

# Anti-Poverty Committee News

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April/May 2003 #11

## Welfare on Demand

### APC Launches Campaign Against Liberal's Welfare Laws

On April 1st, 2002, Bills 26 and 27 came into force, and the Liberal's set in motion the machinery for a social crisis. *The Employment and Assistance Act* and *the Employment and Assistance Act for People with Disabilities* are fuelling a rise in poverty and misery not seen since the NDP welfare cuts of 1997.

Murray Coell, the Minister of Human Resources, openly brags about "60,000 people who are now no longer dependent on income assistance. That is a twenty-four per cent drop in our caseload in one year." Over 14,000 people have had to reapply for disability assistance and have been forced to endure a long, complicated, and humiliating process. There are 50 confirmed suicides in the Province of BC, due to the stress and hopelessness caused by the reassessment ordeal.

The Liberals have also introduced the two year out of five time-limit for collecting welfare. BC has the distinction of being the only province to bring in this measure. These policies will generate ever increasing homelessness, unsafe working conditions, longer food bank line-ups, and a higher crime rates. By the end of another year we will see the full impact, by the social chaos in our streets and in our society.

Starting this April 1st, the Anti-Poverty Committee and its allies are launching a province-wide campaign to obliterate\* these laws. We will directly target those in power and we will use every method of struggle to stop this government from implementing this horrendous crime. It is our intention to place welfare at the top of the agenda and to actively involve every community in

*con't on p. 2*



## APC Action Update

### 7 Members Occupy Office to Protest Disability Reassessment

On March 13th, seven members of the Anti-Poverty Committee occupied the Health Assistance Branch in Victoria, in support and solidarity with people with disabilities who had two days left to send in their reassessment forms. They asked the workers to leave and then locked themselves in a back office. In seven minutes the riot squad arrived and broke down a door and a window. The occupants were sitting in a circle with their hands above their heads saying "we are not resisting, we are willing to go peacefully" when officers assaulted them, peppersprayed them and held a tazer gun near the head of one man. They were held for over 30 hours in jail covered in pepperspray. One member had to be sent to the hospital when the police did not believe that she needed insulin for her diabetes. The next day they were released with charges of mischief and some restrictive conditions.

### The Disability Reassessment

In October 2002, the Ministry of Human Resources informed 19,000 people with disabilities that they had to reapply for their benefits under a more restrictive definition by

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## Campaign Against the Liberal's Welfare Laws

Welfare on Demand

Immediate End to Disability Reassessment Process

End the Three Week Wait for Welfare

End the Two Year Time Limit

Obliterate Bill 26 and 27

Repeal the Entire Liberal Legislative Package!

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## APC Welfare Campaign

*con't from the front page*

the province that wants to confront this government. We will be working with other community and advocacy groups to draft humane and equitable welfare legislation, as a concrete alternative to the Liberal agenda. We will be mobilizing the poor and working class this April 1st at our annual People's Picnic – an action that will directly target those implementing and benefiting from the welfare policies of this government. We will follow up with a large Welfare Campaign meeting for poor people and their allies on how we can work together to fight this government.

An integral part of this campaign is to directly challenge these laws with every possible tactic and strategy. This includes renewing our commitment to direct action casework – actively mobilizing to defend the interests of people when they are cut off welfare, evicted, or being denied benefits. The Anti-Poverty Committee will be holding a press conference, on Monday March 31st, to launch the APC Welfare Campaign.

- Anton Pilpa

\*obliterate - to destroy or remove all traces



March 5th, 2003, The Disability Coalition at the Anti-Olympics March

## The Disability Reassessment

*con't from the front page*

January 15th. Due to community, and advocate outrage and protest, and the threat of being held publicly accountable for thousands of people who are too seriously disabled to return their forms, the Minister exempted 5,000 people with mental health disabilities, and changed the deadline to March 15<sup>th</sup>. People with cognitive impairments and other extremely severe disabilities were still forced to complete the 23-page form. By March 15<sup>th</sup>, 3000 forms were still missing so the Ministry postponed the due date again to March 20<sup>th</sup>.

While the Ministry promises that those people who are eligible for the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation will continue to receive the highest rate of assistance, the recent provincial budget showed that the Liberals are slashing the Ministry of Human Resources by \$255 million and the Ministry of Children and Family Development by \$136 million. Both these Ministries are responsible for the province's most vulnerable people. The reassessment itself is costing four million dollars. At the same time a leaked Ministry of Human Resources communications plan said that the government expects that more than 9,000 people will be kicked off disability benefits after their cases are reviewed. Murray Coell refuses to recognize and acknowledge that over 30 people have died as a direct result of this review process.

The Ministry promises that clients who return their forms after March 15, and are ineligible for the PWD designation, will continue to receive their current rate of assistance until June 15<sup>th</sup>. But after that they will be reduced to basic welfare and lose their enhanced medical benefits, bus pass, housing, and access to basic dental care. If they wish to appeal their reassessment they have 20 days to inform the ministry of their intent to appeal and provide new information for their case. The ministry is unclear if this "new information" means enduring another reassessment process by a qualified doctor. The Health Assistance Reconsideration Unit will review this new information and make a decision. If the reconsideration is in favour of the client, the PWD designation will be granted immediately. If the ministry decision is upheld, the individual may proceed to the independent Appeal Tribunal for a final decision. No new information may be submitted at this time; however, the individual may call witnesses to support their position. What is frightening is they have changed the appeal system so that the tribunal panel will no longer be able to consider whether the Ministry has made an error in law in its decision, as well government workers, not health professionals will handle the appeal.

The truth is that the stress, despair, and anxiety caused by the disability review process is just beginning for people with disabilities and their advocates, as we wait for the letters to be sent out to the estimated 9000 people. APC continues to confront and take what ever means necessary to hold this government accountable, and we are inviting all people with disabilities, people on welfare, advocates and supporters to join in the Welfare on Demand Campaign.

- Megan

2 stop the disability reassessment!

# All Out Against the Olympics

The Anti-Pov-erty Committee signed on to the Gloves Come Off Campaign against the 2010 Vancouver/Whis-ler Winter Olympic Bid. Our members were part of the many actions put on during the In-



ternational Olympic Committee Tech Team (IOC) visit between March 1st-5th. The last thing the IOC saw of BC was the APC march on March 5th . The over 250 strong crowd was made up of the disabled community (14,000 are facing benefit reassessment), Indigenous people (BC is untreated sovereign land), Hospital Employees Union members (BC government is firing 4000 women hospital workers), APC members, anarchists, the homeless, and others. After speeches from Indigenous allies, APC and the HEU, we snake marched to the Pan Pacific Hotel where the IOC was staying.

The crowd yelled: "NO OLYMPICS ON STOLEN NATIVE LAND" & "IOC GO HOME." Racist gold medalist, Nancy Greene-Raine wants to build a \$550 million ski resort at Sutikalh (Cayoosh Mountains north of Whistler) to go along with her Sun Peaks resort at Sk'wel'wek Welt. The 2000 Sidney Games was caught expropriating indigenous lands. At the Pan Pacific, we blocked traffic and APC and its allies gave more speeches about the deteriorating conditions in our communities while our governments hype ridiculous sports Games. The Housing Action Committee said they were going to fight homelessness. APC said that if the government will not build social housing we will take action this June during a National Housing Campaign. People on disability expressed rage about changes to the Disability Benefits.

The march then headed up Georgia and blocked a major intersection at Robson. We made a circle, held hands and received blessings from our Indigenous allies as rush hour yuppies honked horns and the police remained confused. Telquaa and Rose asked the Spirit to protect us all and change the minds of the IOC.

Afterward we dispersed in groups, with many of us being followed by police on bicycles. This action was a positive sign to APC as it was our first major mobilization in four months. The crowd was large, loud, diverse and willing to push forward and escalate the movement. - Joey Only

## Legal Defense Update

The APC's Legal Defense Committee continues to meet regularly to discuss strategy and legal support, and to plan ongoing support for APC members, supporters, and other activists under attack by the state for their political activity.

The "Airport 3," APC members arrested at Vancouver International Airport on January 21 for protesting the deportation of an Iranian refugee and her adult son back to Iran, have been to the Richmond Provincial Court on five separate occasions. At this time, Justin, Calvin and Randy all have lawyers. The three are charged with "assaulting a peace officer" and "aiding escape from lawful custody," potentially serious charges which could lead to jail time if they're convicted. This is nothing compared to what Iranian deportee Kobra Nateghi and her son, Hassan, could face in Iran, a country notorious for torture, executions and practicing extreme forms of discrimination against women.

So far all court appearances have been routine. No trial date has been set nor have the three been asked to enter pleas. We have received good support from the com-

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WELCOME TO CANADA ...

- Illustration by Trevor

no olympics on stolen native land!

## Legal Defense Update

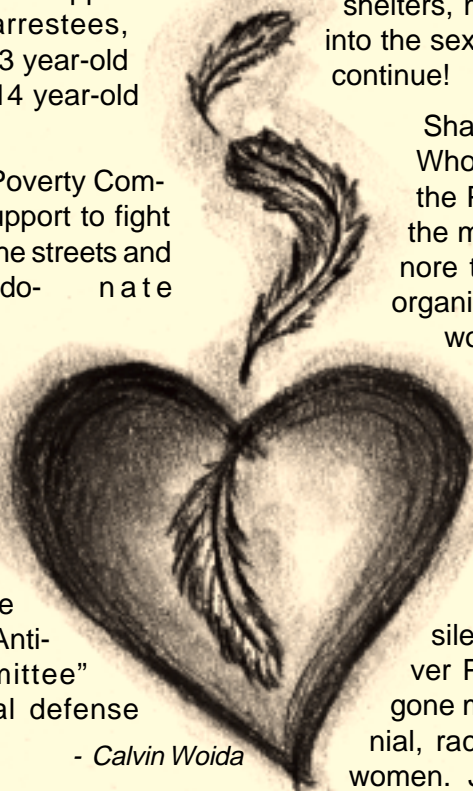
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munity. Messages of solidarity have come from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the Montreal and Vancouver "No One is Illegal" groups, the Vancouver International Solidarity Movement and others. APC members and anti-deportation activists from the Iranian community have all made the long trek out to Richmond to attend court.

The APC Legal Defense Committee is also supporting the "Britannia 9," the anti-poverty and community activists arrested during last year's "Britannia Police Riot" when Vancouver cops went berserk, assaulting and arresting people protesting Gordon Campbell speaking in working class East Van, a neighborhood reeling from the Liberal cuts to welfare, education, health care, and housing (the protestors succeeded in having the speech cancelled!). The APC has offered material and moral support to the Britannia arrestees, who include a 63 year-old Minister and a 14 year-old boy.

The Anti-Poverty Committee needs support to fight on all fronts: in the streets and in the courts. To donate to our Legal Defense Fund, please send whatever you can afford to the Anti-Poverty Committee. (please make checks out to "Anti-Poverty Committee" and write "legal defense fund" on it).

- Calvin Woida



## Women's Memorial March: "Their Spirits Live within Us"

On Friday, February 14th 2003, the 12th annual Women's Memorial March was held to remember the women who have been murdered and are still missing from the Downtown Eastside (DTES). Today, women continue to be murdered and go missing in the DTES, in other parts of Vancouver and throughout British Columbia. Family members made speeches at the Carnegie Community Centre and then we marched around the DTES. Women left roses and tobacco and cited prayers at places where women were last seen, or had lived. Women from the community also made speeches outside of the police station and at ceremony in Oppenheimer Park. Afterwards there was a feast at the Japanese Hall.

As I walked, I remembered the news coverage from the night before on home invasions and on how to protect your home. I thought about how much more property is valued over the lives of human beings, especially if the people involved are largely poor, Aboriginal, sex-trade workers or drug users. To me, this march is always one of the most important ones that I attend over the year. It is a time where I remember my own and other women's experiences of violence. It also challenges me to commit myself to working in solidarity with Indigenous struggles, when I see again, so clearly, the devastation of ongoing colonialism. It also reaffirms my commitment to the class struggle.

This year as I walked, I thought about how many more women will be added to the list of those that are already dead or missing, because of the Liberal cuts. With cuts to women centers, welfare, legal aid, childcare, shelters, many more women will be left homeless, destitute and forced into the sex trade in order to survive. We cannot allow for this situation to continue!

Shame on the police who do not take the lives of women seriously! Who ignored people, who years before the police started to look at the Pig Farm, were telling them about Robert Pickton! Shame on the media who distort the realities of the DTES and who largely ignore the stories of the murdered and missing women! Shame on organizations like NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) who force sex trade workers into more dangerous locations by pushing them further into isolated areas and into sketchy alleys! Shame on the government, for its brutal policies that entrench women in poverty! Shame on the continued colonial, racist, misogynist and classist attitudes which allow for these women to be murdered and continue to be missing with little outcry from mainstream, police and government institutions!

We must stand up with and for the voices that have been silenced. We need to demand a full public inquiry into the Vancouver Police Department's investigation of all the women who have gone missing in the DTES. We must also demand an end to the colonial, racist, classist and misogynist ideals that fuel violence against women. Justice for All!

- Lisa Wulwik

# HAC Takes Fight Outside the DTES

## DA Casework Update



On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003 the Housing Action Committee held its first public demonstration. Although we have picked many fights and won in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) – such as removing fire doors that had been walled shut – for the first time we took our struggle outside our community and made our demands to a higher power.

Our target was Prime Minister Jean Chrétian who was speaking at a homeless shelter the same day the International Olympic Committee was in town. Knowing this to be a token gesture for the Olympic bid we made our demand simple: SHELTERS ARE NO SOLUTION. SOCIAL HOUSING NOW!

Over 50 HAC members who are homeless, squatters, or residents of hotels, made this demand loud and clear with the solidarity of a fist full of supporters. Given the fact that most members are persecuted by the police on a regular basis, taking to the streets in a confrontational way shows the possibility for escalation.

The next fight outside the DTES, to where there were no goon squads paid by hotel owners to beat us, was to city hall to demand they pass a bylaw against hotel guest fees. Guest fees are part of a large extortion racket between hotels and welfare; most hotels charge between \$10–25 per person per visit. Although blatantly illegal, according to the Residential Tenancy Act, this robbery is conducted in an institutionalized manner with no interference from the many powers that be. This is why we were forced to attend the city council meeting uninvited to demand a municipal by-law prohibiting the unreasonable charging of guest fees immediately.

We face many struggles, on many fronts in the DTES and in all poor working class ghettos. We refuse to remain isolated and silent while our brothers and sisters suffer. We know that only together can we fight back and win; so we organize in our streets, our shelters, and our hotels. We will pick our fights and win them, by all means necessary. - David Cunningham

**HAC meets at the Lifeskills Centre on Tuesdays at 2pm  
at 412 E. Cordova across from Oppenheimer Park.**

An APC member was illegally evicted from his home on February 7th by his landlord, Peter, who owns the Mr. Sub at Broadway and Renfrew. APC shut down that Mr. Sub on three different days demanding he give the APC member TWO MONTH RENT AND DAMAGE DEPOSIT. The landlord's building is not properly zoned to have tenants.

The landlord stubbornly refused to comply, instead he lied to the police, and threw out the member's belongings. The police then arrested the member on false accusations. The tenant is now destitute.

We will be entering a second phase of action against this landlord. If you would like to be on call for an APC flying squad call us at 604-682-2726. We mobilize around welfare, housing and in other emergencies.

- Joey Only

## Free to be

The gov't did this  
Uncertain unrest  
The lame the elderly the distressed

Believed deceived  
The black flag once again is flying  
To do as supposed  
What is gov't work though but don't

Crime is time lost  
That is the cost  
Organize for free resist  
We will win

Refrain then the same  
So to them as all say "HEY"  
Gordo Campbell this ain't 'bout  
games  
Agreed  
Go get a (steady) job

- Taum

social housing now!

5

## HEU Update

Five HEU members suspended for standing against Liberals

The Anti-Poverty Committee sends a message of solidarity and support to the five executive members of the Hospital Employee's Union who were suspended by Children's and Women's Health Centre for taking a stand against the privatization of healthcare.

On January 28th, one year after the Liberal government tore up the HEU contract and initiated the privatization of health care, about 4,000 HEU members, as well as several other unions and APC, held information pickets at various hospitals and attended a march and rally downtown. The hospital administration suspended five HEU members for not reporting to work on time and taking part in putting up an "illegal picket line."

One HEU member received 5 days suspension without pay. The chairperson and one shop steward received a 2 month suspension without pay. The Secretary Treasurer received a 3 day suspension and another executive member received a 10 day suspension. At VGH there were some one day suspensions given to laundry workers but in most cases members just got warning letters.

The Provincial Health Services Authority and the Coastal Health Services Authority are poised to fire 5,000 HEU members in housekeeping and food services and replace them with workers that will earn half their wage with little or no benefits. Most of these workers are women and many have held these jobs for over 20 years. This will be the largest mass firing of women in Canada's history, and this is just the beginning: if the Liberals continue with this agenda, many more union members will lose their jobs as they continue to implement their agenda to privatize more services within hospitals.

- Megan

## The Liberals & UBC Pushing Workers Down

In February, Martha Piper, the President of UBC, invited members of all three union locals on campus to an "open forum" on the labour dispute. She defended her 65% raise and the tens of thousands of dollars that UBC spent on ads promoting their side of the dispute. When a CUPE 116 member got up to the microphone he reminded Martha of a talk that they had a while ago about her home of Ohio, and what had happened at an university called Kent State when the university administration and the state had got out of hand. He reminded her that four students were killed simply for standing up for their rights.



*March 14th, 2003, UBC CUPE members cutting up a coffin representing the death of democracy after the Liberals passed legislation taking away their right to strike.*

by almost 60% over the last two years. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, CUPE 2950, the clerical and library workers, started a rotating strike because the university refused to agree to pay equity. At UBC, like most places, workers in female-dominated jobs still make less than workers in male-dominated positions. The University is also pushing to privatize some services and kick unions off of campus.

After three weeks of noisy, disruptive picketing the university tried to get an injunction to shove the strike off campus. They claimed that the university is private property. After the courts failed them they went to the best known union-busting goon squad, the BC Liberals, who in record time passed a bill which forced university workers back to work and made the strike illegal.

At five am the next morning union members, faculty, and students shut down the entire campus in a "political protest" against the Liberal's undemocratic legislation. At noon over a 1000 people rallied at the main gate of the university. The next day 3000 people again shut down all the gates of the school and marched throughout campus in defiance of the Liberals and the university administration. The unions refuse to back down from their demands for tuition relief and pay equity and are fighting against privatization.

What is scary is the lengths this government and it's institutions are willing to go. On Friday morning two women from CUPE 2950 were taken to the hospital when a car accelerated into the picket line. One women's arm was covered in the license plate numbers of cars that had hit her. A non-union construction worker beat up a union member with a hammer after he took a picture of his car. The Liberals deliberately put workers in harm's way and we know when violence, harassment, and poverty increases for workers, it only gets worse for welfare recipients, refugees, the homeless, and the unemployed.

- member of  
CUPE 2950

# HISTORY OF DIRECT ACTION CASEWORK IN VANCOUVER

In 1932 the government set up work camps all over Canada to deal with the masses of unemployed men.



For slave wages, the unemployed men built highways, planted trees & dug up rocks in horrible conditions

Three years after the start of the camps, the Department of National Defense recorded 360 occasions of strikes, riots, demonstrations & disturbances.



Half of these were in BC.

In April 1935, the Relief Camp Workers Union called a strike. 1600 men left the camps & hopped trains to Vancouver



They set up a strike headquarters at 52 1/2 Cordova in the Downtown Eastside & elected committees for publicity, health, relief (welfare) & finance. When the unemployed were refused relief or medical care a whole committee would accompany the person to the welfare office or health clinic & demand they be looked after.

Once a committee was sent to stop the eviction of a family & the auction of their furniture for back rent.



The committee stopped the auction then went into the house & barricaded the doors.

The cops came to the door & threatened to drive them out with tear gas.



A large crowd gathering on the street stopped the cops.



They were almost always successful.

Finally the landlord, who was also a city councillor, arrived. He came up to the window, shook his fist & screamed at the occupiers inside.

One man inside yelled back:



The landlord & the cops left.

For a week a few people stayed with the family after which the Relief Camp Workers Union called it a Victory!



defeat this government!

# What is APC?

The Anti-Poverty Committee is an organization of poor and working people, who fight for poor people, their rights and an end to poverty by any means necessary. The poor face constant attack under the capitalist system and these attacks have only intensified under the BC Liberal government.

The BC Liberal's brutal policies - the cuts to welfare, the six dollar training wage, the privatization of public services, the cuts to social programs, the restriction of democratic and human rights - all are designed to transfer wealth from poor and working people to the rich and powerful.

APC is committed to fighting the brutal policies of the BC Liberals through direct action, mass mobilization, and casework. We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of oppression. APC is an independent and democratic organization open to anyone who agrees with our basis of unity. We are committed to working in solidarity with the struggles of other progressive movements—locally, nationally, and internationally—to end poverty and injustice.



- Illustration by Peter Kuper

Problems with Welfare, your Landlord or Boss?  
Maybe you need Direct Action Casework...

Contact the Anti-Poverty Committee

tel: 604-682-2726 fax: 604-687-4347

email: [apc@resist.ca](mailto:apc@resist.ca)

42 Blood Alley Vancouver, BC V6B 1C7

(between Water & Cordova, off Carrall in the DTES)

Office Hours: Mon-Fri 10am - 6pm

Check out our new website:

<http://apc.resist.ca>

## APC Events

2nd Annual People's Picnic  
at the Premiers

Tuesday, April 1st 6pm

Food, Music, Speakers

4464 W. 12th Ave

Meet at Pigeon Park at 5pm for a  
bus or take the 99 B-line and get  
off at Sasamat

Walk 4 blocks south

Turn left on 14th.

APC Radio Special

May 7th 6 - 8 pm

Tune into Vancouver Co-op  
Radio (102.7 FM)

Focus is on our Welfare and  
Social Housing Campaigns.

## Other Events

No One Is Illegal

Demo at the Border

Saturday, April 5th

Meet at Guilford Public Library in  
Surrey at 11pm or at Grandview

Park on Commercial Dr. in Van-  
couver at 10pm for the bus to  
the Peace Arch border crossing

604-682-3269

[naii\\_van@hotmail.com](mailto:naii_van@hotmail.com)

Actions Against the War

Ongoing peace camp at

US Consulat, Thurlow & Hastings

For upcoming actions look for  
posters around town or check  
out: [www.stopwar.ca](http://www.stopwar.ca)

## Get Involved...

APC General Meetings

Every other Tuesday, 6pm

April 8 & 22, May 6 & 20

Childcare and Coffee

327 Carrall Street

(beside Pigeon Park)

8 stop the war! stop the deportations!