

Ten Years is More than Enough!

Need Fightback vs. Attacks on Workers and Poor, Falling Taxes and Olympic Profiteering for Rich

First they spend 10 years giving billions in tax breaks to rich friends, to the banks and to the corporations. Then, over seven years, they ladle out billions of working people's tax dollars to Olympic profiteers.

All the while, Gordon Campbell's Lie-berals and their corporate backers say a government shortage of money means they must brutally cut back the health, education, and social services working people depend on. They did it again in their March 2 provincial budget.

They (and their media) dishonestly downplayed this most recent brutality by saying it was a hold-the-line budget, even some funding hikes for health and education—oh, and \$320 million in cuts to various ministries.

But the planned disappearance of 3,500-4,000 government jobs (more than eleven per cent) over the next three years means the services those workers provide will also disappear, causing more hardship and misery for people who need these services.

And Corporate Campbell KNOWS the "hikes" for education and health will not be nearly enough to cover both existing cash shortfalls and increased costs due to inflation and other causes. So, in fact, the budget imposes further cutbacks and will mean more school closures, more layoffs, and more loss of health services.

Of course, there are a few more cuts for destitute welfare recipients and the disabled, while there is still nothing for the homeless or to reduce BC's child poverty (the highest in Canada for six years running).

Nor are there any wage increases for public sector government workers (most locked at zero for two years with union leaders' pre-bargaining consent). And zip for rural communities, imploding around mill closures, beetle-damaged forests, and failing fisheries.

Oh, but the poor Lie-berals are out of money, and can't get any more, they say—even though the

budget provides a few new tax cuts for banks, the business tax breaks slated for coming years are left in place, and \$1.5 billion in new subsidies go to the oil, gas, and mining industries.

So working people, especially the poorest among us, have to suffer some more—they say. **Do you believe?!**

SCREW THAT! We need to start re-building a province-wide, all-inclusive fightback movement—inside and outside trade unions. Whether we're currently lucky enough to have jobs or not, BC

working people have to get moving again, as we did in 2004. We have to join the few, brave anti-poverty fighters and Native activists who have kept alive some visible, public opposition to Corporate Campbell in recent years.

And we need to start thinking once more about preparing ourselves to use our most powerful weapon—a general strike across BC! It may take a while to build up to that, especially since we now know that a handful of union leaders will try to derail tens of thousands of members who are ready to fight. But we also know that nothing short of a general strike will stop the attacks and begin to restore what we have lost.

In presenting the lie-filled provincial budget as economically necessary, the newly-penniless Campbell and his business buddies are continuing a tradition of dishonesty that we should all be getting used to!

- They announced \$10 million in cuts to vulnerable kids and families on the eve of the Olympic circus after just spending a fortune to haul cubic kilometers of snow to Cypress Mountain by truck and helicopter.
- When they couldn't fund hospital beds or decent wages to caregivers for seniors, youth at risk, and the mentally challenged, they had funds for a much-needed speed-skating oval in Richmond—and to fly a back-up Zamboni from Calgary.



- Pleading poverty as the reason for school closures, they had lots of bucks for a new curling rink.
- Unable to afford livable welfare rates, they could shell out for lavish, international Olympic advertising, a new highway, and a new SkyTrain line. (Every poor person in BC could be raised out of poverty by \$1.6 billion, 20% of Olympic costs—Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).)
- Promises to protect and increase housing for the homeless were breezily broken as hotels and rooming houses in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side and elsewhere were allowed to close, and subsidized units in the Olympic Village shrank from 33% to “possibly” building some on “adjacent” land in the future.
- High-profile land claims treaties with a few Native bands have glossed over the accelerated promotion and exploitation of other unceded—and often disputed—Native lands for resource extraction, resorts, and suburban/residential development.
- Government’s initial cost estimates for the Olympics magically escalated over tenfold to \$7-8 billion, while projected economic benefits to Vancouver and the province puzzlingly shrank over 80% to \$1 billion.
- Oh yeah, and they also lied about not tearing up labour contracts and about not implementing the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)!
- Etc., etc., etc.

So, the social spending cuts, and the pain and suffering they cause, are unnecessary. But Corporate Campbell and Co. are determined that we all shall learn that government money is not to be squandered on us. It is to be given to corporations through the Olympics and other boondoggles. Or, even better, it is to be left in corporate coffers in the first place through tax cuts. And all the gains of working people over the last 75 years—improved healthcare, education, wages, working conditions, and social programs—are to be taken back.

BC working women and men should NOT learn this lesson.

Instead we should be coming together to re-launch the fightback struggles of 2001-2005. We need mass demonstrations to show the government (and each other) how increasingly many of us oppose them. We need repeated acts of civil disobedience to disrupt “business as usual.” We need union locals and labour councils once more becoming hotbeds of discussion and planning for resistance. We need rejuvenated, action-oriented community coalitions that include all stripes of working people and our allies—union members and the unorganized (remember we ALL used to be unorganized), the employed and the jobless, citizens and immigrants, all colours, shapes, sizes, genders, and sexual orientations.



Unfortunately, the union leadership in the BC Federation of Labour and in most of its major affiliates (who have not organized a mass protest rally for FIVE YEARS) are not likely to initiate any of this or support it organizationally and financially once it gets going.

But that leaves the rest of us! We are many! And many of the many know how to organize. Let’s do it!

In the wake of the provincial budget and years of a militancy vacuum in BC trade unions, **The Prepare the General Strike Committee** (active in BC from 2002 until 2005) has been tentatively re-activated by a few former members. Anyone interested in pitching in can contact Gene McGuckin at 604-254-1421 or emcg3@telus.net, or Shane Calder at 250-590-2665 or enahs.redlac@gmail.com. If we get enough help, we will re-launch our website. We, the working class can do this! Join us.