

November 1, 02

Anti-Poverty Committee

Press Statement:

On Saturday, October 26th, the Anti-Poverty Committee joined organisations across Canada in the "Give it or Guard it" campaign. In Toronto they were flanked by hundreds of riot police and held to the sidewalk with batons and bikes. In Halifax and Ottawa, buildings were opened, then swarmed by police and made empty again. In Vancouver the APC was attacked as "radical agitators" and denounced by every single mayoral candidate as criminals. Clearly they think that empty buildings are necessary to maintain the status quo, clearly they value the word of law far above the spirit. Across the country, when we have called out "Give it or Guard it", they have chosen to Guard it. They have spent their resources guarding their empty buildings against homeless people and supporters and they have exposed themselves as not only caring nothing for the health and well being of poor people in Canada, but as valuing profit above all else and as willing to do anything to protect these interests. The Federal, Provincial and Civic Governments ~~In this country~~ have created the housing and homeless crises ~~in this country~~ and they will do whatever it takes to make sure these problems do not go away. The Anti-Poverty Committee will resist these governments and their pro-business policies that make and keep people poor and homeless in Vancouver, in British Columbia, in Canada and all across the world. We will fight alongside poor and working people in our communities for survival and to defeat this government.

Yesterday, the Liberals announced changes to the Residential Tenancy Act that will further escalate the housing and homelessness crisis in BC. The Government is already unable to effectively respond to the situation as it exists and we cannot allow things to get any worse. As they attack the Anti-Poverty Committee as "agitators" and "thugs", the Campbell government steps up their war on the poor. Low-wage workers: women, immigrants, youth, people of colour are the ones who will be hit hardest by the legislation changes. The number of "employed homeless" is expected to rise with the erosion of regulations around the raising of rents during an existing tenancy and the heightening of landlords' abilities to perform evictions based on tenants' isolated behaviours. As poverty increases across the province, social housing becomes even more important. If someone pays more than 30% of their income to rent they are considered to be in "core need". In 2000, city hall estimated that 25% of the population of Vancouver qualified for social housing based on "core needs." Only 8.5% of the housing stock in the city was social housing at that time. Since then, the massive changes to labour regulations, the introduction of the \$6 training wage and the sweeping cuts to the welfare system have heightened desperation and poverty in the city. Last year's dissolving of provincial social housing and these changes to the Residential Tenancy Act means that rents will increase while wages fall and homelessness will become a reality for many working

people in BC. The fight for social housing is more important than ever before. The fight for social housing is a fight for welfare rights; it is a fight for workers rights. It is the fight against the Liberal Government.

The Liberal Government is attacking on many fronts. The Anti-Poverty Committee has set up many campaigns to respond to these attacks. We are co-ordinating a unifying fight back. The provincial governments attacks through legislation include the cuts to women's services, the new welfare and disability regulations, the lowering of labour standards through changes to the employment standards act and labour code and the lowering of the minimum wage through the implementation of a training wage. This training wage is not a solution to youth unemployment; it is quite simply an attack on low-wage workers. 70% of minimum wage earners are over 19, 48% have post-secondary education and the majority are people of colour. The APC is exposing the real government motivations for this wage by exposing the business organisations that fought for it. The BC Restaurant and Food Services Association (BCRFA) has openly lobbied for this wage for years. The BCRFA is working with the Liberal Government to promote the interest of business above the rights of women, immigrants, people of colour, youth, seniors, the disabled and all workers and people in the province. On Monday, November 4th at 6pm, the BCRFA is having a "Gala Awards" dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The Anti-Poverty Committee, along with over a dozen organisations who have endorsed this event, will be there to expose the BCRFA for their role in the Liberal governments attacks on poor and working people in the BC. We must fight against the legislated increase in poverty in the province and against the \$6 wage. We must fight Gordon Campbell.