

# **Basic Outline of a Proposed Housing Campaign for APC**

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## **Why a Housing Campaign?**

Housing affects all poor and working people. All people need dignified housing in order to maintain their health and their lives. The obvious social and economic contradictions between landlord and tenant, between a homeless person and a property developer, can be the basis of a broad and militant campaign. Through direct action casework and mass mobilization we can contribute to a social movement that will fight for decent housing for all poor and working people.

## **Tenant's Rights**

A huge base of tenants live under undignified and exploitive conditions. Substandard housing disproportionately affects single mothers, immigrant and indigenous communities in Vancouver. We can begin direct action casework around tenant's rights immediately by making connections and building networks with tenants who are at risk of eviction, living in substandard housing, having trouble with utilities companies, or have been ripped-off for their damage deposit. We will need to confront landlords, business improvement associations and community policing offices, and building inspectors. We can provide people with information regarding their rights as tenants and build real connections based on solidarity through direct action casework. A possible component of the housing campaign that can work in conjunction with the welfare campaign would be the demand for an increase to the shelter portion of welfare payments.

## **Squatter's Rights**

The number of homeless people in Vancouver is likely to increase rapidly due to the Liberal government's ongoing attacks on poor and working people. Homelessness disproportionately affects indigenous peoples on Coast Salish lands. The cuts to welfare and disability are particularly relevant to the housing campaign. The former Woodward's squatters are approaching their deadline and are facing homelessness again, and the potential for mobilization around housing is huge. We can look towards actions such as demonstrations, occupations, and squatting. The momentum of the national squatting movement is likely to continue into this year, and a National Housing Campaign is being planned for the summer. Squatting is a particularly powerful direct action because it directly attacks capitalist private property rights while providing a basic necessity of life to poor people. Squatting exposes capitalist exploitation and exclusion by exposing the conflict between the rights of poor people to decent housing and the supposed rights of property developers and governments to speculate on vacant buildings and protect them from the poor with violent police action. For the homeless a squat can be a unifying force and community building effort that inspires a sense of dignity and strength. In this way a squatting component of the housing campaign can be a method of building a base of power within the exploited class. This campaign can be seen as progressive, rather than simply reactive.

## **Campaign Tactics**

Tactics can be broken into two categories; information and action. Information tactics include research, producing pamphlets and news articles, postering, holding public forums and public demonstrations. Action tactics include direct action casework, occupations, squats, demonstrations and street mobilizations. A small number of simple and easily understood demands should be drafted for the campaign. One of our tasks will be to make the links between the struggle of tenants and the struggle of the homeless. Tactics should be chosen based on an analysis of particular situations. Tactics should be chosen based on what people want, what people need and what will be most effective. They must mobilize and empower people and build networks of solidarity. The housing campaign should be set in a framework of progressive escalation of tactics and mobilizations, working towards mass economic disruption in the struggle for housing.

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