

# Excalibur

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity  
—Lord Acton

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## Wage controls un-democratic, anti-people

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau campaigned in the last federal election against wage and price controls. He said that while government can control wages they can never effectively control prices. He was right.

The Canadian people are now living under wage controls (forget price controls, the government did) imposed by this same Pierre Trudeau.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has declared October 14 a National Day of Protest against wage controls. They have asked people in Canada who oppose wage controls; students, unorganized workers, the unemployed, etc., to join them by not working on October 14. We at Excalibur — as indicated by a staff vote — agree with this request and call on all members of the York University community to support the CLC by not working and not attending classes next Thursday, October 14.

We believe the Trudeau government is trying to make Canadian working people the scapegoats of inflation by imposing wage controls which challenge hard earned democratic rights in Canada.

### PRICES RISE

While the AIB has had no trouble controlling wages and rolling back settlements, they have had little effect in controlling prices and profits. Just recently gasoline prices were raised and now Ontario Hydro is planning to raise its rates, for example.

The Trudeau government claims wages are a major factor in causing inflation yet inflation was ravaging the Canadian economy from 1971-1974 during a period when wage demands were not especially high.

According to CUPE, profits rose an average of 111 per cent while average earnings were up only about 27 per cent. It was only following this high inflation period that labour began to call for larger set-

ching up with the rising cost of living.

The government says wage controls have helped slow the rise in the cost of living, however many western countries are currently experiencing a breather from inflation, without wage controls. The United States, whose economy has an immense effect on Canada's, is recovering somewhat from previous inflation rates without wage controls. And it is safe to say that the state of the US economy has helped stem Canadian inflation.

### FOOD COSTS

According to Statistics Canada, the primary reason for the comparatively small rise in the current cost of living is a small rise in the cost of food, from the farmer. This is an area not even affected by controls.

Many economists agree government spending effects inflation and by setting up the AIB along with its large staff and substantial salaries, as well as the one million dollars recently sunk into an ad campaign to justify the AIB, the government itself can be accused of fueling inflation.

Wage controls serve to accentuate differences between rich and poor in this country. The AIB's formula of calculating settlements on a percentage basis hurts the poor. When people earning \$4.00 an hour and \$15.00 an hour are both granted 10 per cent increases the wage difference between the two is increased rather than diminished. The difference between 40 cents an hour and \$1.50 an hour is substantial.

As we have already said, and as Trudeau once said, you can't control prices and profits. To begin with, this government doesn't even try to control prices. When was the last time you heard the AIB roll back a price? And even if they did try and control prices, manufacturers could diminish the quality of



Where will you be on October 14?

their products, thus increasing profits without raising prices.

Calculation of profits is based on a certain amount of trust for corporate records. There is always a way a clever accountant can show reduced profits, so how can the government regulate them?

Another aspect of the wage controls is their anti-democratic nature.

The Liberal government was elected on a programme that was directly opposed to wage and price controls, the same policies they are now forcing upon the Canadian people.

The controls also challenge the right of Canadians to collective bargaining, a hard earned right we have grown to accept as intrinsic to Canadian society. With the AIB's arbitrary rulings this "right" has now been suspended. Canadians are protesting on October 14 to see this right restored.

The government says those who participate in the October 14 protest are violating their collective agreements yet they have been doing just that ever since they started over-ruling negotiated contracts.

We believe students and all those interested in seeing some justice restored in Canadian society should participate in the day of protest. Wage controls and the problems of Canadian working people are relevant to students for many reasons.

As CUPE president Grace Hartman says in this week's

interview, we are all going to be workers some day. When the rights of workers are threatened, our rights are threatened.

Many students may have already experienced reduced wages at summer or part-time jobs as a result of the AIB.

Just as students should identify with labour, labour has already begun to support student interests in their opposition to cutbacks and support for free tuition.

When a government can get away with anti-democratic, anti-people policies, the nature of society is threatened. If you are interested in working for a democratic, people-oriented Canada don't come to York Thursday, October 14, but attend the CLC's Queen's Park rally at 11:00 a.m.

Cynics and critics of the day of protest try to belittle it as a meaningless, one-shot affair but if the people of Canada, even for one day, can form a united voice and say NO to the Canadian government, it will have an effect, they will have to listen.

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