



anti poverty committee

united we will win!

Summer 2005

New Wings Hotel Mass Eviction

City Staff and VPD collaborate in rendering scores of people homeless

The occurrence of three murders at the New Wings Hotel, on January 28th and April 4th respectively, passed through local media like a brief firestorm of sensation focused on guns and drugs. While this kind of coverage may be a point of fascination for newspaper readership, the essence of the story for the people who actually lived at the hotel, and in the Downtown Eastside where it exists is radically different, and consistently ignored and suppressed. It involves a series of programmatic abuses at the hands of police and City authorities, and is part of an ongoing strategic business and social plan for this neighbourhood which boils down to a direct and violent assault on the poorest and most disenfranchised members of society.

Prior to the murders at the New Wings Hotel, the fifty five room apartment building located at Powell and Dunlevy was already a point of interest for the City bureaucracy and police. In October of 2003 the owner of the hotel was summoned to a city licensing

hearing regarding substandard maintenance of the building, the illegal charging of guest fees, and the landlords apparent inability to control the conduct of people on the premises. Out of this hearing the owner was obliged among other things, to take a building management course, and keep a guest and tenant registry that included specific details for each tenant, such as sources of income, and how each



Anti-Liberal Demo & BBQ: 4 More Years? Hell No!

'Four more years? HELL NO!' affirmed over one hundred poor and unemployed people who marched militantly through the streets of the Downtown Eastside. This protest called by the Anti-Poverty Committee was the first directed at the BC Liberals since their re-election. Organised from the welfare offices, women's centers, shelters, food bank lines, needle exchanges and job clubs, this march mobilized the people most affected by the governments assaults. Poor people who are unwilling to wait patiently while the NDP and the government make deals with one another.

The march snaked from different locations that symbolised points of struggle over the last four years. While survival has become a day-to-day battle

certain collective struggles that have been fought have won. Poor people have proven this time and again; from the mass demonstrations in and out of the welfare offices that brought the 'two-year out of five' welfare cuts to a halt, to the peer-run Safer Injection Site opened and operated by poor drug users. Along the march, speakers who were also involved in the fights for the Woodward's building and the DTES women's center spoke to the need to fight back and organise from our daily needs as poor people.

The march that left from Victory Square and ended at Oppenheimer Park stopped by several other locations along the way, such as the police station, where a worker involved in the sex trade denounced the VPD for serving and protecting the rich while poor women

New Wings continued...

person paid their rent. This information was subject to viewing by the City inspector upon request.

After the hearing, and the landlord's compliance with the city's demands, the next highlight in the building's history came on January 28th, 2005, when it was the site of the city's first murder of the year. At this point the City spoke with the landlord again, giving him a final offer to keep his hotel open by letting the City put him through some management courses. Before these courses took place, there were two more murders at the hotel on the night of April 4th.

Immediately after this the City and the police collectively took over the hotel, and over the next three months proceeded to use all possible methods to get people out, and shut the place down. The landlord states that he was forced to sign over management rights of the hotel to city in order to maintain his occupancy permit, until the City closed it down. Initially all tenants were treated as murder suspects for living in the New Wings Hotel. The day of the 2nd shooting the police took control of the hotel as a crime scene, and took all tenants of the hotel to jail in two buses provided by the City transit system. After questioning on suspicion of murder they were released within 24 hours. While the City put some tenants up in hotels with 3 day crisis grants in places such as the Dufferin and Dunsmuir hotels these people were kicked out of these places after only one night, with the hotels keeping the government money. One man who happened to be walking his dog while the police took control of the building was given 20 dollars by the city for lodgings. Each of the tenants given crisis grants were required to pay them back to welfare.

The police remained in control of the building until April 9th, and during this time, despite lacking warrants for any specific rooms, broke into each unit and proceeded to search for evidence. In this search many possessions were destroyed, fridges unplugged leaving food to rot, and prescription medications seized. While some doors were ripped off hinges, leaving animals to run away, others were locked inside for several days with no access to food or water. For the first two days no one was informed why they could not access their homes by the police man guarding the door, but on the third day people were verbally instructed that they were part of a murder investigation. Tenants were then allowed to enter units to pick up medications, get clothing, and take care of pets. After the five days tenants were allowed back into their units, with the qualification that they were registered tenants. This immediately excluded several female street workers who paid in cash, temp labourers, and several employees of the hotel who worked to pay for their lodgings. These people were instantly made homeless, and constituted the first wave of evictions from the New Wings.

The City then declared that there were to be several major renovations done to the building, and ordered the landlord to issue eviction notices. These notices for closure were without permits, and therefore illegal. This was brought to the City's and landlord's attention and within a week permits were granted and new eviction notices were served. These notices were specifically for renovations of stairways and bathrooms, yet the landlord has stated that he is conducting a complete building overhaul - among other things replacing windows

building self-enclosed units, and replacing doors. Together these renovations constitute major construction, and remove the building from use by the community for a substantial amount of time. These kinds of major changes to a building are referred to as "conversions" and are covered by separate permits that were never applied for by the New Wings Hotel, making the entire closure of the building illegal.

After the eviction notices were given the landlord proceeded to buy people out who would leave early, under the supervision of City workers. Some tenants took this offer, and were given 50 to 200 dollars to leave immediately, forgoing their damage deposits and one months rent which was owed to them. The landlord proceeded then to seize the rooms and possessions of people who were gone, before the eviction was in effect, and before an order of possession was obtained. Some of these units were simply emptied into dumpsters by building staff.

Since July 1st there has been no one living in the New Wings Hotel, yet even after a month many former tenants are still attempting to get their possessions and damage deposits back. There has also been no construction done on the building. While the City was unsuccessful in living up to its promise of relocating the people from the New Wings Hotel, it did succeed in robbing the downtown eastside of 55 low-rent rooms, and evicting the 60 plus tenants that lived there through every legal and illegal technique they could manage. Due to the city's failure in relocation, former tenants were forced to take the matter upon themselves, many of them successfully relocating themselves to local parks and alleyways. Others have ended up sleeping in hallways and common areas of other buildings like the New Wings Hotel, and are bringing down the same kind of heat on these locations that the police and city bureaucrats used to shut down the New Wings. Rather than being an anomaly, the case of the New Wings Hotel is more a template for the neighbourhood. It has been applied to earlier examples such as the Marr Hotel, and will continue to be used as an essential police and City tool that is part of an aggressive gentrification project for the Downtown Eastside. In commenting on the New Wings Hotel VPD spokesperson Tim Fanning stated that "We support any initiative that is going to either clean up that building or shut it down, ... It's been a great thorn in our side. It's been a real problem for years." The City approaches the downtown eastside in the same way, and their aggression is only going to intensify as property values rise and the arrival of the olympics nears. The survival of this neighbourhood and the people in it will depend upon its ability to collectively meet and challenge this aggression.

July 9th continued...

are violently assaulted every night with near impunity. At the Court house an organiser with No one Is Illegal promised that the struggle for justice and equality for refugees and immigrants would continue.

Reaching the park a barbeque was held and we sat and ate as a community, gaining strength from providing for one another as well as struggling in solidarity with each another. This demo was a success in showing that the grassroots movement for dignity and economic equality continues to fight-on with the determination to defeat this government once and for all!

Harm Reduction Saves Lives

or too long, the Canadian prison-industrial complex has remained peripheral to the discussions, analysis and strategizing of many on the left. While we sit silently, thousands of poor people suffer behind bars. This suffering - the violation of every imaginable human right - is perhaps best captured by the way that the agencies responsible for the health of prisoners seem to have made every last effort to sustain and exacerbate what can only be described as an epidemiological crisis. HIV and HCV transmission rates in federal and provincial institutions are on the rise with intravenous drug use being one of the leading means of infection. The lack of any meaningful harm reduction policies or prevention plans leads us to conclude that both Health Canada (HC) and Correctional Service Canada (CSC) have decided that the health of inmates - by and large poor people and people of colour - does not matter.

Many inmates who are incarcerated because of drug charges continue to use drugs with little to no access to health or addictions services. Others, incarcerated for poverty-driven property crimes or other petty crimes, turn to drugs as a source of comfort or solace in an environment that is increasingly crowded, violent and repressive. Since clean syringes are considered contraband in Canadian prisons, intravenous drug users (IDUs) are forced to share dull, dirty and barbed needles with countless others over and over again, thereby increasing the spread of diseases such as HIV and Hep-C within the prison population.

Upon the inmates' release from prison, often back into a life of poverty, the diseases do not stay behind but continue on. Currently in the DTES, 21% of IDU's with HIV contracted the disease while in prison. The rates of HCV infection are likely much higher. The diseases they contracted while wards of CSC become population health problems when they are released into the community with little or no harm reduction and/or prevention education. To make matters worse, many are

released unaware of the blood-borne pathogen they contracted while incarcerated. And so the partnership of silence and ignorance between Health Canada and CSC drives what has reached epidemic proportions in ghettos and reserves across Canada.

We do not believe that reforming the brutal system of imprisonment will change the system of social inequality that creates capitalism's need for prisons. We understand that social inequality has forced many people into financial situations that conflict with the laws of capitalism (i.e. laws that place property rights above human rights). It is not a coincidence that Canadian prisons warehouse a disproportionate number of girls, women and aboriginal people. The Canadian state maintains this poverty and creates an economy that forces members of marginalized populations to take incredible risks with their physical well-being and health in order to subsist and survive. One of these risks is using drugs intravenously while incarcerated.

JUSTICE FOR PRISONERS

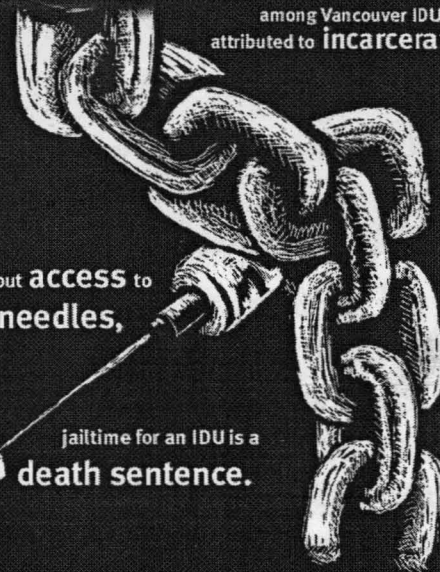
MARCH & PROTEST

**Tuesday,
August 9th
2pm at
Victory Square
(Cambie & Hastings)**

PUBLIC FORUM

**August 9th
6:30pm
50 E. Hastings**

21% of HIV infections
among Vancouver IDUs can be
attributed to **incarceration.**



Without access to
clean needles,

jailtime for an IDU is a
death sentence.

HARM REDUCTION FOR PRISONERS NOW!

Throughout the struggle against Imperialism, organizing with prisoners has been crucial in every movement. In Canada it is no different. This International Day for Prisoners Rights join the struggle of solidarity with those who fight behind the bars!

Secwepmc Defenders Behind Enemy Lines

The following update was taken from the front-page of resist.ca. It contains specific information on how to support the Secwepmc Defenders who are still in prison. We strongly urge all those who are able to pick up pen and paper and write letters - not enough can be said for the significance of such gestures of solidarity and support when in politically and physically isolating conditions.

July 15, 2005

This morning, Native Youth Movement Warrior Nicky Manuel was released from the Alouette Correctional Facility for Women to her daughter, family, community and supporters. However, Rose, Marc and Trevor remain incarcerated behind enemy lines. Rose and Nicky have requested that money be sent to Trevor and Marc (contacts below): please send money orders or certified cheques (no personal cheques) to either or both at the addresses below and write "For Inmate's Account" on the envelopes. Of course, letters to Rose, Trevor and Marc are also welcome at the following addresses:

noii-van@resist.ca
778-885-0040
<http://noii-van.resist.ca/>
skwelkwekwelt

Skwelkwek'welt Protection Center
P.O. Box 837, Chase, BC
Canada, V0E 1M0
Phone (250) 318-4290
Fax (250) 679-5306
e-mail: jrbilly@mail.ocis.net

Important instructions: Use either white or yellow paper and only write on one side of the sheet. Do not send anything else like stamps or even newspaper clippings as it may get returned to you. Also, assume that prison staff will read letters.

Rose Jack
Alouette Correctional
Centre for Women
PO Box 1000
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 7G4

Marc Sauls or Trevor Dennis
Kamloops Regional
Correctional Centre
PO Box 820
Kamloops, BC V2C 5M9



Come to a meeting:

General Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month.

6pm - 251 Union Street - Buzz 900 and someone will come and get you.

For information about specific campaign sub-committees (welfare, housing and low-wage workers) please get in touch (meeting times vary).

Make a donation to APC:

Mail a cheque (see address below) or deposit \$ directly into our account at any VanCity branch.

Get in touch:

apc@resist.ca

604.682.2726

P.O. Box 1, 12 East Hastings St.

V6A 1N1

(office visits by appointment only)



Get

Involved!

APC Basis of Unity

The Anti-Poverty Committee is an organization of poor and working people, who fight for poor people, their rights and an end to poverty by any means necessary.

The poor face constant attack under the capitalist system and these attacks have only intensified under the BC Liberal government. APC is committed to fighting the brutal policies of the BC Liberals through direct action, mass mobilization, and casework.

We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of oppression. APC is an independent and democratic organization open to anyone who agrees with our basis of unity. We are committed to working in solidarity with the struggles of other progressive movements - locally, nationally, and internationally - to end poverty and injustice.

Visit our website for up-to-date information about this and other APC campaigns as well as upcoming or recent events.

apc.resist.ca