

**From : jimleyden@netscape.net (Jim Leyden)**  
**Subject : EXTREMELY URGENT - time sensitive COPE alert**  
**Date : Fri, 22 Aug 2003 06:00:31 -0400**

Please e-mail widely and quickly  
URGENT - respond immediately svp  
Time for COPE to THINK Democracy  
DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK BY COPE

Sitting quietly in a park on Vancouver's waterfront are a handful of homeless aboriginal squatters and their supporters. They have been very considerate, non-confrontational and unthreatening. They have called for the city to work with them to bring the provincial government to the table in an effort to address the mean spirited cuts to social housing and social assistance. They have invited the city to sit down and talk about the use of the area to the west of Portside (CRAB) Park. They want this land to be used to expand the existing Park as well as to house a First Nations Longhouse and some Sweat Lodges and other Aboriginal Cultural Programs. They have respected both the park and the park users. They have gone to great efforts to keep the area tidy and unthreatening. They have honoured arrangements they made with the park employees on the first day of the squat. In response to this the Cope council and Parks Board have launched a concerted campaign to remove these aboriginal people from their unceded land, failing to engage in meaningful dialogue or the seeking of mutual solutions. I am a supporter of those squatters. I would like to still be a supporter of COPE

As an organizer of the Woodward's squat I listened to the COPE candidates talk about how important what we were doing at Woodward's was. They talked about how undemocratic the efforts of the NPA councillors were in trying to remove us from our homeless community. They talked about the disgust they felt when the police were used to remove the homeless from their tents. They mused about how no civilized democracy should make homelessness a crime. Today when you read the remarks from the Cope parks board members at the emergency council meeting and in the media you can't tell them from those of Jennifer Clark and George Puil, and I wonder why we held the squat in place until after the election. Today for the poor, you can't tell the difference between the NPA and COPE. Did we elect COPE or did we elect a bunch of NPA wannabes?

Some of you may be saying that there is a difference if we just look hard enough. Well you're right. The NPA never turned upon its own. The NPA never held an extraordinary City Council meeting to enable an injunction against a handful of homeless people squatting peacefully in a local park. The NPA never pretended that it's intentions were anything but hostile towards the homeless. The other thing the NPA never did is to deny access to democracy for the poor. COPE did that today. In an action unprecedented by any other civic government in recent history, they refused to allow the poor and homeless access to legal council.

The city parks board proceeded with its efforts at imposing an injunction upon the peaceful CRAB Park Squatters. When the pro-bono Lawyer for the homeless indicated that she was not available to represent her clients next week and requested a one week adjournment the city parks board refused to support her request. The poor have no access to legal aid representation and cannot afford to pay for lawyers in the same way as the city.

WE were all appauled when the Campell Liberals eliminate legal aid for the poor. We thought it was an affront to democracy. Today we are faced with a different Campbell and a different political party engaged in the same assault upon the democratic rights of the poor.

If you believe as we do that COPE must not just Think Democracy but must offer democracy then please join us in requesting that the COPE Parks Board delay this court case until legal council for the poor is available. We have been advised that the only way this sham can be avoided is by the Parks Board supporting our request for a one week postponement.

Copy and paste the following notice and send it to the city council and parks board members listed below, immediately. Tomorrow will be too late.

I support the call by the CRAB Park homeless, for you to delay the injunction hearing against them until their lawyer is available. It is my understanding that they are requesting only a one week delay in proceedings. I agree with them that equal and unfettered access to legal council by the poor is an essential base component of democracy, and further believe that COPE is also concerned with assuring that the poor have full access to legal defense. I therefore encourage you to immediately instruct Ben Parkin, the City's legal council to confer promptly with the legal council for the homeless and the presiding judge with the intention of setting a new date for trial which is convenient for all legal parties concerned.

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