

Anti-Poverty Committee News

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Tent City: Refuse to Retreat

For four months now the Victory Squat has stood strong. While enduring attacks from all levels of government and the police, the Tent City continues to provide safety and solidarity for those most brutalized by the BC Liberals. Throughout all the small struggles waged by the squatters the two demands remain the same: social housing for all in need and end the welfare time limit immediately!

Over 25% of Vancouverites qualify for social housing but still there are no units available. The federal Liberals have not invested a cent since 1993 and it was a top priority for Gordon Campbell and his thugs to scrap any new plans for decent housing. At this time COPE has done little to nothing to deal with our housing crisis. Although they own the Woodward's building, they are planning on making only 100 out of the 450 units into subsidized housing. This is an insult to those of us who fight for social justice. The people fought for Woodward's and Woodward's belongs to the people.

We demand Woodward's be given to those in need. All of it! COPE must provide the units and the Liberals must subsidize them. The necessity of social housing has been highlighted by the Liberals threatening to steal the cheques of welfare recipients this April 1st. If they are allowed to carry through with their welfare time limits, the crisis poor people live and die through already will intensify. Their strategy of throwing tens of thousands of men, women, and children off of welfare and into a rapidly depleting job market, makes good business sense for the Liberals' financial backers. Within the onslaught of cuts, privatization, the six dollar training wage, the tearing up of contracts and all other crimes perpetrated so far by the Liberals, adding thousands to the ranks of homelessness will drastically undermine the working classes' power in bargaining.

Gordon Campbell is dead

set on going through with the welfare cuts regardless of the cries coming from the poor. Gradually the people of this province are beginning to understand the consequences of this upcoming catastrophe. They are studying statistics and making reports. Political parties like the NDP who threw women and children off of welfare and into the streets during their reign are saying NO to the cuts. Politicians that long abandoned the poor are saying NO in meetings not attended by the poor. Almost everywhere, everyone is saying NO but NOTHING is being done.

The Liberals have already thrown at least a hundred thousand people and families off of income assistance, why now the sudden attention?

Because poor people are fighting back! Before the construction of the Victory Squat by the APC, the welfare time limit wasn't on anyone's political Horizon. We forced the people of this province to take a stand. The squatters have stood for four months, victoriously fighting for their rights and dignity. Welfare recipients have mobilized marches through the financial district and sent flying squads into welfare offices. Advocates are participating in direct action casework, different organizations have formed coalitions and are creating collective strategies to destroy the two year time limit!

APC has been active in all these things. Where poor people are struggling we stand with them, not in sympathy but militant solidarity! We are becoming a fighting force to be reckoned with and need everyone's support. The real time limit is how long until the working people of BC say "ENOUGH! We refuse to retreat! We will fight together. We will fight to win!" When that time comes we will defeat the Liberals and create a real movement that will destroy oppression.

United we will win!

APC stands with Cheam

The Anti-Poverty Committee stands in solidarity with the Cheam First Nations People's right to their land. We demand, in solidarity with Cheam First Nation People that the British Columbia government and Cattermole Timber immediately leave their land. We support all actions necessary to meet this demand. The Cheam people have the right to sustain themselves and their communities and maintain their tradition and way of life. The plan by Resorts West to develop a massive elite ski resort is deplorable, inhumane, and against all laws, sacred and judicial. This plan would destroy the Cheam's ability to practice their traditional medicine and affect their ability to hunt and would dominate their sacred mountains. We demand the Cheam retain their land and the ability to continue their traditions on their land. The Anti-Poverty Committee will work by any means necessary to support the Cheam Nation's claim to their unceded and rightfully owned territory. There are Anti-Poverty Committee members at Cheam and we are able to send others, for more information on ongoing actions and leafleting contact APC at apc@resist.ca or tel:604-682-2726 or fax: 604-682-2752. - Tony

Cheam Update

On October 30th, the defenders of Elk Creek, scattered saw dust, the remains of a Cheam First Nation sacred site, throughout the office of Cattermole Timber in Vancouver. APC member and native forest defender, James Mickelson explained that, "This is also an answer to Cattermole Timber's campaign of physical intimidation against peaceful forest defenders, and to the politicians who refuse to take steps to resolve this issue, or even engage in dialogue . . . Your thug tactics will not keep us from voicing our opposition and from acting against this injustice."



On October 2nd, 2003 members of the Cheam Nation and their supporters blockaded the CN railtrack.

Safe Site: Six Month Success

The user-run injection site announces its victory and success in operating a peer-driven supervised injection site for six months.

Since April 7, 2003, the User/Peer Group has successfully operated a supervised injection site and drop-in centre for the people of the Downtown Eastside. The site was opened to:

1. Address the dire and largely ignored health needs of injection drug users in the Downtown Eastside
2. To put direct pressure on all levels of government to establish a supervised injection site in the DTES
3. To protect drug users and people who live in poverty from the Vancouver Police Department, who initiated a large-scale crackdown on residents of the DTES – a crackdown that has had severely negative health impacts for drug users, and their access to essential health care.

Community members, drug users, and other supporters of harm reduction opened the site where drug users could inject drugs safely, have access to sterile injecting equipment, access medical attention as necessary, and escape police brutality. Despite repeated harassment from the Vancouver Police Department, the site operated for six months from 10pm to 2am, 7 days a week.

The preliminary results from our evaluation of the site shows that the site provided an important public health and community benefit. During the past six months, a total of 3614 injections were safely supervised at the injection site, and on average, 194 sterile syringes were distributed during the four hours of operation each night. Three hundred and forty-nine different individuals accessed the site, 87% of which were people who previously injected in public spaces – a practice that has been shown to be associated with a high risk for disease transmission, overdose, and other health-related harms. In addition, no overdoses occurred during the operation of the site.

The site, unlike the newly opened government-run site, maintained a community based user-run format, and was able to accommodate all those who came to use the site including the 12% of visitors who came to the site requiring assistance with injections.

While we support the opening of the government-run site, we want to emphasize that the new site is, in many ways, unlike the community based user-run site that we operated for the last six months.

We are now very concerned about the well being of many individuals, particularly women who require assistance with injection, who now have no place to inject safely. Therefore, we are urging the Vancouver Coastal Health to adopt the peer-based format that we successfully implemented at the user-run site. Our experience has demonstrated this format is feasible, safe, and the most effective way to accommodate those most at risk.

Our experience at the user-run site has also further confirmed the findings of recent research studies that have revealed the severely negative effect that the Vancouver Police Department's crackdown is having on access to health care, and the health of individuals living in the Downtown Eastside. Throughout the operation of the user-run site, attendance and access to sterile syringes fluctuated substantially in accordance with the level of police interference. The police repeatedly parked cruisers outside of the site, harassed those trying to access the site, and on one occasion entered the site illegally, without due cause or an appropriate warrant. Due to escalating police threats and harassment and under threat from the City of Vancouver, we were forced to close 327 Carrall User Run Injection site, sadly we know this will come at the cost of drug related harm to our sisters and brothers. We thank all our supporters and all the volunteers who worked night after night at 327 Carrall. We will continue to organize as a peer group and fight for the rights and dignity of drug users and those who live in poverty.

If you would like to get involved, contact Megan Oleson at The Anti-Poverty Committee.

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.

Get Involved in APC

APC General Meetings

Every Tuesday, 6pm, 327 Carrall in the Downtown Eastside beside Pigeon Park

Childcare and coffee provided

APC Office

The APC Office is located in the Shelly Buiding at 108-119 W.

Pender across from Tinseltown
Office Hours: M-F 10-5

Donate

APC relies on donations from individuals and organizations. You can make a cheque out to the Anti-Poverty Committee and send to 108-119 W. Pender St. Vancouver, BC V6B 1S5



On October 10th, 2003, two police officers broke into the user run safe site and changed the locks on the doors to try and intimidate and deter organizers, volunteers, and users of the site. The opening of the site was only temporarily delayed while a volunteer sanded off the police's locks from the doors.