

Anti-Poverty Committee News

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May 2004

#18

Hope Village fights for the right to sleep in peace

Hope Village council took their proposal for a "legal" tent city to city hall on Thursday, April 22nd. The city's response was to be expected. After hearing from twenty supporters, most who are homeless, city council still could not seem to understand the absolute need to shelter people.

The COPE council kept passing the buck to the federal and provincial Liberals, telling us it was our responsibility to lobby for social housing. We do not need to be reminded of our struggle with the Liberals. The APC has been fighting tooth and nail against the Liberals for years. We have resorted to what ever it takes to fight for the right to sleep in peace from the slum landlords and the scum politicians.

Representatives from the United Native Nations articulated the reality behind the statistics in regards to aboriginal homelessness. Out of the 1200 people who live with absolutely no shelter night after night it is the aboriginal

people who are most represented. It is the aboriginal people who are most to be homeless out of the 131,000 at risk of homelessness in Vancouver and a significant share of aboriginal people at risk are under the age of 10.



Hope Village went to the library for COPE's Annual General Meeting

Representatives from CUPE addressed the concerns of unions across the country. Cuts that create homelessness are passed in conjunction with anti-labour bills. The two, working off each other to undermine collective bargaining and lowering wages and standards. CUPE BC's executive council passed a motion endorsing the need for a tent city to provide subsistent shelter for the more than 6000 people turned away from shelters in 2002-2003.

The Anti-Poverty Committee continues to work with the Hope Village council, who are now in negotiations with city staff. To acknowledge homelessness as a national disaster is more than a token gesture. The catastrophe of homelessness is atrocity that must be ended by all means available. We will not stop struggling until everyone has the right to sleep in peace. **To check out the Hope Village Proposal go to the APC website: <http://apc.resist.ca>**

Safe Streets Safe For Who?

Another wave of assault on British Columbia's poor and homeless communities is gathering momentum in the ivory towers and boardrooms of Vancouver's and Victoria's business improvement associations. This new vanguard is the Safe Streets Coalition (SSC). These executives and power brokers like us to see them as the white knights of their "movement." They paint a picture of a coalition of selfless concerned citizens who fight the good fight against the swelling tide of aggressive "beggars" and squeegee kids who threaten to unravel the good, clean fabric of our otherwise spotless, happy city.

The coalition is proposing legislation that would further toughen and broaden the definitions and punishments for panhandling and squeegeeing. They are also pushing for an amendment to the Trespass Act that could in essence legitimize red zoning: a completely unconstitutional tactic favored by police in the DTES where "consistent trouble makers" are banished from areas where they live and access social, health, and welfare services.

"People in British Columbia are increasingly challenged and intimidated by the disorder in our neighborhoods and on our streets," says Kathi Thompson, the chair of the SSC. (Who is also the chair of the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association and a top executive at Terasen Gas, formally BC Gas.) "The SSC was formed to encourage the government to provide communities, the police, neighborhood groups and business with the ability to pro-actively deal with aggressive and disorderly behavior."

Ms. Thompson is of course drawing attention to the gangs of bloodthirsty beggars that have been seen roaming the cities downtown core. Pillaging pockets of nickels and dimes at record rates and cleaning car windows with reckless abandon. Gangs that have, in her opinion it seems, remained unscathed by the provinces recent, sweeping welfare cuts and the cities' Project Torpedo that penetrated the Downtown Eastside with vicious tactics and increasingly scandalous beatings. Never mind, she would say, that this city has an ever

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refuse to retreat!

Dissent Members and HEU Fight IWA Local

On Saturday March 27th, about eighty IWA millworkers from around the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley, members of the Hospital Employees Union and the Anti-Poverty Committee protested outside the executive meeting of the IWA Local 1-3567 in Langley, BC. The leadership of 1-3567 is under increasing pressure from CUPE and HEU as well as dissident members in the local, for acting more in the interests of the BC Liberal government, than its own or other union members.

In December the leadership of IWA Local 1-3567 were implicated in a raid on a Vancouver sawmill where sixteen members of Local 2171 say they were assaulted. They are also complicit with signing a sweetheart deal with G&H Noble, a Surrey Sawmill owned by the brother of union local's president, Sonny Ghag. The workers at G&H Noble saw their wages cut by 35% and they lost language in their collective agreement protecting them from contracting out.



Protest outside executive meeting of IWA Local 1-3567

As well, the leadership of IWA Local 1-3567 has been signing "partnership agreements" with Compass Inc., Sodexo, and Aramark, the multinational corporations who the BC Liberals have contracted to do the work previously performed by HEU members. The IWA agreements have lowered wages almost 50%, down to \$9 an hour.

In 2002, both the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) adopted policies to dissuade other unions from entering into such agreements because they would undermine the existing the Hospital Employees Union established relationship to the work, even if it was contracted out. The IWA claimed that they were just unionizing non-union workers. The HEU, CUPE and other unions filed official complaints against the IWA to the CLC, but the CLC president, Ken Georgetti, said there was nothing he could do. Only last week after 1-3567 signed another partnership agreement, did the CLC finally invoke sanctions against them. But now IWA has announced that they are planning on merging with the United Steelworkers of America, a large American union with over 600,000 members, so the CLC sanctions will not have much effect.

But HEU and the dissent members of 1-3567 have not given up the fight. Every protest against the 1-3567 executive gets larger and there are over 800 members on a petition calling for the resignation of the Sonny Ghag. Since April 25th, HEU has been out on strike. Despite the hardship HEU members have faced over the last two years they are still on the frontlines, struggling against privatization and for the rights of all workers in BC.

Safe Streets: Safe for Who con't from the front page

increasing security presence, in the form of a small army of private security firms, the Downtown Ambassadors and Loss Prevention Officers who already go to great lengths to curb panhandling and squeegeeing, and of course it is of no consequence that these miscreants have no affordable housing and that they are denied even the right to live in tents in unused parks. So sensitive and pro-active to the plight of the city is Ms. Thompson and the SSC.

In the coming weeks the Anti-Poverty Committee will begin two separate initiatives to:

1. Educate and inform the public about the proposed legislation
2. Expose and target individuals and businesses that are actively involved in the Safe Streets Coalition.

Poor and homeless are not being encouraged or assisted in getting off the streets with this legislation. We are being forced to just go away. But we know that the people that would have us disappear into the cracks have names and addresses.

We will, in the coming weeks make our presence felt. We will use any means necessary to stop the proposed Safe Streets legislation. You say we are aggressive and intimidating? Well, we say that you ain't seen nothing yet.

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 case-work. 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.

Get Involved in APC

APC General Meetings

Every Tuesday, 6pm, 327 Carrall in the DTES beside Pigeon Park Childcare and coffee provided

Donate

APC relies on donations from individuals & organizations. You can make a cheque out to the Anti-Poverty Committee.

Another New APC Office

APC is moving again.

Our new office will be located in the DERA office at:

12 E. Hastings
Vancouver, BC

V6A 1N1

Office hours are Mon-Fri 10-5

New APC website:
<http://apc.resist.ca>

no justice on stolen native land!