

# Schwarzeegger Budget Cuts

By Michael Polson,

Coordinator Institute for Justice and Economic Security (IJES)

The recent budget cuts proposed by Governor Schwarzenegger's Office come a mere week before the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Once again, the budget favors business at the expense of California's poor and working people. The Women's Economic Agenda Project calls for a new vision based on a society based on equality, a vision based on the absolute elimination of poverty. Dr. King put forward this vision 35 years ago in his most ambitious plan ever, the Poor People's Campaign. We are working today to carry out King's vision.

At this moment, we are faced with a dismal governor's budget that threatens to destroy the lives and livelihoods of millions across California. For our children's teachers across the state the proposal would cut billions of dollars in salaries and reduce government commitments to education. For our elders, the proposal would cut a guaranteed pension fund and toss that money to the fickle winds of the market. For the working poor and disabled, The proposal would require that the working poor and the disabled pay monthly premiums to receive MediCal, making care harder to attain for half a million people and effectively dropping over 100,000 people from MediCal rolls. Looming over all of this is one basic fact: Schwarzenegger is bent on slashing and burning the programs that millions throughout the state depend upon because he refuses to levy any taxes on the rich.

Schwarzenegger has said he is "well aware that there are lives behind the numbers." We can only hope that Schwarzenegger is NOT "well aware" of the misery of not having access to healthcare, the misery of being denied proper food and housing for his children, the angst at enrolling his child in an under funded school, the fright that a government worker would experience under his unpaid furlough rules. We hope that Schwarzeegger does not know this misery. If he truly what it was to be hungry on the streets and no services to assist you, he could never make these cuts.

We don't wish that reality on Schwarzenegger or anybody. We can do better as a society. Like Dr. King before us, we demand that all of our economic human rights be guaranteed. This is the richest state in the richest country in the world and there is no excuse for these cuts. The money is here. It has never left. What has left is our government's will to ensure the well-being of our people.

We must build a movement to eliminate the financial poverty that so many of us suffer and the moral poverty in which so many of our leaders are stuck. We will not rest until our economic human rights are guaranteed.