

December '94 • • • not just another newsletter!

DEMO GIVES AXWORTHY AN EARFUL

Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy got an earful from the social justice community recently, even though he'd tried to avoid hearing from many of us. Axworthy's Standing Committee on social policy "reforms" was in town for three days at the end of November. Many social justice groups believe the "official" hearings are a farce. Chretien's Finance Minister, Paul Martin, had already announced he'd cut over \$7 billion from social programs long before the hearings even began. Over a dozen groups representing seniors, students, women, labour, and churches made their points in a November 21st "Shadow" hearing that was organized by the Unemployed Workers' Council (UWC). Their views were incorporated into a brief and presentation to the Standing Committee by the Labour Council on December 1st.

But the real action took place when over 300 demonstrators organized by the UWC invaded the Ball Room of the Royal York Hotel where the "official" hearings were taking place. Spokespersons for various sectors which took part in the demonstration used the opportunity both outside the Royal York and inside the hearing room to tell the government in no uncertain terms that we were not going to stand for further cuts to social programs.

The demo and invasion got excellent media coverage, and helped pass a strong message to the federal government. Our thanks and congratulations to all those whose efforts made the event a tremendous success.

SOCIAL PROGRAM CUTS FOCUS OF '95 FIGHT

The Social Policy Reform Action Group (SPRAG) of the MNSJ is developing community workshops designed to educate community activists around the planned social policy "reforms" and the upcoming federal budget. The workshops also represent a major focus for the MNSJ's economic literacy work group which has joined forces with SPRAG for the foreseeable future - at least until we've passed the federal budget period. A special sub-group was struck recently to develop the workshop, and we will soon be training facilitators and looking for venues to put on the workshops. If you're interested in any aspect of this work, call Ann Curry at 469-1123.

"Fighting for Canada's Social Programs" is the theme chosen for the Labour Council's '95 year book and directory. The theme will also carry through to the '95 Labour Day Parade. In addition, defending social programs will also be the theme of the International Womens' Day demonstration and celebration which will be held on Saturday, March 4th beginning at Convocation Hall of the University of Toronto.

STUDENTS' STRIKE PLANNED

The Canadian Federation of Students is planning a national students' strike for January 25th. Already on board are a number of universities and community colleges. A number of high schools

have also expressed an interest. The students are angry over the whole range of social cuts proposed by the federal government, not just those which will directly impact on students. It's a remarkable display of solidarity with other groups, and the students deserve support.

Other social justice activists can show solidarity with the students by joining them at 5:30pm on January 25th, the day of the strike. They'll rally in the rotunda of Toronto's City Hall and march to the Toronto Stock Exchange - a symbol of those in our society who don't pay their own way. If you'd like to help organize the strike or related activities, call the CFS at (416) 925-3825.

MNSJ STEERING COMMITTEE TO TRAVEL

In an effort to be more accessible to member groups who may wish to attend meetings, the MNSJ Steering Committee will meet at different locations throughout Metro in the new year. Bookings are under way for Etobicoke, Scarborough, and North York. We'll note the precise locations in future newsletters and hope that member groups will take the opportunity to join us.

CORPORATE TAX FREEDOM DAY

Each year, various right-wing organizations make a to-do about Tax Freedom Day, a day some time in July after which Canadians are no longer working to pay their year's taxes. Last year, the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice (OCSJ) observed Corporate Tax Freedom Day. It comes somewhat earlier. Corporations have finished paying what they regard as their share of taxes by January 26th. Last year the OCSJ held a pig race where animals representing prominent corporations raced one another to the trough. A similar event is being planned by the OCSJ for this January. If you're interested in participating, call OCSJ Co-ordinator Catherine Goulet at (416) 441-3714.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Membership fees to the MNSJ for 1995 were due on October 1, 1994. Although our membership is growing, so are our costs, and the fee of \$100 per organization has not changed for more than three years. As a result, the finances of the MNSJ are such that we can no longer afford to mail this monthly newsletter to organizations which have not joined the MNSJ or to individuals who have not contributed financially.

Consequently, beginning in January, we must delete those organizations and individuals from our mailing list unless we receive a request to do otherwise. Please send these requests with an application to join MNSJ and the fee of \$100 for 1995. Individuals are asked to donate a minimum of \$25 to cover costs for 1995. These fees can be reduced by special arrangement.

Organizations will be sent one mailing, and mailings to additional individuals within an organization will be treated as individual mailings. Cheques should be made out to the MNSJ and mailed to the Social Planning Council, 2 Carlton St, Ste 1001, Toronto, M5B 1J3. If you have questions about any of the above, please call Bill Howes at (416) 441-3663.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS & MEETINGS

Listed below are meetings & events of interest to activists in the Metro area. If you have additions for the calendar, please fax information to Bill Howes at fax 445-8405.

Dec 14
Dec 14

MNSJ Social Policy Reform Action Group meets
Forum: Impact of NAFTA on Health & Safety

1995

Jan 5
Jan 17
Jan 25
Jan 26
Jan 26
Jan 27-29
Jan 31
Jan 31
Feb 7
Feb 28
March 4
March 8
Sept 30

MNSJ Metro Budget Work Group meets
MNSJ Steering Committee meets
National Students' Strike & Toronto Rally
Corporate Tax Freedom Day
MNSJ NAFTA Work Group meets
COMER Conference
OCSJ Monthly Meeting
Lunar New Year - Year of the Boar
MNSJ Steering Committee meets
MNSJ Steering Committee meets
International Womens' Day March
International Womens' Day
MNSJ Annual General Meeting

UPCOMING MNSJ MEETINGS

Steering Committee - Tues, Jan.17, 9:30am. Location to be confirmed. Contact Bill Howes, 441-3663.

Social Policy Reform Action Group - Wed, Dec.14, 6-8pm at 2 Carlton St, Ste 1001. Contact: Bill Howes, 441-3663.

NAFTA Work Group - Thurs, Jan.26, 7:30pm at the Native Canadian Centre, 16 Spadina Rd. Contact: Peggy-Gail DeHal-Ramson, 925-4386.

Metro Budget Work Group - Thurs, Jan. 5, 19, 9:30am, 2 Carlton St, Ste 1001. Contact: Zeenat Janmohamed, 538-7630.

THE SQUEEZE ON SOCIAL PROGRAM CUTS

Squeeze Productions will present "**THE SQUEEZE**", a new Canadian political farce, opening January 6th and running till January 22nd at Tarragon's Extra Space, 30 Bridgman Avenue, in Toronto. **THE SQUEEZE** is a sharp-edged comedy about the deficit and social program cuts, written by Ruth Biderman and directed by Jennifer Brewin.

The play tells the story of a well-intentioned young man who stumbles in to the office of the "Ministry of Social Welfare" hoping to prevent the massive program cuts that have been announced. He's befriended by a bureaucrat and an "image consultant" and together they conspire to dupe the chief economist. Mayhem ensues, with the incompetent and self-serving politicians, bureaucrats and business-people all spoofed in a frenzy of mistaken identities, lost documents, stolen spectacles, and constant intrigue in which the public inevitably comes out the loser.

Squeeze Productions is an artist-run co-op formed for the this play. The artists are members of Actors' Equity, and the co-op operates with Equity approval. For tickets call the Tarragon Box office at (416) 531-1827.

POLICY PAPER ON SOCIAL PROGRAMS

If we're to successfully fight the social policy cuts that are planned by the federal government, we've got to have our facts straight. And there's an important new paper that will help. It was produced jointly by the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, the Child Poverty Action Group, and Citizens for Public Justice.

Entitled "**Paying for Canada: Perspectives on Public Finance and National Programs**", the paper argues that cutting social programs to reduce the deficit is not the road to follow. It represents a major resource for any organization which is concerned by the federal social policy review. Copies can be obtained at a cost of \$5.35 each from the Social Planning Council by calling 351-0095 or faxing your request to 351-0107. If your organization is interested in having a speaker on the social policy "reforms", call Janet Conway at 351-0095.

UFW UNVEILS "GREEN" BINDERS

ETG Specialty Advertising, the marketing arm of the United Farm Workers, has announced the availability of new, environment-friendly 3-ring binders. The binders are made of "enviroplast", a new non-polluting plastic-like substance. It's landfill safe and non-toxic when incinerated, unlike PVC which contributes to acid rain. Profits from ETG sales go to fund the organizing work of the United Farm Workers. If you'd like more information or prices, call ETG's Jeanne Mak at 241-3919.

MNSJ ACTIVIST MOVES TO HOLY TRINITY

Brent Patterson, formerly with the John Howard Society, will join the staff of Holy Trinity Church effective January 2nd. His work will involve promoting strategies for social change as well as MNSJ activities. Brent has been active for the past year or so with MNSJ work around the Metro elections. We wish him well in his new work.

WANTED: DESK-TOP FOLDING MACHINE

The Social Planning Council, which publishes this newsletter, is in desperate need of a desk-top size folding machine or a hand-operated collator. If you can donate one, it would be greatly appreciated. The SPC already has a large folding machine (Pitney-Bowes, heavy-duty Model FM), but they haven't got the space for it. If you'd like it, perhaps in trade for a smaller model, please give Barbara Wooley a call at the SPC: 351-0095.

On the topic of contributions, this newsletter is in danger of extinction due to lack of funds. If your organization can help with the mailing of this newsletter with either paper or postage contributions, Barbara desperately needs to hear from you.

HOLIDAY WISHES TO ALL

From all of us on the Steering Committee of the MNSJ to all of our readers, a safe and peaceful holiday season with wishes for a happy new year in 1995. We also wish a happy Year of the Boar to the Chinese and Vietnamese communities who celebrate the lunar new year on January 31st.

