce limits on overtime, cut benefits for those injured on the job, and make it much harder to join a union. The bully tactics used by this provincial liberal government, are no stranger to the people of BC. The cuts to social programs, the racist referendum, and the privatization of public services have created an insecure climate of violence for thousands of poor families.

The massive changes to the employment standards, WCB rules, and labour laws show us the real "new era" that Campbell told us about a year ago. The "new era" means more money to the rich and powerful wealthy class in Canada, and less to the poor and working class. But nothing is eternal, and our message is loud and clear: if we want something we have to fight for it.

Our basic rights are under attack, and the only solution is mass mobilization against the cuts. We must build an independent and democratic movement of masses that will put an end to this retrograde government. With the masses, united and engaging in direct action, we will win.

fight the cuts! defeat this government! solidarity is strength!

Can't see the movement for the tactics: May Day 2002 and APC



The definition of the Anti-Poverty Committee's "fight back" rhetoric became clear on May Day. The APC organized a march from Victory Square to a McDonald's restaurant on Granville Street. With this action APC began our campaign against the six-dollar minimum wage.

It was important to begin the campaign on May 1st because of the historical connection between May Day and the working class victory of the minimum wage. The Liberal \$6 "training wage" is a blow against the hard fought right to the minimum wage and can be defeated only through the class solidarity that May Day celebrates and represents worldwide. The crowd marched to the McDonald's, held a blockade of the three entrances to the store and blocked the street that ran past those doors with banners and bodies. A diverse array of speakers announced: "The fight back has begun!" Organizers declared the demonstration a success and led the crowd back into the street to disband safely at the art gallery.

The march was hijacked at the Pacific Centre mall by a small group of masked individuals who were followed into the mall by the enthusiastic crowd. The police arrested one masked man while he and two or three others kicked over displays and yelled at shoppers. A group of twenty-five people mobilized and marched to the police station to demand the release of the arrested demonstrator.

At the corner of Main and Hastings the police attacked the group again. There was a scuffle and the cops made four more arrests but released one man immediately. A group of fifteen people waited on the sidewalk outside the jail until 11:30pm but those arrested were not released. That night, APC released a statement to the media denying responsibility for the derailing of the demonstration and

the incident in the mall. In the same statement they demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all those arrested. All four people arrested were released the next day. The police and media portrayed APC as "lying hooligans and thugs" one day and as denouncers of criminal activity the next; in fact neither could be less true. The real trouble with the "spontaneous action" in the mall is that it forced APC to be seen publicly: as for or against "property destruction," as for or against "diversity of tactics".

APC is a mass based mobilization organization that depends on an anti-poverty class analysis to create strategy that empowers poor people and depends on this strategy to inform its tactics. When tactics are divorced from strategy they are politically meaningless and often counterproductive, legitimizing state repression without building popular support to effectively fight against it. May Day strengthened APC because it emphasized the organization's priorities of mobilization and sustainable campaign building while revealing the desperation of poor people in Vancouver.

APC would never denounce the anger of poor people nor the translation of that anger into rage, but it would be a great failure of the anti-poverty movement if that rage were to remain unfocussed and be allowed to exhaust itself in self-destruction. The Anti-Poverty Committee is organizing the rage, the desperation and the uncompromising strength of poor people in Vancouver to defeat this government and to eliminate poverty altogether.

an excerpt from our open letter

We, the Anti-Poverty Committee, are engaged in a very serious battle against this bourgeois government. The fight between capitalist oppressors and the oppressed people is warfare. In a serious, dedicated political movement, we cannot afford to have people running around engaging in destructive clown-like behaviour devoid of political consciousness. This is not the Dukes of Hazard, this is not a John Wayne move: this is a life-or-death class struggle where every move counts, where every mistake counts. Those who have engaged in this action have seriously damaged the Vancouver movement against poverty and against the BC Liberals, and we will not tolerate sloppy activities that hurt this movement. Workers in the mall, young people at the demonstration, immigrants at the demonstration who cannot risk arrest due to racist immigration policies, and many other important elements of the Vancouver working class have been alienated from participating in a militant movement against the Liberals, and the masked-up people who rampaged through the mall are clearly responsible for this.

Fight the training wage!

The Anti-Poverty Committee fights the Training Wage by fighting the businesses that are making money off it. Are you being paid six bucks an hour? Do you know someone who is? Do you know a business that is taking advantage of the training wage? Call the Anti-Poverty Committee.

We will take action against these businesses: we will negotiate with the bosses, picket outside and inside, and disrupt the businesses that value so much.

Our short term goal are fair wages for all the workers in all the businesses we target; in the long term we WILL overthrow the training wage altogether,

The Anti-Poverty Committee needs your help. The more of us there are, the more businesses we can target. The more targets we have, the more victories we will enjoy. The more victories we have, the more powerful we are. The more powerful we are, the more successful we will be.

What is APC?

The Anti-Poverty Committee is a mass-based organization that fights for the rights of poor and working people using direct action. The poor face constant attack under the capitalist system and these attacks are constantly increasing.

APC organizes mass actions and direct action casework against the cuts to welfare, the training wage, police oppression, homelessness, and the transfer of public property to the rich. APC uses public attention and disruptive action to make our point and get results.

We are an independent, democratic and inclusive organization open to anyone who agrees with our basis of unity and is willing to work on our campaigns. We support mass-based organizing with poor people and their allies. We oppose racism, sexism, and homophobia and other forms of oppression and we are dedicated to working in solidarity with the struggles of other progressive groups locally, nationally and internationally.

The Anti-Poverty Committee's next meeting will be on Wednesday May 29th at 327 Carrall St., next to Pigeon Park. Our phone number is (604) 974 - 0092 ext. 8895 and our email is apc@resist.org

Upcoming events

May 25th @10:30 am Rally Against the Cuts! Organized by the BC Federation of Labour

At 10:30, people will be starting out at Burrard Station, Library Square, Seaford Peace Park (Kitsilano), and Victory Square. APC is trying to organize an anti-poverty contingent to march together. We will be gathering at Victory Square at 10:30 am. Come march together with us against poverty! Look for APC banners!

IMPERIALISM AND THE THIRD WORLD Conference

May 26 10 am – 5 pm

Roundhouse Community Center
– Pacific & Davie, Vancouver

With the so-called "War on Terrorism" waged by the U.S. government, a blank cheque has been issued on military escalation, violence, and exploitation. Unilateral military intervention has already occurred and is occurring in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Iraq, and Palestine violating the fundamental human rights and the sovereignty of the people living in these nations. palsolidarity@yahoo.com, 604.692.3389

Sunday June 2nd at 7 PM

**APC fundraiser at the Wise Hall,
1882 Adanac @ Victoria Dr.**

Featuring:

Flying Folk Army

Dana Carvey

Dave Littman

\$5 Dollar sliding scale.