

# **A Proposal for a Coalition to Fight Police Violence**

## ***What is the Coalition and what are its goals?***

It a loose coalition of groups and individuals who will work together against targeted policing and police violence in Vancouver. We see police as any group or institution fulfilling policing functions, i.e. VPD, RCMP, SkyTrain attendants, security guards, etc. We are united on the following goals:

- to expose police violence and abuse of power,
- to deter police violence through the monitoring of police activities,
- to mobilize the people directly affected by police violence and targeted policing,
- to attain justice for victims of police brutality and targeted policing,
- to stop the expansion of the police force, powers, spending, and technology, and
- to fight the political isolation of targeted groups through wide-ranging acts of solidarity.

## ***What is the strategy of the Coalition?***

Our first level of response will be to deter police violence or abuse of power through direct observation of police activity. Teams will observe and document cases of police violence and gather evidence on offending officers. They will also inform people about their rights and the work of the Coalition. We will maintain a hotline for reporting incidents of police violence.

Our second level of response will be to use legalistic tactics with cases the coalition takes on. This includes but is not limited police complaints, civil suits, small claims court, etc. This brings media and public attention to the reality of police violence and the ineffectiveness of recourse through normal channels. Use of legal proceedings and bureaucratic complaint procedures deters police violence as a form of punishment in itself for offending officers. It also brings them out into the public where they are identifiable and subject to political attack.

Our third level of response will be to use mass-action tactics to disrupt the bureaucracies that administer police institutions. These disruptions must carry a credible threat of continuation and escalation so as to create the conditions where it costs less politically, in terms of public confidence and the smooth functioning of their bureaucracies, to grant concessions than to ignore us. This will generate public sympathy by dramatizing the justice of our case by showing that substantial opposition exists. This is our biggest single weapon against police brutality, as the police rely enormously on public confidence to carry out their work. Mass-

actions tactics include occupations, rallies, marches, citywide postering campaigns, etc.

### ***How will decisions be made?***

All major decisions, such as new policies and mass-actions, will be made by a minimum two-thirds majority vote at monthly general meetings. Anyone who agrees with the basic goals and strategy of the Coalition is able to be a member, bring proposals, and vote. Individuals representing groups vote as individuals. The role the steering and the two organizers is to put into action the decisions of the membership. They also have the responsibility to make suggestions and help draft proposals and generally ensure that the work of the Coalition proceeds smoothly.

### ***How will the work be divided?***

The coalition will have a steering committee and two organizers. The steering committee is comprised of nine people elected every six months from the general meeting of the Coalition. They are responsible for the following:

- expanding the coalition's base of supporting groups and individuals,
- researching policing issues and developing an institutional analysis of the role of police in society,
- developing propaganda that serves to counter and undermine public support for policing solutions to social problems,
- applying pressure on government, police department, and community policing centers to hold police accountable to the law, and
- mobilizing the public against specific acts of police brutality and targeted policing,

The two organizers are elected every six months by the general meeting of the Coalition. They will be responsible for the following:

- organizing the patrols that will observe police actions and document cases of police brutality, educate people of their rights when dealing with the police, and intervene when warranted,
- maintaining hotline for reporting incidents of police harassment and abuse, and
- developing a photo-catalogue of police officers, their badge numbers, names, and incidents of police brutality.

**Attention: This is a call to all those concerned about the increase in police harassment and brutality, illegal searches and home intrusions and targeted policing in Vancouver.**

The Anti-Poverty Action Committee is working to build a citywide coalition of organizations and individuals around stopping police violence and the flow of public funds into policing "solutions" for social problems.

While the people of Vancouver struggle with cuts to social services, the VPD have received an additional \$7.2 million to be dispersed over the next two years. This is on top of their already bloated budget of \$112 million in 1999. Forty new cops were added to the "Downtown Extraordinary Policing" team this year at a total cost to the public of \$2.7 million.

So what have we gained from all this spending? Cops targeting those very people that our social services are meant to protect - people who are homeless, living in sub-standard housing, drug-addicted, struggling with mental and/or physical health, Aboriginal peoples, peoples of color, street workers, youth and the poor.

It is essential that we present a united front to the media, government, Policing Boards, and Neighborhood and Business Associations. They are all working together to push forward an agenda that values property before people, the wealthy above the poor. When we work as isolated groups on this issue, it is very easy for them to dismiss our concerns and more dangerously, pit targeted groups against one another. We need to act in solidarity as a mass movement and identify the connections between our struggles.

We demand a stop to targeted policing and police brutality. We demand that the police prioritize crimes against people before crimes against property. And finally, we demand that public funds be channeled back into social services, not into law and order "solutions".

**On Sunday January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1pm, the Vancouver CopWatch Coalition will be meeting at the VANDU office (163 West Hastings Street) to make final amendments and vote on the attached Coalition proposal. We will also be electing a steering committee and two (unpaid) organizers.**

**(Due to conflict of interest, no cops will be allowed to attend.)**

Hope to see you there.

For more information please call Anti-Poverty Action Committee at: 683-7123.