

B.C. ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS VANCOUVER SEA TO SKY BRANCH

PRESS RELEASE

Social Workers with the B.C. Association of Social Workers, Vancouver Sea to Sky Branch, are deeply troubled by the "rethinking of government" announced January 17, 2002. It appears to us that Premier Campbell has decided to balance his tax relief to the rich by taking away extremely important social and financial resources from the most vulnerable members of our communities: the poor, children, people with disabilities, and low income seniors and families.

Campbell promised a "New Era for British Columbians". We see now that this new era was only for the wealthy. For many British Columbians, Gordon Campbell's new era will mean:

- ◆ No audio books if you are blind or shut-in and have a low income;
- ◆ Inability to gain job experience and a bit of extra money if you are receiving disability benefits;
- ◆ No bus pass if you are a low income senior;
- ◆ Inability to afford full-time child care if you can only find a minimum wage job;
- ◆ Possibility of being cut off welfare if you can't find a job;
- ◆ A decrease in your meager welfare income if you are between 55 and 65 years of age and unable to find a job and your E.I. has run out;
- ◆ If you are victim of crime, you probably will get no help;
- ◆ Legal aid? probably not;
- ◆ If you are a woman and being abused and don't know where to go, that's your problem;
- ◆ Can't adequately feed or look after your children? Too bad....
- ◆ Child with special needs? Don't ask your government for support.

Welfare benefits now only cover 45 - 65 % of the actual cost of daily living, according to a recent report (December 2001) published by SPARC of B.C. The rate of child poverty has increased in all parts of Canada. One in every five children is poor, and life for poor children in B.C. has just gotten worse. We know that poor children have a much higher likelihood of experiencing health problems, dropping-out of school and becoming impoverished adults. The short-sighted and punitive actions taken by Gordon Campbell's "Liberal" Government will cost British Columbians in the future with increases in crime, mental health problems, broken families and children in crisis.

Premier Campbell, who exactly will benefit from your "New Era"?

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