

# STRIKE!

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Ontario Edition

## Liberals Gut Welfare Diet Program

by PJ Lilley, *Punching Out Collective* (with files from Sam Kuhn of TAG & John Clarke of OCAP)

Somewhere, Mike Harris must be pretty proud of Dalton McGuinty this week. In the worst tradition of the poor-bashing “Common Sense Revolution”, the Liberals have quietly slashed the Special Diet supplement, which was just starting to be put to good use in feeding thousands of families on welfare and disability across the province. (They also quietly signed an agreement with Ottawa that allows the province to seize tax refunds to recover welfare payments made to sponsored immigrants. This clawback, like the one Harris brought in to cut the baby bonus for parents on welfare, is most threatening to women in abusive relationships who may now feel forced to stay.)

The revised diet supplement forces people to disclose their medical conditions, including HIV/AIDS, to justify getting any type of special diet. Even those with the most serious diseases will only qualify for paltry sums such as \$10/month for liver disease, \$10/month for cardiovascular disease and up to \$240/month for cancer or HIV—but only if you’ve already lost at least 10% of your body weight.

Over the past few months, “Hunger Clinics” had sprouted up across Ontario whereby sympathetic healthcare practitioners have been signing up social assistance recipients en masse by the thousands; effectively squatting the provincial legislation. Ontario Common Front groups like Ottawa’s Catapult Collective, the Sudbury Coalition Against Poverty, Guelph Union of Tenants & Supporters, Kingston’s Coalition Against Poverty, the Tenant Action Group (Belleville), Kitchener/Waterloo Youth Collective, and the Peterborough Coalition against Poverty have taken OCAP’s idea and run with it. This year, before they

gutted it, the Special Diet Policy put an extra \$40 million into the hands of poor people. As heartwarming as that is, it is a tiny amount relative to the transfer of wealth to the already wealthy that took place under Harris and continues under McGuinty.

Just as the 21.6% cut to welfare was introduced then in 1995, research done by a City Councillor’s office revealed that, if you compared the tax cut for the rich with the reduction in welfare payments, it worked out to \$1 million a month being taken from Regent Park and given to Rosedale. In ten years, \$120 million has changed hands between these two Toronto communities. Research by the CAW showed that the tax break a \$1 million/year CEO would get in Ontario was the same as the cut in income that 17 single parent families on welfare had experienced. When you consider the money ripped from poor communities Ontario-wide flowing directly into these few wealthy enclaves, the enormity of this exploitation is stunning.

In Sudbury, disgust and outrage at the slashing of the special dietary supplement is being directed towards Liberal Cabinet Minister Bartolucci’s office, with a militant rally and march on November 14. TAG in Belleville says that they and their Common Front allies will not stand for this and plan to attack the government forthwith with a big action in Toronto on November 26th.

Having won millions for poor people, having tasted victory, and having now the strength and numbers to fight; we hope to carry the struggle for economic justice and dignity as far as we can. And...we won’t be quiet until we get our special diet!

**ALL OUT TO RAISE THE RATES!  
REVERSE THE SPECIAL DIET CUTS!**

**Saturday, November 26, 1pm ~ Nathan Phillips Square**  
(Bay & Queen, Northwest corner, Toronto)

# 81 Reasons to Oppose the New Youth SuperJail!

by Marika, Prisoner's Justice Action Committee

The new Super Jail for Youth in Brampton - the Greater Toronto Youth Centre - will cost Ontario taxpayers 81.1 Million dollars to build, and we can easily think of 81 reasons why we don't need this super-jail, and 81 ways that this funding could be used to help make communities genuinely safer and healthier.

The 81 Reasons Campaign was launched last January by Toronto's Prisoner's Justice Action Committee, a grassroots prison abolitionist group. PJAC coordinates annual Prisoner's Justice Day Events, hosts an annual prison justice film festival, carries out popular education on the prison industrial complex, and works with allies inside to help raise issues on the outside.

The work of the 81 Reasons campaign is now being carried out by an always-growing, broad coalition made up of young people from across the GTA, representatives of prominent Black social justice organizations, prison abolitionists, teachers, artists, youth workers and others.

Young people need good schools, recreation centres, family support and good social services - not more jails. Incarceration further marginalizes disadvantaged youth, traumatizes young women, discriminates against queer youth, aboriginal youth and black youth and channels youth into adult prisons.

Large jails far from family increase the problems that lead youth into conflict with the law, while community programs reduce re-offending and help young people rebuild their lives. According to the Canadian Department of Justice statistics, less than 50% of available beds for youth in custody in Ontario are now occupied - based on the numbers alone, it is impossible to justify a new 192-bed jail. Since the passing of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2003, the rate of youth incarceration has steadily decreased. This jail is a waste of essential public funds, and will only bring about more violence and oppression directed at poor youth, Black youth, and young people from First Nations.

Jail construction is set to begin before the new year, and now is an essential time to be pressuring the Ministry of Child and Family services to withdraw this scheme. You can help by joining the 81 Reasons campaign.

We need your skills, and no previous organizing or committee experience is necessary. Members are currently active in sub-committees focusing on research, lobbying, movement building, media, and arts & culture.

Please contact us for more information or if you'd like to get the details for our next meeting:

<81reasons@gmail.com>

or 416-324-5078.

Check us out online at [www.pjac.org](http://www.pjac.org)



## STRIKE!

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**(NORTHEASTERN FEDERATION  
OF ANARCHIST-COMMUNISTS):**

*"an organization of revolutionaries coming from different movements of resistance who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism. The federation's activities are organized around theoretical development, anarchist propaganda, and intervention in the struggle of our class, be it autonomously or by direct involvement in social movements."*



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for more info, or to contribute(!),  
get November events listed, etc. ...

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Labour donated.



# Defying the Rule of Law: Lessons Learned from the BC Teachers Strike

by Chris, Northwest Anarchist Federation

For two weeks, over 42,000 teachers in BC engaged in an illegal strike, defying back to work legislation imposed by the provincial government. Their struggle marks an important milestone in the resurgence of militant rank-and-file struggles across the province. While the provincial government has legislated public sector employees back to work seven times over the past 4 years, this is the first time that the government has been forced to return to the bargaining table. The strength of workers in collectively withdrawing their labour power is being quickly remembered.

While public sector workers have defied previous attempts to legislate them back to work, their attempts to escalate job action have been consistently undermined by a conservative trade union bureaucracy with the backing of the provincial NDP. As the teachers chose to undertake illegal job action, they were roundly condemned by NDP leader Carole James who argued that they should respect the “rule of law”. The court decision to freeze the BCTF’s strike funds was lauded by the NDP opposition critic on education as an opportunity for “cooler heads to prevail”.

Building on the lessons learned by striking

health care workers in April 2004 workers are coming to understand the need to build power from the base.



Measures were taken by the teachers that would ensure that their actions would not be sabotaged. This time around it was decided that the rank-and-file would have to vote on any negotiated settlement before it was agreed upon to return to work.

While over 600,000 elementary and secondary school students were out of class, the strike maintained a large degree of public support. On Monday, October 17 a general strike was organized in the city of Victoria, bringing together over 35,000 public and private sector workers. Public transit, post offices, construction sites, and liquor stores were all shut down as workers converged in a large rally at the legislature. This was just the beginning of a series of coordinated public sector strikes that rolled across the province in the days that followed.

As the provincial government came to realize that these actions were building in strength, they quickly reversed their position, opening the doors to a mediated settlement. While the settlement did not offer any conclusive or substantive gains, simply redistributing a few million dollars to harmonize wages and lower class sizes, teacher’s voted by a 77 percent margin to accept the agreement. Nevertheless, the actions of the BC teachers sets an important precedent, showing the power of workers who choose to defy the law in order to assert their collective bargaining rights. As an enormous number of public sector workers in province move into a bargaining position in the spring, the force of these actions will not be forgotten.



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**News & Analysis  
every thursday  
@ Noon-12:30  
LISTEN !**





# CUPE 3903 Cracks Open York U.

by Jeff Shantz, *Punching Out Collective*

On November 1 the general membership of CUPE 3903 (teaching assistants, contract faculty and graduate assistants at York University) turned down the administration's contract offer following a heated six hour discussion where rank-and-file members raised numerous objections and planned strike action to follow two days later. The next day York finally brought forward a significantly improved offer that, as of this writing was being put to a ratification vote, and the strike was averted.

Rejecting the unsatisfactory contract, which had been recommended for approval by the union executive and bargaining team, offered not only a rebuke to the boss but to the practice of "closed bargaining" which is so favoured by employers and, unfortunately, consented to by most unions.

CUPE 3903 has a winning 'best practice': open bargaining. The membership directs the bargaining team and executive throughout the bargaining process and can have input on whether an offer should be brought for ratification. It's a model for rank-and-file control and participatory democracy that many say should be spread more broadly throughout the labour movement.

This is only part of a broader mobilization within the local, including the largest strike vote numerically in 3903 history. Even before the ratification vote a "More Committee" has formed, which is dedicated, not only to winning a better contract, but to organizing ongoing rank-and-file activity in workplace and community struggles.

## CRAP BOSS OF THE MONTH AWARD GOES TO ...



Last month, a 241 Pizza driver was robbed at gunpoint in the

Lawrence and Weston area of Toronto. To add insult to injury, the \$300 stolen was taken out of his paycheque! The local franchise owner says their theft insurance doesn't cover the drivers, only the store, and that it's just 241 Pizza's policy to hold the drivers responsible when they're held up. 241 is a subsidiary of Afton Food Groups, in Burlington, traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

*Boycott 241 & write them at  
<complaints@241pizza.com>  
or else phone Afton Foods (905) 681-8448  
to tell them to quit thieving  
from their own workers!*

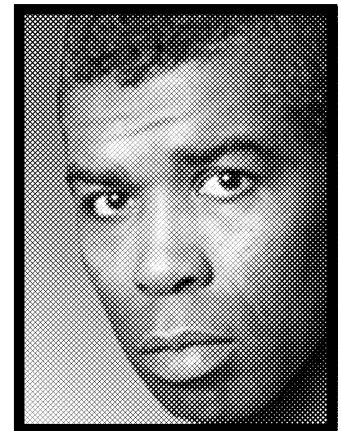
*Remember the ugly state of race relations  
in Chicago in the late 1960s... and*

## STOP THE EXTRADITION! of Gary Freeman (aka. Joseph Pannell)

Court will reconvene on Friday, November 25, at 9:30am, to hear Justice Watt render his decisions on the various submissions made by Gary Freeman's lawyers on October 6th.

This will be a very important court appearance for Gary. A strong showing by supporters in the courtroom will have a positive impact both on his spirit and on our fight against his extradition to the United States.

Family and Friends of Gary Freeman hopes to see you on November 25th at the Courthouse, 361 University Avenue (north of Queen Street West).



[www.freemandrums.org](http://www.freemandrums.org)

**Do you have a problem landlord,  
welfare caseworker or bad  
boss? Need solidarity to  
fight back?**

**CALL the**

**Anti-Poverty Working Group  
CUPE-SCFP**

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