

Resisting Police Harassment and Brutality: A Community Meeting

(Minutes from December 11th, 1999)

Issues/Topics:

- ★ media bias - police/media connection
- ★ justification for increased spending
- ★ this is a strategy to take away people's civil rights/ have people used to not having civil rights
- ★ racism, sexism and classism in police policy
- ★ priority should be people before property
- ★ skytrain cops with guns
- ★ vigilantism
- ★ escalation of police harassment in Downtown Eastside
- ★ worldwide, war on drugs causes increased police brutality
- ★ police corruption
- ★ legal aid doesn't cover making police complaints
- ★ gentrification and increased police harassment/brutality
- ★ Project Scoop: police - immigration - welfare - child and family services working together
- ★ police surveillance: cameras, helicopters, voice recorders
- ★ police don't report/respond to/investigate violence against drug users/sex trade workers
- ★ various marginalized groups are pitted against each other
- ★ we have the largest police force per capita in Canada
- ★ always under suspicion in the Downtown Eastside
- ★ poor response time of police

Goals/Actions:

- ★ forming a coalition/network: that crosses issues, is geographically large, and can quickly rally supporters to respond to police violence
- ★ go to police board meetings to demand: 1) a public and impartial body to make complaints about police violence, 2) to gain intervenor status in public bodies, 3) prioritize crimes against people before crimes against property (including the enforcement of restraining orders)
- ★ forcing NDP to reallocate \$ from policing to things that will make people safer: crisis lines, women's shelters, social housing, harm reduction measures, etc.
- ★ force mainstream media, or create own media, to acknowledge issues related to police violence
- ★ CopWatch - or public safety committee
- ★ create own Code of Behavior for police and politicians
- ★ make freedom of information requests about police/police boards
- ★ organize in Latin American community (40,000 people in BC)/reach ordinary people
- ★ have police hand out harm reduction pamphlets

Minutes from Police Brutality Focus Group

(December 11th, 1999)

I have divided all the ideas brainstormed into three basic categories: propaganda, research, and action. Here are the results of our first focus group session.

Propaganda:

★ Informational Brochures:

1. Cop-Watchers Brochure - what to look for, safety.
2. The Police & Your Rights Brochure - legal rights.
3. Street Survival Brochure - for people targeted by police with help-line #, details on specifics for various groups, advise on confronting police, getting badge number, license plate #, filing complaints etc., and the risks involved in doing this.

- ★ Newsletter - a monthly newsletter with incident reports of police harassment and brutality, police policy, updates, and actions.
- ★ Poster Campaign - an expose on police harassment and brutality. Shame the Cops campaign involves posters with pictures of cops who commit violence with a list of their violations underneath them. Citywide postering.
- ★ Video Documentary - on police harassment and brutality. Perhaps use citizens rights angle for money from National Film Board.

Research:

- ★ "Know Thy Enemy" - everything related to policing in Vancouver.
- ★ Incident Reports - gather and compile incident reports of police harassment and brutality from media, police complaints commission, Vancouver Police Department, and our hot-line.
- ★ Police Harassment/Brutality Hot-Spots - from incident reports, identify hot-spots to dispatch Cop Watch teams.
- ★ Citizen's Rights information.
- ★ Photo-documentary - of offending officers and their offences.

Actions:

- ★ Police Brutality Hotline - create a hotline for people to report incidences of police violence and receive support.
- ★ Cop Watch - walk the beat in order to intervene in, and take photos/film of, police harassment and brutality.
- ★ Shame the Cop Postering Campaign
- ★ Street Theatre - mock police harassment situations in the streets to demonstrate people's rights.
- ★ Network - actively participating in whatever actions any member of the coalition calls for.

★ civil rights education: on the streets - street theatre with mock arrests/situations, brochures, etc.