

The Assembly to End Poverty



By the Assembly to End Poverty
Organizing Committee

Several Victoria-based organizations, including the Capital Region Race Relations Association, the Status of Women Action Group, the Together Against Poverty Society, the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group, and the Victoria Anti-Poverty Coalition are organizing and hosting the Assembly to End Poverty to be held in Victoria, January 31 to February 2, 2003.

The Assembly to End Poverty was initiated because we believe that the struggle to end poverty is at a critical historic juncture. Here in BC the "New Era" policies of the BC Liberal government are seriously jeopardizing the health and lives of hundreds of thousands of low-income individuals and families. The life and death urgency to end poverty is greater than at any time since the Depression of the 1930s and yet the current efforts are uncoordinated and woefully inadequate. All over the world people

face increased deprivation, the threat of economic meltdown, and ecological degradation. As vested interests continue to serve their own interests, the marginalized and dispossessed are pushed to the brink of survival.

The aim of this assembly is to build a more active and effective end-to-poverty movement in BC. It will be a province-wide assembly, but will address the diverse realities of poverty in a local, provincial, national and global context.

The Assembly to End Poverty is oriented to those already active in the movement (low-income folk, advocates, activists), allies and potential allies.

We hope to generate informed debate, mobilize collective action, and inspire solidarity among participating individuals and groups. Our specific goals are:

- ♦ to learn about and present the diverse realities of poverty;
- ♦ to enhance our collective understanding of the root causes of and solutions to poverty, and to discuss alternative frameworks for

understanding the causes of poverty;

- ♦ to find our common ground and/or differences in order to determine who can collaborate with whom;
- ♦ to create stronger ties among people around the province who are working for social justice, health, equity, and environmental sustainability;
- ♦ if possible, to reach an agreement on a written declaration on the end to poverty;
- ♦ to create a collective strategy and regional action plans that include both short-term and long-term solutions; and
- ♦ to determine who will undertake specific actions to end poverty.

Over the course of the assembly we can learn where the end-to-poverty movement is, where we need to go, how we will get there, what the impediments to an effective movement are, and what actions we are willing to take. Even if we find diverse views and disagreements on the causes, solutions and strategies, at least we will know where we stand, where we can work together, and where there are divisions. An assumption that we all have the same understanding as to the causes of and solutions to poverty could be just as much of an impediment to effective action as open disagreements.

At the very least we hope that the Assembly to End Poverty is the beginning of a solidified end-to-poverty, pro-social justice movement here in BC that will work to ensure the health and well-being of people and the planet.

Help Needed

- ♦ volunteers for fundraising, publicity/outreach, logistics and more

- ♦ financial donations
- ♦ food donations

Registration

Registration is free, but space is limited so register soon. Billeting will be arranged for out-of-town participants.

To register, volunteer, donate or for more information contact:

Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group
 Phone: (250) 721-8629
 email: endpoverty@vipirg.ca
 Web: www.vipirg.ca/endpoverty

Mailing address for donations:

**Assembly to End Poverty
 Box 8484
 Victoria, BC V8W 3S1**

The End to Poverty Primer

The End to Poverty Primer is a collection of over 50 writings presenting diverse views on the realities and causes of, and solutions to, poverty. It includes articles from First Nations', women's, and third world perspectives. It has been enthusiastically received and is intended to stimulate thought and discussion to further the work of the assembly. If you would like a primer mailed to you, send \$5.00 to "Assembly to End Poverty" at Box 8484, Victoria, BC, V8W 3S1 or pick one up (suggested \$3.00 donation) from the Victoria Status of Women Action Group, #130L - 645 Fort Street, or the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group, B120-122, Student Union Building, University of Victoria.

A Guaranteed Adequate Income

By Robert Arnold

The Liberal government of this province says it wants to make the provincial economy strong. In my opinion, they are doing the wrong things to make this happen. It has been illustrated in other jurisdictions that many of the things this government is doing depress the economy and create havoc in the streets, thereby discouraging business and investment.

Encouraging private investment and business merely makes rich people and their companies richer. It does not do as much to make the provincial economy strong, as they would have us believe.

If you want to make the economy strong you must encourage business by creating more demand for goods and services. You need a market before you create the goods and services to meet the demand. Businesses that meet a demand are successful. Businesses that have little demand to meet fail.

So the question becomes, "How do we create the demand for goods and services so that business has a market?" The answer is simple: create consumers. This does not mean giving good consumers or rich people more money with which to consume, because giving money to people who are already good consumers does nothing toward the goal of creating consumers. It just allows rich people to consume more, and much of the time they spend that money in places like Hawaii or Cancun, or put it in offshore accounts.

To create consumers it is necessary to give money to people who are not good consumers. The only real reason a person is not a good consumer is that he or she cannot afford to be one. That person is a poor person, who can only afford, if they are lucky, food and shelter.

I am suggesting we give money

to poor people, who will spend it right here in our own economy, not in foreign economies, and who will not take it out of the country to avoid taxes, as certain rich families have done. We will create a greater demand for goods and services here, thereby creating more jobs producing and providing the goods and services, and a larger tax base.

The oft-heard objection to this plan is that the people who will be given this money will not contribute to society. This, of course, is nonsense. We already have more than enough people producing goods and services, or we would not have such high unemployment. Furthermore, the people who get this money will be contributing by consuming, and in many other ways, some of which may well be productive.

The present government of BC is either stupid or is lying to us about what they want to accomplish. I suspect it is lying to us. What they really wants to do is privatize as many government functions as they can so that they and their friends can make money from them.

What they should do is raise welfare rates to the poverty line and let the poor into the marketplace. That would increase economic activity. The government could do this by raising taxes on the rich and their corporations and making them actually pay the taxes. They could allocate funds differently as well. Paying millions to get the Olympic Games to come to British Columbia is not a reasonable way to allocate money.

We must educate the public and our politicians about this situation and demand they comply with our wishes. It is time to end the Reign of Terror in this province. It is time for the government to stop using Economic Terrorism to further its ideological goals.