

Hike to End Hunger and Homelessness

A 220 km journey for social justice beginning in Hamilton June 3 and walking through Ancaster, Brantford, Cambridge, Kitchener/Waterloo, Guelph, Acton, Georgetown, Brampton, Malton, Etobicoke and Toronto.

Towards a Caring, Compassionate Society

Why We're Walking

We are walking to protest the causes of hunger and homelessness, from Harris government cutbacks to the corporate greed which values ever-expanding profits over people's lives.

We are your neighbours, members of your community. We have jobs, we are unemployed, we are church members, we are families, we are single individuals. Some of us are currently homeless, and others are always a pay-cheque away from the streets. Most of us are fortunate to have a roof over our heads and a decent meal each evening. Others must scrounge for the bare necessities.

We are united, however, in reaching out to you, to speak out, to get involved, to become active in the struggle to end poverty in this province, not simply by dropping canned goods at a

food bank, but by working to create the kind of society where food banks and hostels are no longer needed.

Currently, 345 billionaires possess the equivalent wealth of more than 2.5 billion of the planet's poorest people. In Canada, 1% of Canadians own 86% of all assets and collect 75% of all profits. Bank Presidents "earn" in a day what their full-time employees make in a year. Inequalities such as these must be addressed and stopped if we are ever going to end injustices such as hunger and homelessness.

This walk is a journey for social justice, a pilgrimage, a step in the direction of the world we want: a world where all are fed, housed, treated with respect, a world where our resources are shared by all, not by just a small group of super-rich who force the majority of the world's population to suffer the pain and outrage of poverty.

Please join us.

The Spoils of Greed: Harris' Ontario

- The policies of the Harris government violate the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which guarantee everyone "an adequate standard of living...adequate food, clothing and housing, and [the right] to continuous improvement of living conditions."

- Following social assistance cuts made by the Harris government in 1995, food bank use soared from 250,000 to 375,000 people: a 50% increase.

- The Harris government recommended a \$90-per-month food diet for victims of the cuts which provided only half the daily nutrition recom-

mended by the World Health Organization and Health and Welfare Canada. If this diet were fed to prisoners of war, it would be considered a crime of war under The Hague and Geneva Conventions.

- During the week of May 15, 1997, only 204 jobs—most of them minimum wage—were posted at the Canada Employment Centre for the regions of Waterloo, Wellington, and Perth. Over 30,000 people were searching for work that same week.

- A recent Hamilton study shows regional quality of life has decreased by 12% in the past two years as more and more people are forced to rely on

over-stretched social services.

- Despite the fact that male violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women, the Harris government has slashed funding for women's shelters and programs to assist battered women, forcing many to return to violent men.

- Metro Toronto is the child poverty capital of Canada.

- The Harris government cancelled 390 non-profit housing projects which had been approved by previous governments. Meanwhile, hostels are over-full, and the homeless face freezing to death on city streets.

Don't Trust Corporations With Your Livelihood...or Your Life

- As of 1994, 81,469 corporations with combined profits of \$17.1 billion had paid not one cent in income tax.
- Over the previous 12 years, corporations with over \$167 billion in profits paid no income tax.
- Canadian corporations have deferred more than \$40 billion in unpaid taxes, interest free.
- Average 1995 compensation for a Canadian CEO: \$800,000
- Average 1995 Canadian industrial wage, including overtime: \$22,500.

"Things are going so well in the stockbrokerage business that luxury-car dealers can't keep up with the raging demand from Bay Street wheeler-dealers eager to flaunt their newfound wealth." Toronto Star, 9/27/96.

- In 1995, TD Bank's Richard Thomson received \$3,372,804, 230 times the salary of an average bank worker's \$14,653 wage. Statistics Canada's income for a single person at the poverty line is \$15,175.
- According to Statistics Canada,

pre-tax corporate benefits between 1991 and 1995 were up 89.4%. By contrast, worker wages (including benefits) increased only 10.5% in the same period.

- Who carries the tax load? During the "good years" of post-war financial growth, (ie, 1954), taxpayers handled 60% of the load, and corporations 40%. In 1994, Corporations accounted for 10%, taxpayers 90%.

- In 1996, The Royal Bank, the Canadian King of Greed, (profits of \$1.43 billion), gave its top six executives (all men) the equivalent pay of 577 full-time bank tellers earning \$21,000 annually! For example, Tony Fell, RBC Dominion Chairman pulled in \$4,802,000 (weekly salary of \$92,346.15)

To get involved, listed below are a small number of the many organizations working on these issues:

Hamilton

SHAIR International Resource Centre,
(905) 528-9055

McMaster OPIRG, (905) 525-9140 x27289

Kitchener/Waterloo

WPIRG (Including K-W Food Not Bombs)
(519) 888-4882

The Working Centre (519) 743-1151

Metro Toronto

FoodShare (416) 392-6653

Low Income Families Together (LIFT)
(416) 597-9400

Toronto Action for Social Change
(416) 651-5800

Lovecry (advocates for Street Youth)
(416) 406-3295

Two Excellent Publications

Ten Deficit Myths (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives) (613) 563-1341

Unfair Shares: Corporations and Taxation in Canada (Ont. Fed. of Labour), (416) 441-2731

The Hike to End Hunger and Homelessness is a project of the Ontario Coalition for Non-Violent Action. To make a donation or to reach us, we are c/o Toronto Action for Social Change, P.O. Box 73620, 509 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M6C 1C0. (416) 651-5800; (905) 627-2696; (519) 836-6633.

Hike Community Partners include: Toronto Action for Social Change; Ontario Omnibus Alliance; Hamilton-Wentworth Coalition for Social Justice; Brian Swords; Foodshare; OPIRG-McMaster; Peace Studies McMaster; Jane McDonell and Anne Murray (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary); Canadian Auto Workers; Peace and Social Action Committee (Toronto Friends Meeting). Community Sponsors: Federation of Metro Tenants Associations; The Welcome Inn; Guelph and District Labour Council; Hamilton and District Labour Council. Endorsers: Hamilton Against Poverty; Interfaith Witness for Social Justice and Compassion; OCAP Kitchener; Media Collective; Fred Chase, Secretary Treasurer, IWW; Food not Bombs Toronto; SHAIR.

Non-Violent Resistance to Injustice

"If greater gains have not been won by non-violent action it is because most of those trying it have...expected too much from "the powerful"; and so, I would add, they have stopped short of really exercising their peculiar powers—those powers one discovers when one refuses any longer to do another's will. They have stopped far too short not only of widespread nonviolent disruption but of that form of noncooperation which is assertive, constructive—that confront those who are "running everything" with independent activity, particularly independent economic activity. There is leverage for change here that has scarcely begun to be applied." Barbara Deming.

The Hike concludes with a non-violent resistance action: the eviction of the Harris cabinet and conversion of Queen's Park to a Free Child Care Centre. We will hold a training session in Toronto June 15 for those interested in taking part. There are hundreds of forms of non-violent action that do not involve sitting in a spot until you are dragged off by the law. The Hike is intended to discuss some of these many other forms of resistance which involve going outside of or beyond the "acceptable limits": the reclamation of unused, community lands for non-profit housing or community gardens; the boycott or simple refusal to patronize corporate chains in favour of local, accountable small businesses; the sharing of community resources instead of the hoarding of them; unbanking yourself and transferring to a credit union and LETS (Local Economic Trading System); declaring Greed-Free Zones; and living outside a profit-obsessed economic system.