

the anti-poverty committee newsletter

Who are we?

The Anti-Poverty Committee is a grassroots organization that fights back against assaults on poor people. The poor face constant attack under our current economic system, and these attacks have intensified under this government. The Liberal's brutal policies - the cuts to social programs, the racist referendum, the privatization of public services, the tax cuts - all are designed to transfer wealth from working people and the poor to the rich and powerful.

Our demands:

1. End the six dollar minimum wage.
2. Restore funding to social housing.
3. Reverse the welfare cuts.

How do we fight.

We must use direct action and mass mobilization in our fight against this government. They will not be swayed by moral appeals or symbolic protests. They will not change course, even when it becomes clear how much suffering and death their policies will create.

This is government for the rich, and we must challenge them on their own terms. Hit them in the pocket-book - not just with ideas but with cold, hard economic facts. When they lose their ability to make a profit or attract investment - they will come to us begging to negotiate.

The early history of the labour movement shows this, as do the histories of oppressed people's movements across the world. The strike is a powerful weapon. The poor and unemployed can't afford to not to use it.

Social Housing Now!

The Campbell government's attack on poor and working people in BC is setting the stage for a homelessness crisis. Thousands are already without a home or living in slum conditions in Vancouver. The housing market has failed to supply adequate and affordable housing for people, not because it is unprofitable, but because developers don't find it profitable enough.

This puts the onus of supplying affordable housing squarely on the shoulders of the government. Yet there have been a miniscule number of affordable housing units built and the need is constantly increasing. The federal government has pulled out of funding new social housing in any significant way, and what new money that comes down now is band-aid money - going towards shelters to warehouse the poor.

Subsidized housing wait-lists exceeded 10,000 names under the NDP regime, yet freezing new social housing projects was one of the first acts of the Liberals (after tax cuts for the rich). This government has refused to acknowledge that poverty and homelessness even exist and instead looks to our inadequate social programs as the problem to be eliminated.

BC was no paradise for many thousands of poor people, before Campbell. Now we have gone from bad to worse. His rhetoric of correcting the errors of past governments rings hollow. We need to demand that everyone benefit from the immense prosperity of this province. British Columbians need to demand that the Liberals provide prosperity for everyone - not just the wealthy.

There are 16 social housing projects placed on permanent hold by the Liberal government - a total of 1,179 units.

Welfare as Warfare!

Welfare was not a living wage under the NDP and the Liberals have made it into a death wage. The Liberals have made new rules for collecting welfare which will cut off many recipients, including: refugees, youth who have not lived independently for two years, people who are over the two year limit, and those convicted of welfare fraud. This will force many people already in desperate situations, into the streets, into the drug and/or sex trade. Unemployment has risen to around 10% since Liberals came to office, not including the tens of thousands of jobs to be lost through government cuts.

Single-parents

- End of exemptions for child support.
- Kids of parents on welfare must attend school or else the family will be cut off welfare.
- Must return to work your youngest turns 3
- Reduced shelter allowance for single parents with 2 or more children by nearly \$100/month
- Payments for single parents rolled back almost \$70/month to the same level of support paid to individuals living alone

Service cuts

- Human Resource Ministry has already closed offices in 15 communities, leaving only a 1-800 number for service.
- Appeal panels will no longer have community representation.
- Government is seeking to privatize welfare resulting in further cuts.

Some cuts will kill!

Disabled

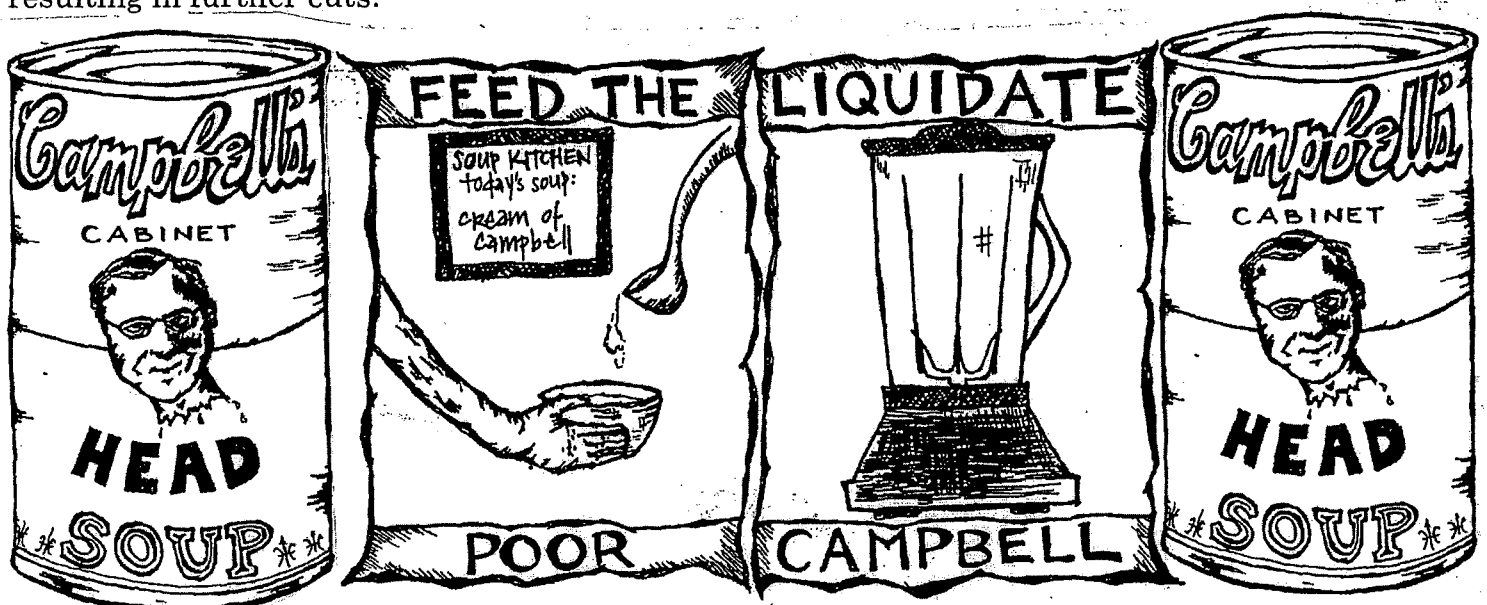
- Disability benefits will be restructured forcing more people back to work, and drastically cutting access to life-saving health care goods and services

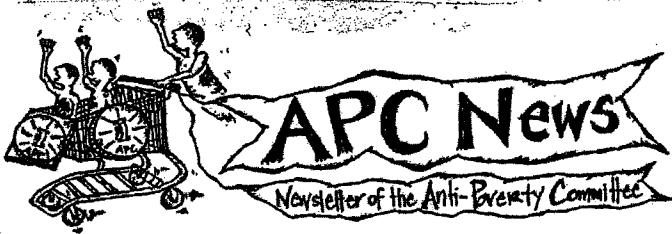
Single employables

- Increased focus on mandatory employment yet, job training programs have been cut by \$7.5 million.
- Orientation course, followed by a three week job search, mandatory before receiving welfare.
- No more earnings exemptions, outside income now also deducted dollar for dollar

What can we do?

- **Community advocacy clinics** – Recipients need to understand their rights to full benefits and protection. Community outreach should encourage those not receiving benefits to so, if they can.
- **Direct action advocacy** – Large numbers of people can be mobilized to defend people from being cut off welfare and bring attention to state of mass poverty in BC.
- **Mass applications and appeals** – Hold large workshops on welfare rights and have everyone go down together to apply or appeal their benefits. This will create an influx of new cases to disrupt the welfare system.





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Six Bucks Sucks!

Youth unemployment is a serious issue in Vancouver - reaching as high as 20% over the last decade. What is the BC Liberal government's answer? The best way to "help strengthen youth employment options" is to slash pay cheques of the lowest paid people in this province. Six dollars an hour for the first 500 hours of work.

This new "training minimum wage" assumes that most of the workers who receive work for the minimum wage are middle-class teenagers who live with their parents. In reality: 61% are adults 19 years or older, 64% are women and 48% have had some sort of post-secondary education. Lowering the minimum wage clearly doesn't benefit these people.

So who does it benefit? Some of the biggest businesses in BC: McDonald's, Boston Pizza, the White Spot, Earl's Restaurant, Milestone's and the Bread Garden. All Liberal backers.

Attack on Welfare Recipients!

As more people will be kicked off welfare because they are no longer eligible under the new laws, they will be competing with the working poor over jobs that do not support a minimum standard of living. The six dollar training wage also leads to work-fare like employment where recipients are forced to work for their cheques.

Attack on Homeless!

The Liberals see youth unemployment as the problem rather than youth poverty, but employment is not beneficial if it does not allow for a minimum standard of living. A six buck starvation wage is no incentive to get out of the sex or drug trade.

Attack on Students!

High school students are the intended target of the training wage and are the most effected by a decrease in their wages. Students who have worked before the November 15th cut off date may be fired or not hired at all. Low wages and higher tuition costs affect the ability of young people to save money for post-secondary education meaning that it is harder to educate their way out of poverty. As well the Liberals have removed the tuition freeze and stopped the funding for work-study positions, giving students no option but an unmanageable dept load

Attack on Immigrants and Refugees

People new to Canada are already vulnerable to exploitive wages, this just makes it legal. If new Canadians cannot prove that they have worked before, even if they have an education and years of employment then they can be hired at six dollars. Plus hardship assistance has been eliminated for refugees making them more susceptible to exploitive employers.

Fight Back!

The six-dollar wage will lead to worsening working conditions and wage-cuts for all workers. The Liberals admit that there is nothing to stop employers from firing first time workers as soon as they finish the 500 training hours. It will be harder to complain about unfair firings and working conditions because the Employment Standards Branch staff are being cut by 35%-50%. Plus a vast surplus of labour due to an already high unemployment rate (9.7% in January 2002), and an increase of those now ineligible for welfare will further job competition and wage-slashing.

We must fight this new assault by targetting businesses that higher people at the new training wage. Anti-poverty activists can picket these unscrupulous employers, and community groups can work with labour unions to build a province wide boycott campaign.

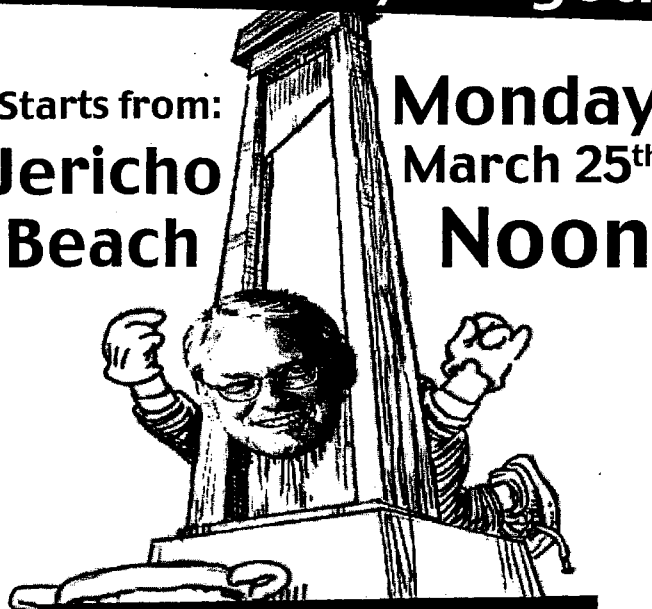
Economic disruption is a tool in our struggle for justice and freedom from exploitation. Report businesses that hire at the new sub-poverty wage to the Anti-Poverty Committee.

Next APC Demo

One Cut They Forgot!

Starts from:
**Jericho
Beach**

**Monday
March 25th
Noon**



**March and Rally
Against Poverty**

Get Plugged into APC

The Anti-Poverty Committee needs your help to fight the Liberals. If you are interested in getting involved or being informed about upcoming actions, please contact us using the number below. As a recently formed group, we have very few resources. If you are a member of a community group or trade union, please consider endorsing our upcoming actions and contributing financially or in kind.

Next meeting:

Wednesday Feb. 27th.
Carnegie Centre - Classroom #2

Contact Info:

Vox/fax: (604) 974-0992 ext. 8895
Email: a_p_c@mybc.com

Upcoming Events

International Women's Day

Friday, March 08, 2002 at 12:00 PM

A gathering at the Women's Memorial sponsored by the Western Region Women's Conference featuring Jenny Kwan, Libby Davies and Angela Schira. All welcome.

Info: troublemakertwo@hotmail.com

Rally Against the Cuts and Celebrate International Women's Day.

Saturday, March 09, 2002 at 11:00 AM

Gather at 11 a.m. at Broadway and Commercial (Broadway Sky Train Station, walk along Broadway to King Edward Campus (VCC) for a program of short speeches, song and dance.

Contact: Elsie Dean, 604-294-5834 or
sbdean@sfu.ca

Union Strategies for the Liberal Era

Friday, March 08 to Sunday, March 10, 2002

Union Strategies for the Liberal Era: skills for fighting back. A conference where you can learn skills and strategies to protect your members, your rights and your community. Co-sponsored by the Capilano College Labour Studies Program and the B.C. Federation of Labour

Contact: Jean Greatbatch 604-984-4901
Lsp@capcollege.bc.ca

Rally and Speak Out - In Support of Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Worker Rights

Friday, March 1, 2002 12 to 1

800 Burrard (at the corner of Robson) the Regional office of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The government continues to push draconian changes through a barrage of Bills: C35, C36, C42, and through restricting immigration. Bringing in harsh and punitive measures, Canada's new Immigration Act adds to the racist backlash against immigrants and refugees after September 11. People Organizing Spontaneous Solidarity Efforts

For more info: call 604.682.3269, ext. 6467