

Welfare "Reform" -- It's Up To Us To Stop It!



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Twin Cities/Madison District
Freedom Road Socialist Organization

www.frso.org
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On July 1, 1997 a disaster started unfolding. This disaster is throwing families into the streets and forcing people to go hungry. As the disaster spreads further, thousands will be engaged in slave labor; wages will fall for all working people, especially women and people of color; and the rich will be laughing all the way to the bank. The disaster is welfare reform. It is up to us to stop it.

Welfare means basic survival for unemployed working people. Sixty years ago, there were huge struggles, led by communists, to demand a safety net, so that in times of crisis and unemployment we wouldn't have to starve in the streets.

We have to fight again. Fighting attacks on welfare means fighting for our basic right to survive. It means defying the ones who are working to keep women down. It is about oppressed nationalities demanding justice. Fighting this battle means defending our right as working people to a decent life.

Why Do We Need Welfare?

Do the math. There are just not enough jobs out there for everyone who needs one. If all the unemployed people lined up for all the open jobs, most would still be out in the cold. When you think of living wage jobs, it's even worse. Most of the jobs that are out there don't even come close to paying enough for a family to survive; to pay for child care, housing, health care, food, transportation. Without a job, we have no income. Without an income we die. That is why we need welfare.

Why The Attack

Politicians try to blame poor people for poverty and unemployment. The fact is, poverty and unemployment are built into the system we are stuck with for now — the capitalist system. The rich people (the capitalists) who run this country NEED a pool of

welfare we got out of this government. We are fighting a battle for the most basic of human rights, the right to survive.

It all boils down to one thing all over the country: there is no kinder and gentler way to cut welfare. Without full employment, there will be a need for welfare. Attacks on welfare are an attack on our class, the working class — both those of who are employed, and those of us who are unemployed.

Break the Chains!

We want positive reforms. But no amount of reforms will solve the basic problem we face — we live in under a capitalist system, where a small group of rich people, the capitalists, are constantly plotting how to get richer at our expense. While we are living under capitalism and fighting for our basic needs, we also have to be organizing ourselves to take power.

We know what we need: housing, health care, food, jobs, education, child care, and a decent living. We are tired of exploitation and discrimination.

The handful of rich that run our country are waging a war on us. They are aiming their fire at both the unemployed and employed sections of our class. They are systematically attacking oppressed nationalities. They have shown by their deeds that they are unfit to rule. We cannot live this way. We have a right to liberation and self-determination! And we want it now!

The wealthy want to keep us down and desperate. They get richer by making us poorer. They will not give up their positions willingly. They have the police and the military to protect their interests. We have to take control, and it's going to take a revolution. We need to put in place a system that puts the people's needs first, a system where all political and economic power is in the hands of the working class: a socialist system.

for seeking opportunities in other states. The same goes for time limits, education limits, and anything else that restricts our ability to survive and thrive.

Until there is full employment, and until the work of raising children is valued (which won't happen under capitalism), human beings have a right to welfare. This has to be our starting point and our bottom line as we fight this battle.

What We can Do

- Get together with others: If there is a group in your area dedicated to fighting welfare cuts, get involved! If you're not low income, do what you can to help out — low income people's groups need a lot of support; child care and transportation are the biggest barriers to participation.

Those not involved directly in the battle can do their part by voicing opposition to welfare "reform". Push other forces to take a stand on the issue, keeping the bottom line of human rights in mind. Be aware of what the current issues are, and be ready to lend a hand to the fight that welfare rights groups are carrying out, and to speak up.

- Find out what's going on: Study the laws in your state; within a week, you'll know more than 99% of the politicians who voted for them. Find out where and when the decisions are being made at a state, local and county level, and...

- Get in their faces. These laws didn't come from heaven, they were written and voted for by politicians. Dog these politicians wherever you can. They may talk nice, but their laws kill. Look for the sellouts who think we can have a kinder starvation, and dog them too.

- Don't give up: People fought and died to wring the little bit of

desperate people competing for a limited number of jobs to keep wages low.

This is a rich man's welfare law. Bosses make more money when they pay us less. The less they pay us, the more profit for them. This is a basic law of capitalism. If they could get away with paying us next to nothing for our work, they would. With welfare reform, they started to get their wish, as we will explain below.

All over the world, governments are trying to cut welfare. The rich in the U.S. are in competition with the rich of Europe and Japan. All of them are doing what they can to exploit folks in their home countries and abroad. In most of those countries, people are protesting the cuts with huge demonstrations and strikes.

For the moment, things are going well for the rich. They say we are in an economic boom, even though more of us are poorer than ever, and working harder for less. The slightest downturn in the economy will plunge millions more of us into disaster.

Are You Working Now? Look Out!

The new welfare law will not just be bad for those of us who will be cut off. If you have a job now, you're next in line for trouble.

These welfare cuts will hurt all working people, in many different ways. When welfare is harder to get, there are more desperate people trying to fill a limited number of jobs—driving down wages for everyone. Welfare used to be the "floor" for working peoples wages. Now that floor is gone and those of us near the bottom will feel it first.

Another slam to all working people is welfare—the new slave labor. Under welfare, mothers are forced to work for no pay to get the welfare grant. Your boss could go to the welfare office and get

someone to do your job for minimum wage, for less than minimum wage, or for free! If there is a job to be done, it should be a real job that pays a living wage, not a slave job that pays no wage! Finally, we all have to think about the suffering, the social damage to our children, our neighbors, our sisters, brothers and friends who will go homeless, hungry, and desperate. It's already happening, and if we don't stop it, it will get worse.

Welfare Reform hits those of us on the bottom of the economic ladder the hardest — women, oppressed nationalities, and immigrants.

Attacks on Oppressed Nationalities

There is no equality in the U.S. today. Years of discrimination and national oppression have made it so that poverty rates for all people of color are way higher than for whites. We are the last hired, and the first fired, and the first to suffer during economic downturns. And welfare reform will make it worse. It's just another way of the white chauvinist politicians to keep us oppressed. They are already preparing for the social consequences of desperate poverty by building more prisons and stepping up police repression.

Attacks On Women

Most adults on welfare are women, who are doing the real work in this world by raising children. This country has always been set up to keep women down and under the control of men. Welfare isn't much, but it was something to survive on. This new welfare law is a giant step backwards for women; as the benefits dry up, more of us will be forced to stay in rotten relationships, forced into low wage or no-wage jobs, forced to give up our kids, and forced into the streets. This is unacceptable. We all have to come together to fight the injustice.

Attacks on Immigrants

Non-citizens are singled out for the worst attacks. These cuts are hypocritical in a country that is run by the descendants of immigrants who killed the original inhabitants, stole the land, and enslaved whole nations. The attacks on legal and undocumented immigrants are just another way to keep one group of us more exploited, so the rich can get richer.

Don't Believe the Hype!

Part of the reason that they're getting away with these attacks is that the rich and media have fed us lie after lie about welfare, poor people, and how the economy works. They talk about family values, while they come up with laws to kill our children. They want us to blame each other for the problems we face, instead of the capitalists who created the problems. Let's stand up, talk back, and fight the injustice, not each other!

Fight Back!

Just because it's law doesn't make it right. The ultra-rich who run this country used to have laws that allowed slavery and child labor. Before welfare, families died in the streets. People got together and fought to end those injustices. We, the people, have to do it again.

Never forget that this is a life and death issue. It is not a matter of trying to find a kinder, gentler starvation, a "nicer" form of slave labor, or another job search program for jobs that don't exist, or deciding which group of people is more deserving than another. This welfare reform is rotten at the core, and we have to get to the core of the problem to fight it.

Fighting welfare cuts means fighting all welfare cuts. We need to resist any attempts to tighten eligibility. Vended payments, where the government decides how we spend our grants, must be opposed. The same goes for residency requirements, which punish