

Volume I Issue 1

Speaking out about poverty

March 1994

"We're fed up with double standard"

On March 7th ELP presented a brief to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development by television in Vancouver. The Committee was in Ottawa.

ELP organizers Patricia Chauncey, Rose Brown, and Linda Marcotte, along with volunteer Dave (who prefers that his last name not be used) made the presentation.

ELP made 12 points to the committee:

- ☛ People need enough money to live on with dignity
- ☛ We are fed up with the double standard where the rich are treated to tax loopholes and "incentives" while the poor are scrutinized, condemned, and given less than the rich.
- ☛ The deficit is not a good excuse for chopping social programs

☛ We need job creation--1.6 million jobs need to be created

☛ We need a minimum wage of about \$10 an hour

☛ Social policy should not be used to create more low wage labour and working poverty

☛ We need adequate funding



On Feb. 23rd over 50,000 people on welfare had to line up for their cheques. End Legislated Poverty organized groups to go to line ups and be in solidarity with people on welfare. These three people, wearing ELP supplied masks to avoid being identified, were at the Mt. Pleasant East social services office in Vancouver.

for social programs and rights for low income people

☛ We need affordable housing

☛ We need a good unemployment insurance system that should be separated from welfare.

☛ We reject the idea of experimenting with the lives of low income people

☛ Training is not a substitute for job creation.

☛ Social policy reform should ensure that every Canadian

(continued on page 3)

At a Glance

News

- 3 • Report on Feb. 23rd
- 4 • Organizing in Nelson and on the Sunshine Coast
- 5 • Poverty news from France to Canada
- 8 • Recovery Houses
- 9 • Federal Budget Attacks UI
- 9 • People Unite

Features

- 6-7 • Thinking about the Social Safety Net

Regulars

- 2 • Editorial & Letters
- 5 • Around the Globe
- 8-9 • Front Line Advocate Workers
- 10 • Needy & Greedy Interview with an activist
- 11 • ELP Helps Landlords have the advantage Strike at Army Navy?
- 12 • Help for low income people

Dave's statement to social policy committee

"I am looking for work. I am on welfare and get \$482 a month, not really enough to survive decently. A person in the top tax bracket who buys \$1000 worth of RRSP per month gets \$481 back, per month, on his taxes. This person doesn't have to pass a needs test. I do. People in the top tax bracket who invest in RRSPs are not accused of fraud daily in the press. People on welfare are. People in the top tax bracket are not scrutinized to determine if they are using their \$481 productively or simply squandering it on foreign vacations. The media raises questions about what people on welfare do with our money nearly every day. People in the top tax bracket are not put under a microscope to determine if that \$481 a month they get from government contributes to their "incentive to work." Yet welfare is being scrutinized to see if it keeps me from working...."

Ta da!

Welcome to ELP's new newspaper, *The Long Haul*.

This paper is made up of the old *Action Line*, *FLAWline* and *ELP Newsletter*, all in one. We are printing 5000 copies

We need you to help make it a success. Send us your articles. Your poems. Your cartoons. Give us a call if you want to distribute *The Long Haul* in your community (879-1209 collect).

Together we can make *The Long Haul* a strong voice for low income people in B. C.

Why we chose "The Long Haul"

By Sandy Cameron

When we considered a name for the ELP newspaper, we turned to *The Long Haul*, an autobiography of Myles Horton, social activist and founder of the Highlander Centre, who knew that injustice has more lives than a cat. Horton understood that perseverance is an important characteristic for people who want to change what is into what ought to be.

ELP is dedicated to ending poverty in Canada. Our country has the resources but not the political or moral will to accomplish this task, for at the present time we have an economic system that creates great poverty alongside great wealth.

Only consistent, determined effort will carry us toward our goal. Often our efforts seem small and insignificant compared to the forces opposing justice, but it is important that we do them. Small efforts, collected together, form a mighty river that can wear down mountains. Like Myles Horton, we are in for the long haul.

Editor's note: Thanks to all the people who submitted ideas for names of the paper, Sheila Baxter, Lorraine Gardiner, and Sandy Cameron. We made a list of the names that were submitted and the ELP Board chose *The Long Haul*. Even though Sandy wrote this piece about "The Long Haul" he submitted other names such as "The ELPful news."

Dear ELP,

Better wages would help

(the author wants to remain anonymous)

I know, as a single mother with three kids ranging from grade 1 to grade 12, and with all the school activities, hot lunches etc., that it is extremely hard making ends meet.

I worked part time at a grocery store for three years. Working odd hours, my oldest son would end up sitting after day care hours. He was always dependable and yet it cut into his social life and study time. Working in a deli was physically stressful and I was exhausted. Our family communication was not as open as it once was. My older son was going through a depression and now is out on the streets somewhere in the States. I am a responsible individual but I bit off more than I could chew, given the age differences between my children and trying to work at a job that was physically demanding.

I knew the job would eventually pay well, so I stuck with it as long as possible. But at what cost to my family? That was a stupid thing to do because I'd been injured in a car accident and the work aggravated my injuries further and now I have the stress of trying to locate my son. I stayed at that job because I do want to work for myself, for my self esteem, to contribute to society, etc. A lot of that three years was also to do with peer pressure because I realize now I was doing myself and my family and society a lot more good when I was at home and there for my children who needed me much more than the grocery store. I'm sure everyone would prefer to work but more needs to be done to protect our families. Better wages would help!

My unfair tax break

By Joel Sintov

For a long time I have worked as hard as anyone because I have kept my low wage jobs for long times.

Still I have paid as high a percentage of income tax as anyone else, though I can't say that I've paid as much tax as someone with a higher level of income.

The wealthy get some of their tax breaks to encourage them to spend money and help stimulate economic growth.

So why don't I get some breaks

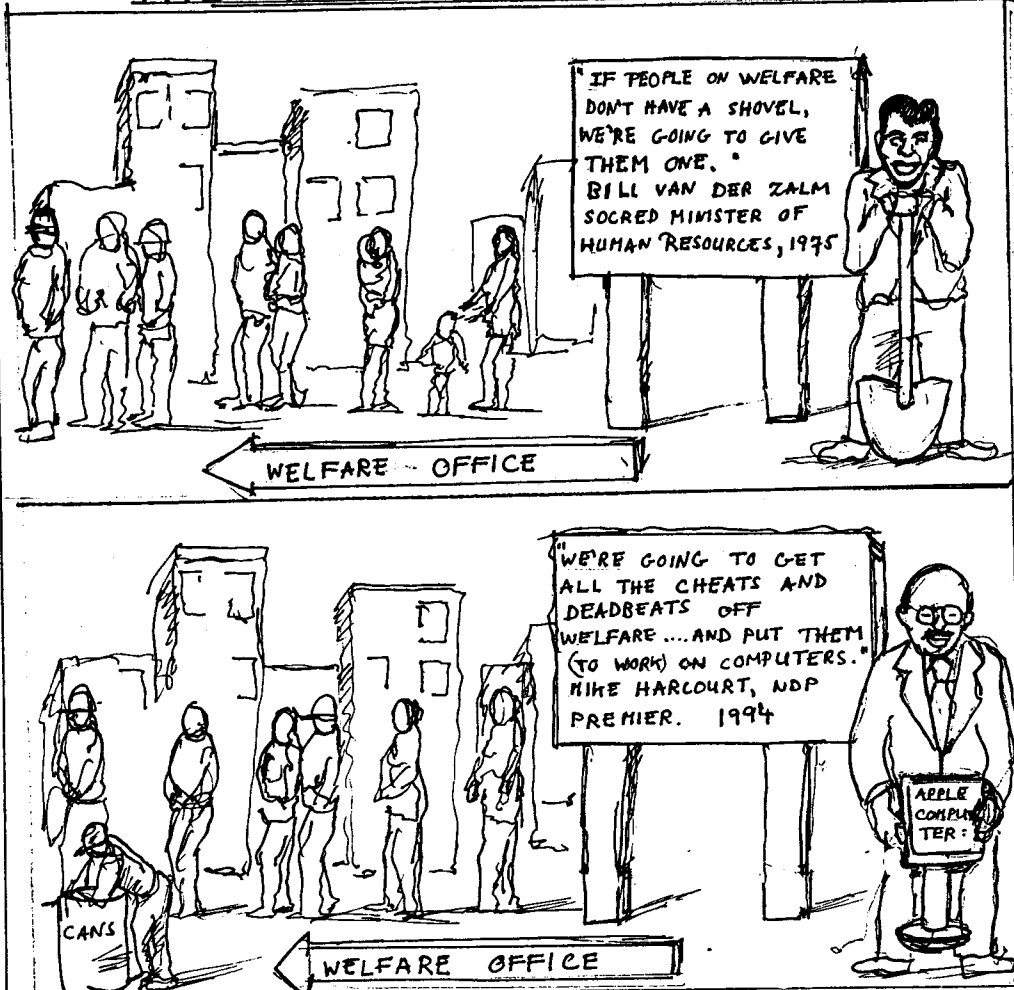
to encourage me to do the same? I work just as hard for my money and I have proved that I'm willing to spend what I get.

So to all of those politicians out there...Quite counting your bills and give me a break already, a taxbreak that is, not a back break. Lower taxes for lower income earners!

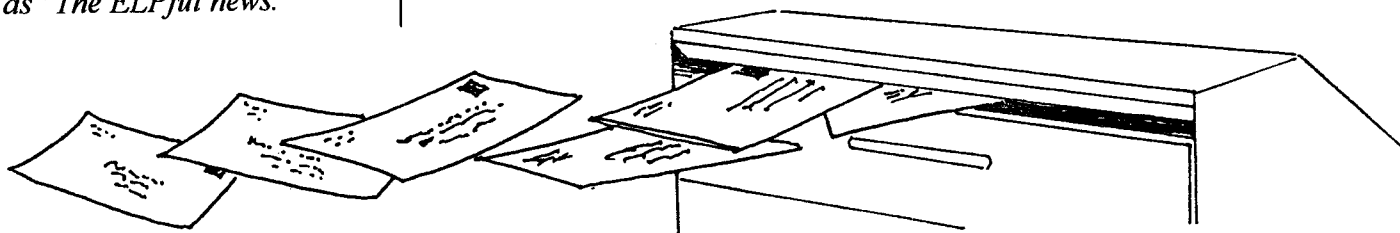
Write to Dear ELP

Do you have comments about The Long Haul? Want to disagree with any of the articles? Do you have points you think we should have considered and didn't? Write a short letter and tell us about it. Don't worry about spelling and punctuation. The computer can do that. It's your ideas that are important. Try to get the letters in before the 15th of the month. If you want help with writing, just call ELP at 879-1209,

PROGRESS : 1975 TO 1994 BY DAVE J.



with thanks to M. Weerker.
in Z Magazine : November 1993.
for a great idea.



Published monthly by:
End Legislated Poverty
#211, 456 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1R3
Vancouver (604) 879-1209
fax line (604) 879-1229
Surrey (604) 583-7363
Vancouver Island 383-8778

End Legislated Poverty is a coalition of BC groups that want governments to reduce and end poverty.

Editors:
Jean Swanson
Joanne Shaw (FLAWline)

Design and layout
Joanne Shaw
Jean Swanson
Dave Ross

Cartoons by Maureen Davis
and David Jaffe

Reports on Feb. 23rd events

On Feb. 23rd the Ministry of Social Services forced over 50,000 people on welfare to line up for their cheques. Usually the cheques are mailed. ELP organized groups in the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, and Vancouver Island to stand in solidarity with the people who had to line up. ELP newsletters were handed out. Harcourt masks were available for people who did not want to be identified by the media. And people signed letters to Harcourt calling the line-ups degrading and humiliating. Here are some reports:

Privacy Commission reports on welfare cheque line-ups

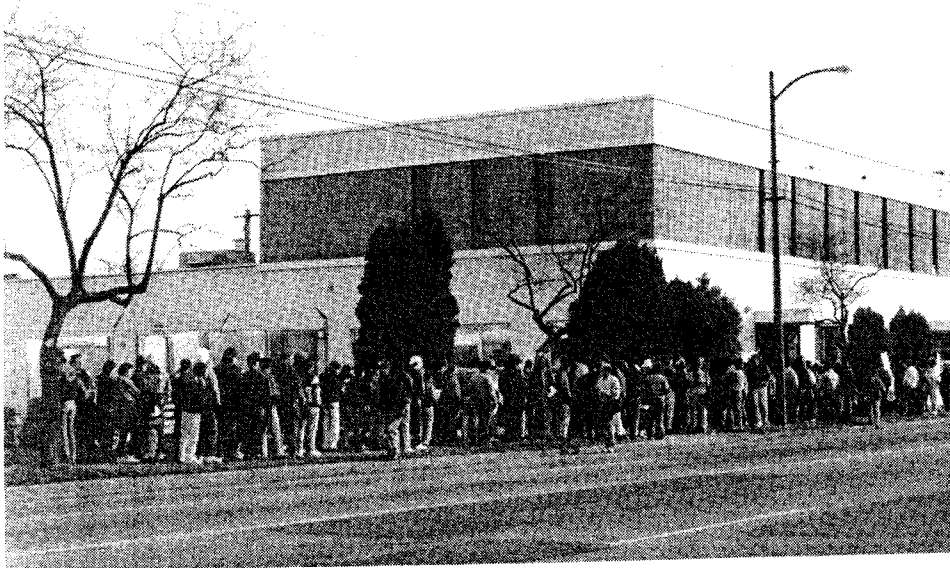
When over 50,000 people on welfare were forced to line up for their cheques on Feb. 23rd, were their privacy rights violated? After taking the time to go to many of the line ups, it appears that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner was afraid that people on welfare might bite.

A letter sent to Patricia Chauncey by Privacy staffer Cori Ross explained the investigation process and results. The letter didn't have any direct quotes from people on welfare. It did quote the media, Harcourt's office, ELP staff and Ministry staff.

The report concluded by saying, "There does not appear to be a strong adverse reaction to the pilot project by clients to the Ministry of Social Services."

"However, clients and Ministry staff were upset with the media's presence at the various Ministry of Social Services Offices.... There was objection to unauthorized filming of line ups. Vancouver Sun photographers were openly criticized by clients at the Seymour Street Social services office in Vancouver."

"Although the Information and Privacy Commissioner has no jurisdiction in relation to control of the media's presence at the Ministry of Social Services Offices, it should be recognized that the filming or photographing of welfare recipients without their consent is morally unjust. If possible, steps should be taken to prohibit or limit the media's exploitation of people on income assistance if the Ministry decides to entrench this pilot project."



People line up for their welfare cheques outside the Mt. Pleasant East office in Vancouver on Feb. 23rd.

The day after Feb. 23rd

On Feb. 24th, the Victoria Street Community Association and the Open Door held a session for community members at the Open Door to discuss some of the changes to welfare policies. The meeting was held to get some solutions to bring to the Ministry staff and to plan for future action.

The group attending felt that it was important to look at having a demonstration at the legislature and to form a coalition of anti-poverty groups in Victoria.

One of the ideas that came from the meeting was having people in full work gear line up outside the Quadra Ministry Office to demand jobs.

Solidarity in Campbell River

By Tracey Wong

Here's the chain of events that happened on Feb. 23 in Campbell River. The line up started at about 8:15 am. Our group arrived at about 9 am and set up an information table as well as free coffee for people who had to wait.

It was a clear but very cold morning and people wouldn't leave the line for coffee for fear that they would lose their place. So we took the coffee to them.

The line up dwindled down quickly because they had brought in workers from other places. A Province reporter was there asking people questions. His attitude was negative and he was starting to upset people by his line of questions. We asked him to leave. We wanted to keep people as calm as possible.

The RCMP came by several times, we assume just to keep an eye on things and make sure there was no big angry mob

congregating outside the office, which never happened. The press from Campbell River showed up and asked a few questions and seemed disappointed that big full blown aggressive protest wasn't happening. We packed things up at around 2 pm and let people that were inside know that if they had any problems, they could contact us at the Centre.

The feeling all day was that this was a major inconvenience as well as a degrading experience to go public. We collected and handed out a lot of publications and tried to help out with information as much as possible.



ELP brief continued from page 1....

lives above poverty, that decent jobs and wages are available to all who need them, that we do not increase the number of working poor, that we reduce and end prejudice and discrimination against people on welfare and UI, and that we end greed as well as need.

"It's good that we made the presentation," said Rose. "It helped us to know how the changes will affect us."

"We were saying to them, you're putting labels on poor people. You're undermining programs for poor people. Yet you are not applying the same standards to the wealthy and corporations and to the greed in

this country. We made them hear what is real for at least those few minutes.

Rose said that the Bloc Quebecois MP, Francine Lalonde appeared to be the only one who was aware of who we are. Reform Party members didn't even ask questions.

Michael Goldberg of The Social Planning and Review Council presented a brief just after ELP's. Goldberg asked the committee if the reform process was for a just reform or simply to save money. He called for a minimum wage of \$9 an hour and said that RRSP's are an unfair way for the rich to avoid taxes.

Organizing around the province

Nelson Anti-Poverty Group working hard

By Rose Brown

More than 200 people came to a food and clothing give away in Nelson on Feb. 14th. The Nelson Anti-Poverty Action Group worked unbelievably hard to talk to people in their community about poverty, and to collect donations of food and money. It takes a team effort to divide up the donations, fill the bags, and distribute this food in as non judgmental and comfortable way as possible.

As the ELP organizer, I was in Nelson to talk to people about their situation, give information about the new changes to welfare, and discuss ways of organizing for change.

Because there were so many people in need, NAPAG kept running out of food and had to go get more. This food give away had no strings attached like food banks do.

People had lots to say about what they need:

☞ I work two part time jobs and I still need to come here for food.

☞ My wages are so low, I live \$45 above welfare rates.

☞ If I wasn't in subsidized housing I wouldn't be living.

☞ You can tell it's welfare day because grocery prices go up in the stores.

☞ Nobody wants to be on welfare.

☞ I did government subsidized training at a small local sawmill. They told me I'd get a job. When I applied at the large saw mill in town, they laughed at me.

☞ I've been trained. I can't

afford equipment to start up work for myself.

I could see that the food giveaway really helped to bring a group of people together so they'll have a basis to do other kinds of action. Its not a big step from doing the organizing required for a food give away to organizing to make the kind of changes that we really need so we won't have to have food give aways. The group is hoping to have a community forum on poverty in the fall.



Its very hard for me to write about the day. Seeing the people work so hard is really commendable. But the indignity of have having to rely on charity is hard to face. The group kept going and buying more food to meet the need but didn't have enough. They were juggling just like people on welfare juggle food money to get through the month.

"The fact that we had to turn people away was more heartbreaking than anything else," Elizabeth Caron, one of the NAPAG organizers, said. "So food banks aren't the answer. We are going to keep working towards something better."

Esquimalt mothers get a start

A bud of an anti-poverty group got its start on Feb. 24th at Esquimalt Neighbourhood House. Issues like job training, welfare cheque amounts, high rents, classism and the corporate agenda were discussed in a very emotional and heart warming meeting with the single parent support group Quick Step.

Stories were shared about struggles of raising small children on incomes that are at about one half of the poverty line.

One woman shared her story about trying to look for work and care for a nursing baby. Her rehab worker was supporting her to have "more dignity" as a working mother. She was exhausted and very tearful relating the shame she felt being on welfare. She felt torn because she is very committed to her child. She described horrible

The group looked at poverty issues and decided it was better to be "loud and proud" and fight for more just conditions on welfare than to buckle under to discrimination that isn't fair

and doesn't end poverty.

The group will meet later in March to discuss the corporate agenda.

I also met with the West Kootenay Women's Council, a group for women who work to have influence on the social issues in the area. This group was started to keep people updated on what they are doing and what grants and services are available.

I made a presentation about who End Legislated Poverty is and how Ministry changes affect people. I talked about classism and showed them the breakdown of who is rich and poor in Canada. We talked about social program changes in other provinces and how these are threats to us here in B. C. I recommended that they read the *Wealthy Bankers Wife* by Linda McQuaig to strengthen their understanding of social programs in Canada.

Thanks to Carol and Elizabeth Caron for inviting me to Nelson and spending the time to talk and consult.

Sunshine Coast Update

By Anne Miles

February 23rd, the day of Solidarity with people on welfare, Donna Thomas and I handed out ELP leaflets at our local MSS office as people went in to pick their cheques up. Very few refused to take a leaflet. There were a few leaflets left in the waiting room, but Donna went in and got them and handed them out again. We used up all 200 of the leaflets that ELP had so kindly bussed up to us a few days before. We had less response to the letter to the premier. My feeling was that people are frightened that their names will be put on some government list of "subversives." As Donna checked the waiting room one last time for discarded leaflets, two of the MSS workers came out and congratulated her for what we were doing! Some recipients stopped for extended chats with us before and after picking up their cheques. It was well worth it in terms of letting people know about ELP and our local group. Letting them know, in short, that they are not alone.

On Feb. 26th we moved into our new office which we will share with CUPE local 801. This is a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby our rent is reduced and the union local gets to use our telephone. We will remain an independent entity. We'll also be Wheelchair accessible. A big thanks to Victor, Gord, Paul and George who helped Donna and me with the moving.



France

Equal work, equal salary

In France tens of thousands of people demonstrated in the streets during March to protest the government's plan to cut minimum wage for young people. A full time minimum wage worker in France now makes about \$1000 a month.

The government wants to reduce the minimum wage for a year so long as employers offer some sort of training.

Demonstrators chanted: "Equal work, Equal salary," and "No division between generations."

The United States, which has the highest poverty rate of the industrialized countries, also has the second lowest unemployment rate. Many U. S. citizens are poor because their wages are low. Is the French government following in U. S. footsteps on minimum wage? Will Canada be next?

Washington

By Sandy Cameron

On March 9 Jean Swanson and I traveled to Seattle Washington to take part in a trilateral (United States, Canada, Mexico) demonstration against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The demonstration was supported by the Seattle Labour Council and organized by the Jobs with Justice committee. Jean and I represented Action Canada, B. C.

An upbeat, energetic crowd of about 250 union and community activists met in a parking lot across the street from the Labour Temple building. Demonstrators carried banners, shook rattles made of pop tins with dried peas inside, sang union songs, and listened to one speaker from each of the United States, Canada (Jean) and Mexico. The speakers told the crowd that NAFTA was killing jobs,

killing wages, and in Chiapas, Mexico, killing people. It is also killing democracy as it transfers the power to make important decisions about the economy from elected institutions such as Parliament or the congress to the boardrooms of transnational corporations.

The Mexican speaker, a Jesuit priest and factory worker, said that working people in Mexico were against NAFTA and that many workers could not buy adequate food, clothing and shelter with the wages they earned.

The demonstration was planned because an expensive trade conference (\$300 registration fee) on how to make money out of NAFTA was taking place at the Seattle International Trade Centre. Because of the downward spiral of competitive impoverishment that NAFTA generated, the demonstrators called for jobs with justice. They wanted it known that they would fight against job losses

and wage and benefit reductions.

After the speeches were over, we marched to the accompaniment of songs, rattles, and chants such as "Human need, not corporate greed," to the International Trade Centre two blocks away where business executives hoped to have a gourmet banquet. The march to the Trade Centre didn't take long, and before we knew it, and much to our surprise, we had taken over the banquet room on the second floor. The circular tables were set for dinner, but the guests had not yet arrived because it was only 6:15 pm. We sang and chanted slogans for the next 45 minutes in a festive spirit of disciplined defiance. Our favorite chant was "No justice, no dinner." The banquet was postponed. Nothing on the tables was disturbed, including the dinner rolls and the exquisite wine glasses, but our presence made it impossible for the executives to put on their feed bags.

What's happening in Alberta?

Ralph Klein is setting the national standard for deficit hysteria. In the name of deficit reduction, the Alberta government has announced the deepest and furthest reaching cuts in public sector spending in Canadian history.

Cuts include:

- ☛ \$239 million by 1997 from education
- ☛ \$186 million cut from universities, colleges, and technical institutes
- ☛ \$620 million cut from health care
- ☛ \$180 million from social services
- ☛ \$88 million cut from municipal assistance grants.

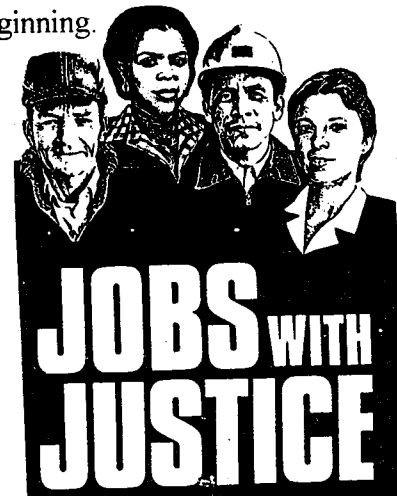
Although the numbers seem mind-numbing, the human costs will be truly staggering. Labour and community leaders are predicting massive increases in poverty, sickness and even starvation.

Albertans are fighting back. Meetings and protests to fight the government are being held around the province. For more information call Paul Green at Action Canada Network, Alberta, 403-483-3021

No Justice, No Dinner

The Seattle police waited quietly on the sidelines, and at 7:10 demonstrators snake danced around the banquet hall and down the stairs to the street. The message had been delivered.

Jean and I felt privileged to be part of this trilateral demonstration for democracy and against NAFTA. We were impressed with the energy and commitment to justice of our American and Mexican sisters and brothers. We knew the fight against NAFTA wasn't over. In fact, it is just beginning.



Thinking about the social safety net

The federal government is determined to make massive changes to Canada's social safety net, especially welfare and unemployment insurance.

Between April and September, the government plans to consult with Canadians.

They intend to present a final report by Sept. 30th and introduce legislation in 1995.

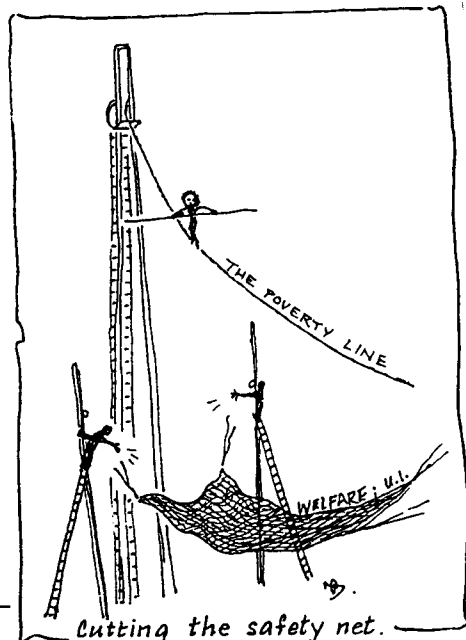
Will the changes make things better for low income Canadians or worse? Right now it looks like the government is heading in the direction of making things worse.

Why do we say this? Here are some of the reasons:

- ☛ The Liberals seem obsessed with the language of "incentive" and "disincentive" when considering low income people. But they ignore these terms when dealing with programs and tax loopholes that benefit the rich.

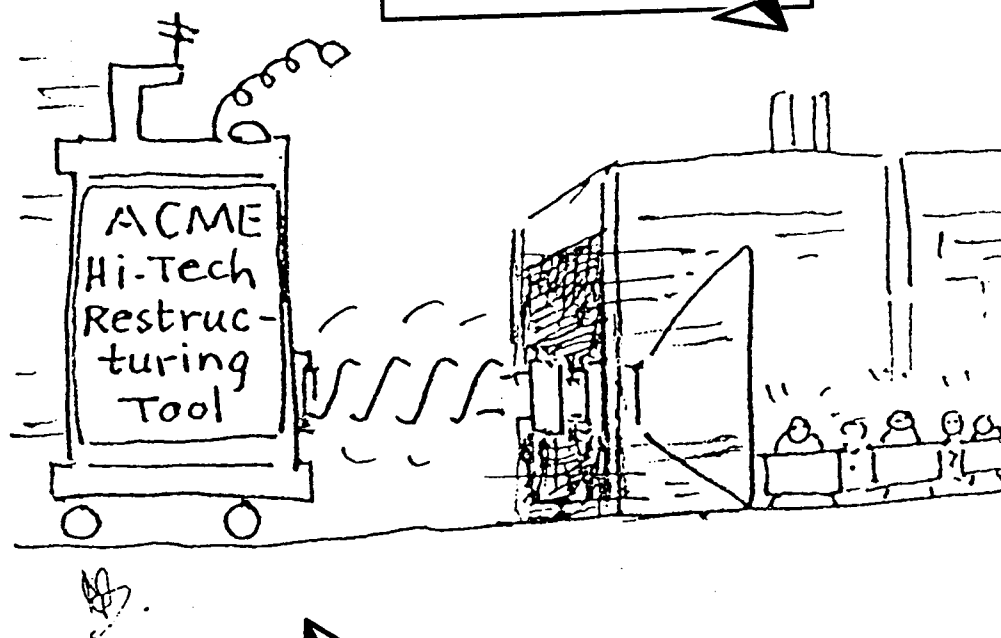
- ☛ The Liberals are concentrating on programs that push or lure more people into a workforce that doesn't have jobs for them. They seem to be bent on changing UI and welfare into workfare.

- ☛ The Liberals are talking about creating 60,000 jobs with their infrastructure program, not the 1.6 million jobs that we need.
- ☛ No one (except low income groups) are talking about raising welfare, wages, and UI to levels above the poverty line.
- ☛ There is no talk of raising minimum wage.
- ☛ The Liberals seem to assume that training is a substitute for job creation.
- ☛ What about people who can't work or shouldn't have to if they are raising their kids? The Liberals aren't talking about giving them adequate incomes.
- ☛ The Liberals aren't talking about greed. The richest 5% of Canadians own 46% of the wealth. Why should UI be cut back or welfare, when these people could pay higher taxes and higher wages to their employees.



?????????

What economic forces are causing people to lose their jobs? What needs to be done so that people don't lose work? What can governments do to create jobs? Should this be totally left to the private sector if our official unemployment rate is 11 percent?



?????????

How many low income people aren't working? What's happening to them?

Making a presentation to the Committee on Human Resources Development

The government says it wants input on its plans to change welfare and UI. It has a paper that you might want to get if you want to give some input. Call 1-800-208-9494 to get the paper. But don't be fooled by it. The assumption behind the paper is that the safety net is the big problem, not the lack of jobs.

If you want to make a presentation to the Committee, write to:

Clerk
Standing Committee on
Human Resources
Development
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Tell them you need money for your expenses and preparation time.

Get a group of low income

people together. Look at the drawing and ask the questions. Some of the answers could form the basis of your presentation to the government committee.

Be sure to talk about your experiences as a low income person. Remember, you are the expert on this subject, not the committee members.

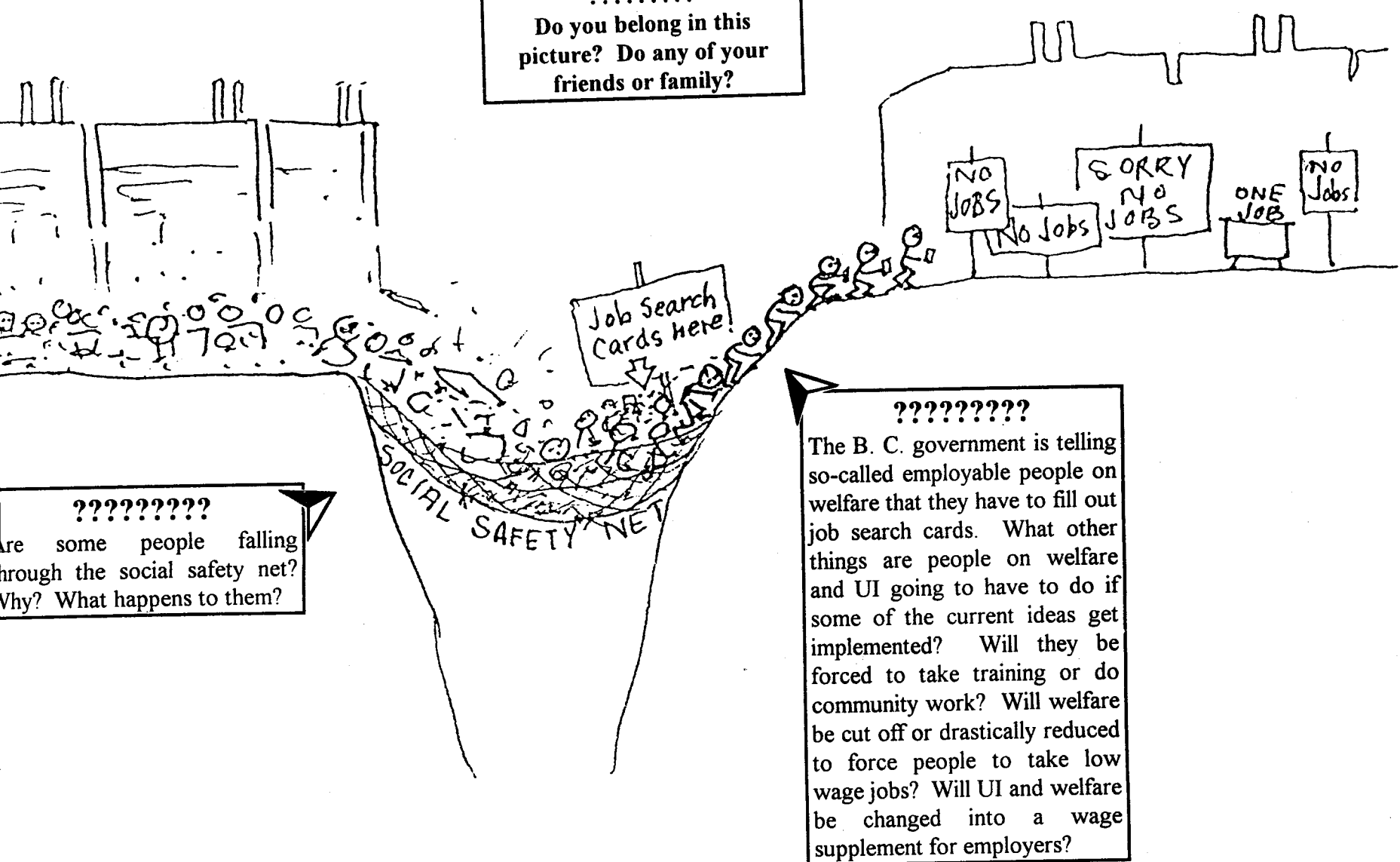
Resources: For a copy of ELP's brief to the Standing Committee, or for a copy of the brief from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, give ELP a call at 879-1209. If you'd like to consult about the Committee or have some one from ELP come to your community to discuss social policy reform, give ELP a call.

Using this drawing to help think about social policy reform

Going from left to right, the drawing follows what happens to a person who loses their job. Starting at the left side, ask questions about the drawing.

Do you belong in this picture? Do any of your friends or family?

Are jobs waiting for trained people? What kind of jobs: What happens to wages if thousands of people are seeking very few jobs?



Are some people falling through the social safety net? Why? What happens to them?

The B. C. government is telling so-called employable people on welfare that they have to fill out job search cards. What other things are people on welfare and UI going to have to do if some of the current ideas get implemented? Will they be forced to take training or do community work? Will welfare be cut off or drastically reduced to force people to take low wage jobs? Will UI and welfare be changed into a wage supplement for employers?

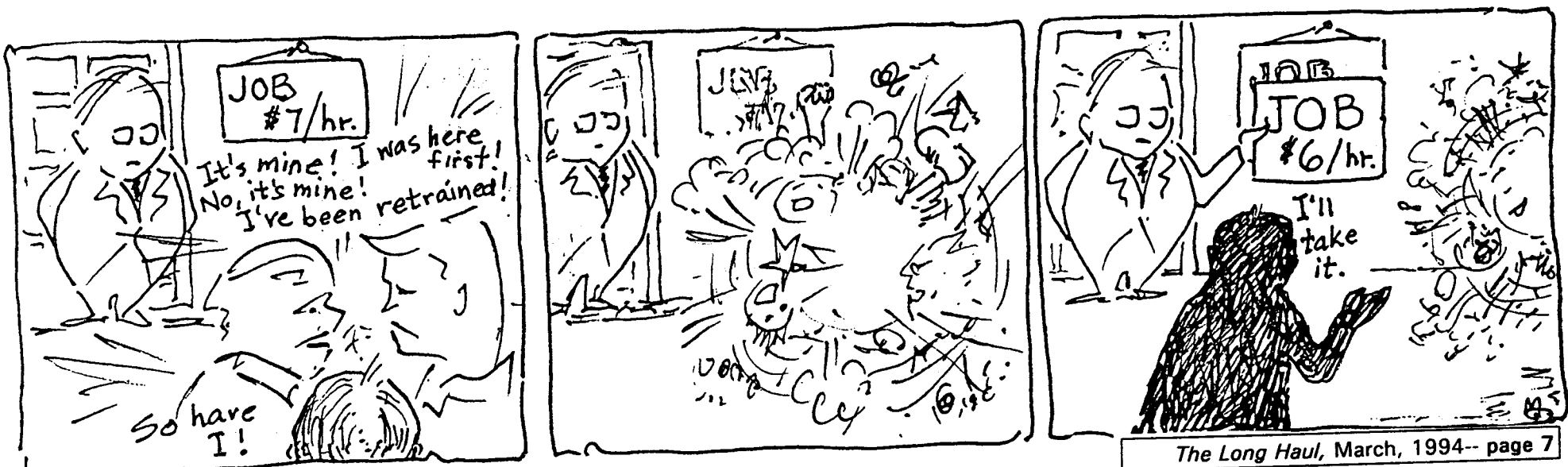
Will social program changes be used to create more cheap labour?

Who will benefit from social program changes? The "who benefits" question is very important to ask about all government changes. If social

programs are changed to force more people into the workforce, who will benefit? If social programs don't give people enough to live on, who

benefits? If social programs force people to train for jobs that aren't there, who benefits? If social programs give wage

supplements to employers, who benefits? You can use this drawing to help answer some of those questions.



FLAWLINE

FRONT LINE ADVOCACY WORKERS

Guidelines needed for recovery houses

~ by Linda Mix
Downtown Eastside
Residents' Association

In a letter to the Minister of Social Services, DERA organizers asked for protection that would enforce safe standards regarding recovery houses.

"I have had reports of so-called 'recovery facilities' in the Fraser Valley where residents have been physically assaulted into submission and reports of another house having regular outings to local strip bars as therapy."

In November, 1993, alone, at least 12 DERA clients brought complaints about so called "recovery houses". These clients have substance abuse problems, were seeking help to make an important and productive change in their lives, and ended up being the victims of scam artists who receive funding, indirectly, from the Ministry of Social Services. Oftentimes our hands are tied as these houses do not fall under any provincial or local jurisdiction, other than maybe having a license for "boarders".

The guidelines for "recovery houses" are not enforced, and almost any fly-by-night group or individual can rent a house and set it up as a "recovery" facility. In most situations brought to our attention, the residents have no legal rights because of loopholes in

legislation and the "recovery" houses have no legal obligations to the people who live there. These residents are vulnerable to unscrupulous schemes set forth by the operators, and do not get proper help with their recovery.

Franklin House, is no longer currently in operation as a recovery house, while its former operator is under investigation. The organizer allegedly, with only a month of sobriety, opened up a recovery facility, "counseled" his residents, collected their welfare cheques, and disappeared.

I have had reports of so-called "recovery facilities" in the Fraser Valley where residents have been physically assaulted into submission and reports of another house having regular outings to local strip bars as therapy.

There are no regulatory bodies to enforce standards for almost all recovery houses. There is no legislation under the *Residential Tenancy Act* as they are considered boarding houses.

The MSS has sent shelter cheques to these bogus operations, with no checks into credibility. If there is a problem, the residents of these houses are often left with no legal recourse, and must again deal with homelessness and a bureaucracy which sees them as lacking credibility.

We would like to see provincial legislation to enforce guidelines for the operation of recovery houses, regulatory boards to set standards such as qualifications and certification of staff, and inspection along the lines of legitimate, licensed recovery facilities. This will take time, but eliminate these unscrupulous and dangerous facilities.

The legitimate facilities, are beautiful. The Ministry of Health funds "residences" where the

counselors are certified, monitored, and "licensed through community care". There are also credible "recovery houses" and many have benefited by them, but be cautious that they are usually not monitored like "residences" are. For more information, see the Blue Pages,

under government of BC, "alcohol and drugs", or phone 1-800-663-1441. Someone receiving GAIN may ask their FAW for the money to cover the charged fees for a residence.

□□□

The Resolution of GAIN Appeals

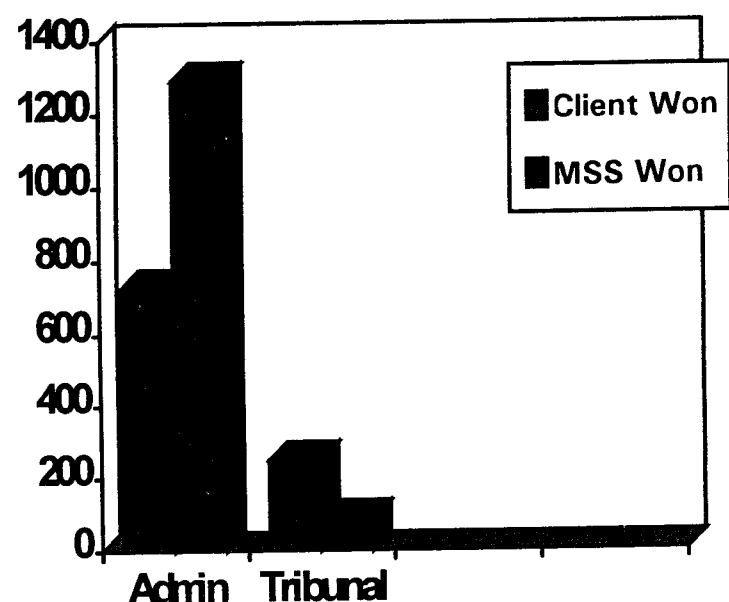
~ by William Kay

It pays for welfare recipients get an advocate and go to tribunal. Only about one out of every four people who lose at the administrative level, go on to tribunal. But of those clients who do go to tribunal, three out of every four win. In the 1992/93 "season" there were 2,355 appeals launched by BC welfare recipients, each resolved either at the administrative review level or tribunal.

review"
Of the 2,355 appeals: 2,017, or 86%, were dealt with at the administrative review level while only 338, or 14%, went on through the tribunal process.

Of the appeals taken care of at the administrative review level, the ministry won 64% while recipients won 36%.

However, recipients win more tribunals than the ministry does. Of the 338 tribunals, the ministry won 26% while clients won 76%.



Note that the 1291 appeals that MSS won at Admin Reviews could have been taken to tribunal where 3 out of every four clients have won.

The ministry won 1,373, or 58%, of these appeals.

A total of 982, or 42%, of these appeals were resolved in favour of the recipient

Of course not all appeals make it all the way to a tribunal. Some are dealt with at the "administrative

The proportions of wins and losses have remained more or less constant. What has changed is the total number of appeals which has doubled over the last 10 years. This can partly be accounted for by the growing numbers of people dependent on welfare. □□□

THE LAW
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

FLAWLINE

FRONT LINE ADVOCACY WORKERS

Federal budget attacks unemployment insurance

The Feb. 22nd federal budget has slashed at least \$2.4 billion from UI. According to the Canadian Labour Congress, most people who have to collect UI will lose thousands of dollars. Most claimants will have the length

of their claims cut by about three months.

"Never in the 54 year history of the Unemployment Insurance system have changes of this scope and magnitude been implemented without public notice, extensive

study and public consultation," says the CLC.

"The government has signaled that it would like to merge UI and welfare and transform both into some form

of workfare."

The CLC compared benefits in 1989 and 1994. The table below shows the difference.

□□□

1989

1994

Entrance

Variable 10 to 14 weeks;
Local employment rate used:
6% to 9%

Variable 12 to 20 weeks
Local employment rate
used: 6% to 13%

Part I

1 week of benefit for 1 week
of work to a maximum of
26 weeks

1 week of benefit for 2
weeks of work to a
maximum of 20 weeks

Part II

1 week of benefit for 2 weeks
of work to a maximum of 13

1 week of benefit for
every week of work over
40 weeks to a maximum
of 12 weeks

Part III Extended Regional Benefits

Benefits extended 4 weeks
for every percentage point
the local unemployment rate
is above 4% to a maximum
extension of 32 weeks.

Benefits extended
2 weeks for every
percentage point the is
above 4% to a maximum
extension of 26 weeks.

Quote of the Month

The message of the rugged individual is pervasive, with the poor being told they are responsible for themselves, and the rich being assured they are responsible for no one but themselves."

— **Armine Yalnizyan in Defining Social Security, Defining Ourselves**

Town meeting unites forty people

Forty people met at Vancouver's Carnegie Community Centre on March 10th to discuss the upcoming changes to the welfare system. Most of the people present are reliant on income assistant and were told about the town meeting by End Legislative Poverty during the welfare lineups on February 23rd.

"We're concerned that welfare will no longer be a safety net, but will be used as a club to beat people over the head to take ANY job," said ELP staff member, Linda Marcott. Linda tied BC's seven recent changes to welfare policy to what the federal government is doing. She described hundreds of people recently cut off from welfare in Alberta. Then she emphasized that unity and action are crucial for low income people to preserve what's left of BC's welfare system.

The federal government has been talking about replacing welfare and UI as we know it with a "guaranteed annual income" which sounds sweet on the surface but only offers \$3000 per year per adult.

David Mossop, a lawyer from Community Legal Assistance Services addressed questions about the changes to the GAIN Regulations. Many people took literature about the welfare regulations, advocacy and general poverty, and added their names to ELP's mailing list.

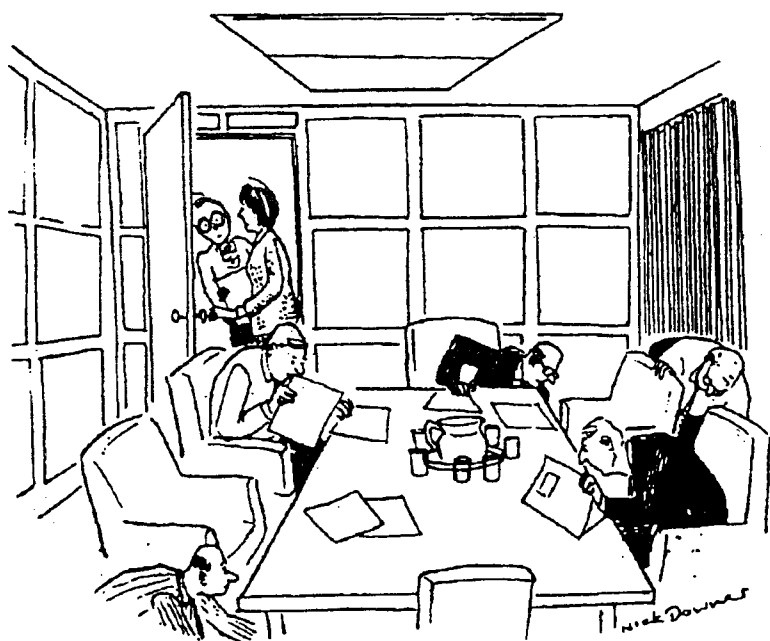
"We're concerned that welfare will no longer be a safety net, but will be used as a club to beat people over the head to take ANY job,"

Finally, people suggested actions that they could do in response to the changes. Write letters to newspapers, Sponsors, editors. TV. Radio. Linda wants people to meet with premier Harcourt and Minister of Social Services Joy MacPhail. People can contact Linda at ELP (604) 870-1229.

□□□

THE LAW
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Long Haul, March, 1994-- page 9

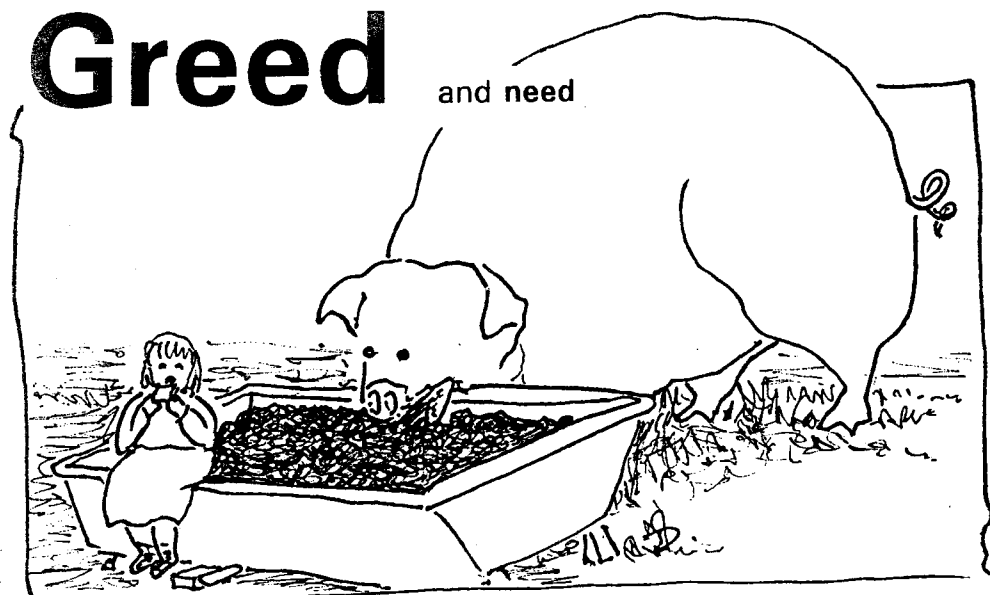


'They can't find their hidden agenda'

CALM 6-92

Greed

and need



Humour or is it?

Manage greed ELP tells government

In the recent budget Finance Minister Paul Martin promised provinces \$800 million to experiment with innovative social programs for the poor, people who use welfare and unemployment insurance.

End Legislated Poverty has written to Martin asking him to do similar experiments on how to modify programs and laws that benefit the wealthy and greedy, the richest 5% of Canadians who own 46% of the wealth.

The experiments could deal with questions like:

- ☛ Are wealthy people dependent on wealth? How can we reform the tax system to make the wealthy more independent?
- ☛ If tax loopholes for the wealthy were closed, would the wealthy continue to pass their wealth on to their children? Is greed generational?
- ☛ How would the behavior of the wealthy change if they could only write off \$261 per \$1000 of RRSP they buy (like low income people) instead of the \$481 they get now?
- ☛ If this law were changed, would the wealthy lose their incentive to work? The incentive to retire? Would they become couch potatoes and sluggards?
- ☛ Should tax policy provide a hand down, not a hand out to the wealthy?
- ☛ Would the wealthy have more self esteem if they worked for their money, rather than inherited it?
- ☛ Would counseling help the wealthy to escape from the culture of wealth?

- ☛ Is 46% of the wealth sufficient for the richest 5% of the population? Could they get by with 40%? Could they eke out an existence on 30%? How much would be left for the rest of us if they did?

At the conclusion of the experiments ELP would like Martin to give the results to a group of people on welfare and UI, and ask them to make recommendations to government.

Department of the ungreedy ELP thank you's

These people have helped ELP a lot in the last month. Many thanks to you:

On the Island: Cindy McLaren and the Blanshard Court women, Dorothy Livingstone, Cindy Barker, Steve Lewty, Donald Twa, Danielle Moon, Mac Scott, Bee Sack, Jenny Sommer, Lynn Tooley, Sarah Zammit, Rain Benson, Caroline Gagnon, Joop Schuyff, Dane Goulet, Mickey Smeele, Kevin McNamee Annett, Sandy Morley, Edith Adamson, Tracey Wong, Christine Elliot and the Campbell River rioters and Peter Robinson and the SaltSpring crew, Scott Kerr and Joanne Smids.

In Vancouver: Dave Ross, Dave Jaffe, Trish Hanna, Joan Holloway, Maureen Davis, William Kay, Lynne Melcombe, Sandy Cameron, all the people who worked on the welfare lines in February, and the Wages and Welfare committee.

INTERVIEW

Getting active is fun and interesting

Dave started volunteering with ELP last November. He helped organize and attended the Dec. 18th Justice not Charity event in December, helped organize for the Feb. 23rd cheque line up event, and volunteered handing out leaflets in cheque line ups. On March 7th Dave helped present ELP's brief to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development. Some of Dave's comments on this work follow.

"It's so refreshing not to feel marginalized and to feel that I can make some unique contributions."

"It was fun presenting the brief to the Committee on Human Resources. I realized that I can interact with politicians without having to talk up to them. Before I was involved in ELP I was sort of awed by celebrities. It's funny how relaxed we were before the presentation. We actually had to stop giggling before we went on."

"At the Dec. 18th event, it seemed like the politicians who were there felt guilty. The politicians of colour (Emery Barnes and Ujjal Dosanjh) seemed to relate to our message and our position faster than the others."

(On Feb. 23rd Dave spoke to the media about the cheque line ups) "I was really surprised when I let go of my fears. Some of the best stuff came out. It was pretty encouraging talking to people in the welfare lines. About half of them seemed to be pretty clear about political hype and don't believe the myths about unemployment being their fault. I guess we need a lot of people that are clear about this."

"At least if we can work together and respect each other, we can develop an immediate energy. I feel pretty optimistic for the short term. For me it's a break in all the poor bashing I usually have to deal with. I'm looking forward to being able to stay in this business."

"The middle and owning class seem to be in heavy denial. I'm trying to be less sexist. But they are denying that there is discrimination against people who are poor. Groups that aren't dominant, like poor people, can see two points of view. We can actually see more than the other group that only sees their own point of view. If we can get organized, we'll be more powerful."

Unitarian Church of Victoria focuses on social reforms

The Social Responsibility Committee of the Unitarian church in Victoria is very concerned about the federal process that is reviewing social programs in Canada.

Patricia Chauncey, ELP's Victoria staff person, presented the church with the framework of the review process and discussed both the ELP brief and the brief of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. The committee decided unanimously that the church would challenge the Canadian Unitarian Congress nationally to become involved and support the positions of ELP and NAC.

"Much of the other justice work the committee is attempting will be severely hampered if unjust reforms are imposed. The church is concerned that existing social programs like CPP, OAP and others, which many Unitarians fought for, will be lost," explained Dorothy Livingstone, a long time church leader.

Would you like *The Long Haul* mailed to you? If so send your name and address to ELP, #211 456 W. Broadway, Vancouver, B. C. V5Y 1R3. The Long Haul is free for low income people. If you can afford to send a donation, that would be great.

The landlord has the advantage

By Mike Walker

Landlords have considerable power over the lives of tenants simply because they own our homes. That's why tenants say that landlords should be closely regulated.

The Tenants' Rights telephone hotline gets hundreds of calls from tenants--especially women--asking what they can do to stop their landlord entering their suite illegally. We get hundreds more calls from tenants asking how they can get basic repairs done.

In many cases the next

question is: what if the landlord turns around and jacks up the rent? Since 1984 the answer has been to pay or move out.

We also need protection for B. C.'s supply of affordable rental housing.

More than 140,000 tenant households in B. C. pay more rent than they can afford. Over half of single parents and young people, and seniors have difficulty paying their rents.

Tenants in B. C. need

protection against rent gouging, property flipping and retaliation. We've been asking to get rent protection ever since Bill Bennett took it away in 1984. We want a system that protects our homes by rolling back unjust rent increases.

We don't want to drive small landlords out of business. We want protection for our homes. A landlord's rental business can fail and he can move his money into mutual funds. We have to keep on renting.

Mike Walker is co-ordinator of the Tenants Rights Action Coalition.

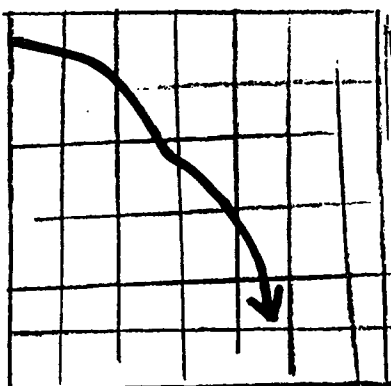


ELP plans to present protest letters to Harcourt

End Legislated Poverty collected a three inch stack of letters to Premier Mike Harcourt on Feb. 23rd. The letters were signed by people who had to line up to collect their welfare cheques on that day. The form letters protest about having to line up to receive welfare cheques.

"It's degrading and humiliating to have to pick up a welfare cheque in person," the letter states. ELP is now trying to arrange a meeting with Harcourt to present the letters.

1 9 9 4



CALM 1-92
MC

Things are looking up !

Army Navy workers may go on strike

Workers at the Army Navy Department stores in Vancouver and New Westminster may go on strike soon for better wages and working conditions. About 50 of the 200 or so workers make \$6.40 an hour, and the employer has only offered a 10 cent wage increase. Most of the workers would make less than the poverty line for a single person (about \$7.60 per hour) if they worked full time. But many work only part time. Only a few make over \$8 an hour (still less than the poverty line for a full time worker with one dependent).

Some of the workers and their union, the B. C. Government Employees Union, met with representatives of End Legislated Poverty, the Carnegie Community Association,

Neighbourhood Helpers, and the Downtown Eastside Residents Association on March 14th at the Four Sisters Co-op in Vancouver.

The Union was worried that if it went on strike people in the neighbourhood who shop at the store would have a hard time getting what they need--especially low cost food.

At the meeting people discussed alternative places to shop. The Union is considering having a shuttle bus for residents to take them to other stores if there is a strike at Army Navy. The community reps at the meeting supported the Army Navy workers. In fighting for better wages and conditions, the workers are trying to reduce poverty.

ELP HELPS! Legal and other info for low income people

Report quiet on minimum wage increase

The Provincial Government asked Mark Thompson to do a report on Employment Standards laws. These are laws about minimum wage, hours of work, vacation, overtime, and other things like this.

Thompson came out with his report on March 16th. Some things in it will be good for low income people. Some won't.

We desperately need an increase in the minimum wage. To be the same percentage of the poverty line today as it was in 1975, the minimum wage would have to be over \$9 an hour. Thompson didn't recommend that the minimum wage go up. He just wants it "reviewed".

Thompson did say that part time workers should get

the same benefits as full time workers. He did say that farm workers and domestic workers, taxi drivers, and homeworkers should be covered by Employment Standards.

The government can now look at the report. It may or may not make the report's recommendations into law.

Do you want to tell the government what you think about minimum wage or other laws about work? Write to

Dan Miller, Minister of Skills, Training and Labour
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B. C. V8V 1X4

You do need a stamp.

Help for low income people

These groups have advocates who will help you with legal and other problems. The advocates are people who will stick up for you. They are not lawyers, but they have experience with the law and with getting people their rights.

In the Lower Mainland

Downtown Eastside Residents Association
9 E. Hastings. Phone 682-0931. Open Monday through Friday.

First United Church
320 E. Hastings. Come Monday through Friday, 9 to 11 am.

B. C. Coalition of People with Disabilities
#204 456 W. Broadway. Phone 872-1278. Open 9 to 5 Monday through Friday.

Law Students Legal Advice Program
For help with a wide variety of legal problems. Locations throughout the Lower Mainland. Call 822-5791.

Tenant's Rights Coalition Hotline
Phone 255-0546

Legal Services Society
191 Alexander St. Open 9 to 3:30 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Open 12:30 to 3:30 on Wednesday. For help with welfare serious criminal problems or urgent family problems related to the law.

Federated Anti-Poverty Groups of B. C.
Phone 533-4818 for information and referral

Battered Women's Support Services
Crisis line is 687-1867. Provide free support groups, legal advocacy, and counseling

Langley Legal Assistance Centre
Phone 530-5811. Appointments preferred. Drop ins welcome. Provide help with welfare, landlord tenant, small claims, wills, etc. #204 20189 56th Ave., Langley.

United Native Nations
Phone 688-1821. Appointments preferred. Help Aboriginal People apply for status, get documents, and medical services. Help with welfare, child apprehension, etc.

Outside the Lower Mainland

Victoria: Together Against Poverty.
Phone 361-3521. Appointments preferred. One to one advocacy. Help with welfare, UI, landlord and tenant problems. Public education and organizing on poverty issues.

Terrace: Terrace Anti-Poverty Group Society
Drop in to Room 200, 4721 Lazelle Ave. Welfare, UI, landlord tenant advocacy. Help with applications for handicapped status, Canada and Old Age Pension.

Pt. Alberni. Pt. Alberni Womens Resource Society
Call 724-7111. Prefer appointments. Help with family court, women and children's counseling, transition house.

If your group would like to be listed in this section, call ELP at 879-1209.

Nelson: The Advocacy Centre
Phone 352-5777. Prefer appointments. Open Monday through Thursday 9 to 4 pm at #4 560 Baker St., Nelson. Help with welfare advocacy, handicapped benefits, custody and access, separation and divorce, child apprehension, sexual abuse, wife assault, and more.

Prince George: Active Support Against Poverty
Phone 563-6112. Help with welfare, resumes, filling out forms. Landlord tenant drop in clinic. Free clothing.

