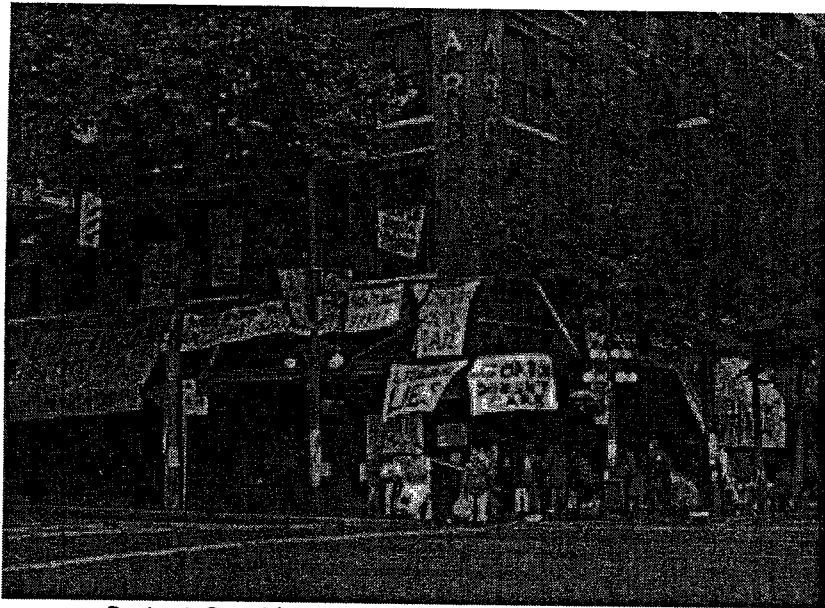


Illara's Drop Page 4.2

Starting A Revolution
2002 September 16th



Protest Outside & Inside Old Woodward's Building

Sometime late Friday night, or early Saturday morning (reports are not sure about when) a few people secretly infiltrated the old Woodward's building which takes up an entire city block in the downtown eastside.

The building has been vacant for years, and the government previous New Democratic Party (the NDP) Government bought the building hoping to take the block and make social housing on it. The NDP was defeated last year in a huge trouncing and the Liberal Government headed by Gordon Campbell came into power, and the future of the building was unsure, it was established if they could sell it to a commercial company they could use the money in other ways.

Thing is here in Vancouver, probably more so than in Toronto and other parts of the country, it's a landlords market for affordable housing, ie it's VERY HARD TO GET A PLACE. This I know I tried a number of times to acquire housing on my own and regularly ran into stumbling blocks because I do not have a stable income or lifestyle. I had found myself from March 2nd until May 1st living in illegal rooming place which was deemed a firetrap and a serious health hazard to live in, my space was one of the better of the 7 rooms that were rented out

to people because I had a window, but a number of people had zero ventilation in the place and there were situations with possible arson that were luckily averted.

On May 1st the place was Raided by Police and we were told about the need to vacate the premises, I kind of said I would only vacate the place really if I could get something else, not in a couple of weeks, not in a couple of days, RIGHT THEN AND THERE. Because lets face it there isn't anywhere I could go and I didn't want to be on some governments workers 'to-do list' while I sat under a bridge wondering if I was going to ever have a place to live! Or living in a dangerous environment where I would constantly worry about being raped, beaten up, or have my stuff stolen.

I was lucky. Infact I was so incredibly lucky more so than I really want to admit. Its very hard out there and I recently heard a number of 'hotels' which people were living in are being shut down unfit for human habitation and because they were rampant for drugs and other nastiness within the buildings.

There are a few people within this building who are dealing drugs on a regular basis mostly crack, and heroin, and the landlord is doing everything in his power to get rid of them in a legal fashion. Because that is all he can do, so far its been working, but the process is agonizingly slow even for him, I am sure he would like to take people by the scruff of their necks and forcibly toss them out into the street to make this place safer for those who are good tenants, but you can't legally do that. It takes time but he is working on it day after day.

So what does this have to do with the people sneaking into the old Woodward's building across from where I currently live? They took over the place, they were Poverty Activists, they strewn banners across the building accusing Gordon Campbell of not caring about people, turning a blind eye to the lives hurt by his slash and burn attacks on policy and just to get the building to be made into social housing, like it was supposed to be, and help alleviate the affordable housing strain to get people off the streets and get a detox centre to help the people who are suffering in this community of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, its only when we start to help instead of turn a blind eye to this problem will we get somewhere with this area. There are so many boarded up buildings so many abandoned spaces in the downtown eastside its not that we don't have the room, these places exist, just no one is willing to do it, and so the buildings lie empty.

The action has garnered a great deal of media attention within this stark media outlet town (we have two daily newspapers, both owned by the same people, and the major network here is Global or BC-CTV, or the CKVU, at least there is some CHOICE in the Television news we can watch thats from Vancouver, but there isn't much for information around here) I have linked a few of the stories here, (and where possible given a link to my own archive incase the links die after all this blows over) feel free to read and learn what is happening just over 50 meters away from me and where I live.

Squatters Raid Woodward's Building
Source: Canada.com (owned by CanWest)

My Mirror

Squatters Occupy Old Store To Push For Social Housing
Source: The Province (via Canada.com)
My Mirror

Injunction Granted To Evict Activists
Source: Canada.com
My Mirror

Injunction Granted Against Woodward's Protestors
Source: CBC Vancouver
My Mirror

I talked with Steph last night, as she sent me this little video ditty which was kind of neat, and we chatted for like 2 hours, after I looked at the video ditty again and there was one frame that struck my attention, so what I did is I captured the frame and did something creative with it, I made her a banner for her page & journal. She isn't into advertising her page that much but if you are interested you should check her out, she doesn't update often but her archives go back to 1998, and there is a lot to read, and after a while you get hooked. At least that's what I did. Although I maybe a little biased, I did fall in love with her back in 2001... ***smile*** I am glad we are great friends.



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