

20 SEP 02

W.O.O.D.S.Q.U.A.T. #1

W.O.O.D.S.Q.U.A.T. is published by Friends of the Woodward's Squat to provide support from the outside & circulate writing from people on the inside. We want your writing for issue #2, to be printed tomorrow, Saturday, September 21st. Give us communiques, statements, journal entries, poetry, outbursts, reports from today or from your stay so far. We'll be around at 11pm tonight to collect your writing -- see Aaron by the TV around that time. Paper & pencils are available there too.

RELEASE FROM THE WOODWARDS SQUAT 19 SEP 02

For Immediate Release
September 19th, 2002
Media Advisory

Woodwards Squatters call Press Conference
Friday, September 20th, 2pm
Inside the Woodward's Squat, corner of Hastings and Abbot

Woodwards Squatters denounce Police Threats

After a successful rally of hundreds of people outside the Woodward's Building, the police spoke with a representative of the squatters inside. Cst. Dave Dickson said, "We are disbanding for now, but we will be back tomorrow. We will be back to remove people with force, and if they are violent we will use pepper-spray. We have stopped negotiating."

"This is outrageous," said Kaspar, a squatter. "We are not violent. We have not used any violence, and we have no intention of using violence. We oppose the police using violence to evict homeless people from the squat."

"We are constructive, not destructive," said another squatter named Jean. "We are for a constructive way of solving the problem of homelessness. We call this social housing. We are opposed to any destructive actions on the part of the police."

"The use of pepper-spray, legal prosecution, and imprisonment against people who are making homes for ourselves out of a derelict building that was slated for social housing is unquestionably immoral. This violates our human rights and international law," said a squatter named L.

"We would like to thank all those who came out to support our cause, including Councillor Fred Bass, Marg Prevost, MP Libby Davies, Jack Layton, MLA Jenny Kwan, Sheila Baxter, and Jim Sinclair, President of the BC Federation of Labour," said Jim Layden. "We will continue to fight the BC Liberal government, with whatever tools we can find. This Squat is one such tool, and we will use it -- we will peacefully occupy the Woodward's building until our demands for social housing are met."

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O.P.E.N. H.O.U.S.E.

CHRONOLOGY FROM DOWNTOWNEASTSIDE.CA

January 1993 - Woodward's department store chain goes bankrupt, flagship Hastings Street store closes for good.

March/April 1995 - After a series of new property owners, Fama Holdings Ltd., owned by Kassem Aghtai, buys Woodward's and the parking lot for approximately \$18 million. They announce their plans to redevelop the site with a commercial and market condo (approx. 360 units) project. The campaign begins in the Downtown Eastside to protest this development, as it has no amenities or social housing for the existing neighbourhood.

June 19, 1995 - Development Permit Hearing for Fama's plan. This includes about 200,000 sq./ft of commercial space, over 300,000 sq./ft of condo space. Fama is able to convert existing commercial space to residential space in return for heritage conservation. This means Fama is granted additional residential space then is allowing under the existing zoning. The city asked for no concessions regarding affordable housing. The DP is approved.

June 1995 - The City, with no warning, purchases the parkade for approximately \$11 million.

Summer 1995 - numerous protests and opposition over Fama's plan.

February 1996 - The protest pays off. The provincial government announces a partnership between Fama, the province and the city to include over 200 units of co-op housing in Woodward's. The Woodward's Co-op Committee is formed.

November 1996 - Development Permit Board amends earlier approval to include a 197 unit co-op development in Woodward's.

April 4, 1997 - Fama Holdings backs out of partnership, the deal is off. Fama now wants an all condo project. Community goes ballistic; spray painting and demonstrations commence immediately.

April 16, 1997 - Sit-in at Fama's office in West Vancouver by supporters of the community.

April 21, 1997 - Development Permit Hearing for revised Woodward's project without the co-op is cancelled partly due to the level of protest.

April 1997 - Fama is granted a demolition permit to commence removal of inner walls, old mechanical systems, etc. Fama is not allowed to do any new construction, only demolition.

July 1997 - Province reaffirms that the 200 co-op units intended for Woodward's are still available off site. Lori Krill housing co-ops, completed summer 2002 is the result.

October 20, 1997 - the City approves Fama's Development Permit with all condos. At least 60 community members speak in opposition of the permit.

1998, 1999 - Fama never gets their project going. Condo market for the area "no good."

May - June 2000 - High-tech option comes to Woodward's. Markley Stearns plans to buy and develop Woodward's into high-tech computer "hub." Deal falls through, high-tech bubble bursts across North America.

March 2001 - Provincial government buys Woodward's building from Fama at current market value - \$21 million. Province announces a social housing allocation of 220 units. Simon Fraser University plans to move School for Contemporary Arts to Woodward's.

June 2001 - Provincial elections, new Liberal government and new Premier, Gordon Campbell.

November 2001 - Provincial government freezes 1,700 social/co-op units yet to be built. Woodward's is frozen.

April 2002 - Gordon Campbell cancels 1,000 social housing units, Woodward's is cancelled.

August 2002 - Minister responsible for BC Housing, George Abbott, acknowledges to the press that the Woodward's building is for sale.

August 2002 - Woodward's Housing Co-op Committee is informed that there is potential buyer. Representatives, Geoff and Tanya Hughes, of Madison Bellevue Apartments Corporation meet with Co-op Committee, who are asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. However, Committee declines offer, thus no information of sale is discovered except that they want to do a market rental development. Two Vancouver buildings providing SRO housing, the Marble Arch Hotel and Dunsmuir House (operated by Salvation Army) are owned by this company and others, including the Strand Properties Corporation. The Strand appears to be the principle player in the bid to purchase Woodward's. Purchase is contingent on significant concessions (e.g. property tax free exemption) and financial support (e.g. RRAP) being brought into the deal. It, however, remains doubtful that rents would be low enough for those living in the community. Chuck Brooks Consulting, also used by Fama Holdings, is involved with the potential buyers.

September 14, 2002

Community members occupy Woodward's.

Another challenge to secure Woodward's for the community begins.