

Opinion

Cutbacks and wages

By GARY KINSMAN

The present tidal wave of provincial cutbacks in social expenditure in Canada must make one pause in thought about the just society we're supposed to be living in.

The capitalist economies have slumped together and they will not grow again, except in short frenzied bursts, unless the capitalist class succeeds in raising the overall rate of profit. In reality there is only one way this can be done — and that is to force labour to produce more while it receives less. State cutbacks in social expenditure are one side of this coin. Wage controls are the other.

Cutbacks hit different parts of the population in different ways, but overall they accomplish the following for the capitalist class: first, they shift the burden of costs for non-luxury services back onto the users. In this way they are a de-facto cut in wages. Second, they convert a significant amount of paid labour in the public sector into unpaid labour in the household. Daycare and health care cuts, for instance, force women to work harder in the home taking care of children and the sick. Third, cutbacks hit the poor and make the position of the unemployed even less secure than it is. The swollen mass of the unemployed then increases pressure on the employed. In other words, the working class is forced to compete harder as individuals against one another to try to get hired. Labour productivity for capital is increased out of fear and intimidation.

The wage controls operate on the basis of restricting the

ability of the working class to catch up and keep up with the rate of inflation. The anti-inflation board, set up to administer the government policy, has rolled back over 20 wage settlements, and is now averaging three or four new rejections a week.

A member of the Board, Jim King, recently admitted that the board began by "inventing the rules as we went along."

It's clear that some of its rulings give a little more to avoid trouble, while in others it cracks down to defeat a sector of workers who are weak and isolated, or to set a precedent for a related sector.

This makes the call by the Canadian Labour Congress for a demonstration in Ottawa on March 22 crucial in giving students and others a chance to show support for the working class. Students should form contingents in such actions and continue to attempt building contact between themselves and the rank and file of the working class.

The social cutbacks are tied to the wage controls organically, and logic requires us to see that if only working class action can bring down the wage controls, it is crucial that this is pointed out as the way in which the social cuts can be defeated as well. The only way!

Those who see the link should not refuse to see the role they will play in isolating students, faculty, and the rest of the York community, by attempting to artificially limit our field of action simply to university issues.

It's clear that the mass of students do not live in isolation from society. Neither should we.

Viewpoint

Support the united farm workers

By ARVIND HANDA

Farmworkers for as much as 100 years have had to suffer under horrible working and living conditions. Powerful growers and giant corporations, through the use of cheap surplus labour from other countries, have been able to keep the workers in the desperate situation of having to struggle on a daily basis for their next job and their next meal.

With their super-profits, the growers gained political control over the courts, police, the state legislatures, and even federal agencies — effectively crushing every attempt by the workers to better their conditions, often through sheer violence, killing farmworkers.

In the 60s, Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers began to organize workers along non-violent lines. With the use of an international boycott of California table grapes and the help of millions of people, the UFW won over 200 contracts with growers in 1970.

These contracts achieved, for the first time, control over the dangerous and sometimes fatal use of pesticides; it put an end to child labour and gave workers vastly improved working conditions, schools, homes for the aged. Medical centres were built; farmworkers for the time had job-security.

In 1973, the growers threw out the UFW, stripped contracts of all benefits and arbitrarily signed contracts with the Teamsters. Many farmworkers who protested were beaten and jailed by teamster goons and local police. Finally two were murdered.

Once again the farmworkers employed the boycott, asking

people not to buy California table grapes and head lettuce. Strong public support for the boycott has resulted in the passage of historic legislation, giving workers the right to choose their own union through secret ballot elections. The UFW has been leading in the elections by a margin of over two to one against the teamsters; it has won three contracts covering over 2,000 workers and is negotiating with a number of other

growers.

There will be a showing of the new and widely acclaimed Farmworker documentary, *Fighting for Our Lives*, on Wednesday March 10 at 8 p.m. in CLH-D. People who want more information or who would like tickets for the film night (\$3 general admission, \$1 for students) can come to our table most days in Central Square or contact us through the CYSF office.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE



Yosif Meshener has been in prison for six years in the Soviet Union. He applied for an exit visa and was put in prison for "anti-soviet" agitation.

For further information call Andrew at 667-3647. Student Council for Soviet Jews.



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