

Panarticon

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Vacuuous & Vicious: Vancouver

Flying back to BC was a lesson in depression. As soon as you cross the Rockies you can hear the world's largest vacuum cleaner performing its duties as the welcoming anthem to No Fun City. Suuuccckkkkk... Swooping in just in time to hear schoolmarm Anne Drennan advance the finger-wagging on living-it-up if the Canucks pulled through, it was enough to hurl me straight through the remnants of a once beautiful city, deep into twenty years of mismanagement, paranoia, and brutality all collapsed into about 10 square blocks—the Downtown Eastside. It seems that despite the best efforts of COPE, Vancouver Police Chief Constable Jamie Graham has added an extra pillar to the Four Pillar strategy: aggression. Every iota of data collected in the past 10 years on reducing crime and dealing with the Vancouver Eastside drug problematic in a humane and supporting manner has gone to the fish (or what's left of those Pacific salmon). Moreover, Graham has succeeded in alienating previous community policing efforts in implementing an uncalled for strategy of increased policing. To say this is disappointing only begins to recognise the power struggle in play between the public and the police. It is an old struggle, of course, between those with the blue & the badge and those without. It seems that it is time to consider another agenda for COPE, for what needs to be changed is the very way in which the constitution of the police department is determined. Why aren't Police Chiefs elected by the community in tandem with a weighted vote from other sectors, including the Police Department and the City Councillors? A balanced electoral process, while admittedly never being able to avoid the nepotism of democracy, would nonetheless ensure a degree of harmony and an alignment of vision between the public's support of various tactics—such as the overwhelming support for the Four Pillars plan—and the Police Department's aims. And when I mean aims, I don't mean the rhetorical bullshit on their website—<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/police/>. I mean fear, intimidation, detainment without arrest, harassment, surveillance (cameras or otherwise), violence—the tactics of the cop, the actual encounter between cop and citizen, and the fact that today, an overzealous and aggressive Police could become the city's worst vice, in sabotaging efforts to open much-needed safe-injection sites and in presenting an atmosphere which, for some time—& in tandem with various powerplays by previous Councils and business—has resembled xenophobic small-town wagon-circling than the energy of a world-class city. (Come to think of it, Jamie Graham *was* Police Chief of Surrey. And Surrey turned out *just fine*, right? Right.) I don't mean post-Giuliani NYC as a model for Vancouver, nor do I mean the overblown hype of the Olympics. Something a little intangible that comes about through public participation, through a relaxing of laws pertaining to the public's right of assembly, of ingestion of substances, of hosting and creating events, art, music; of raising awareness of social issues that plague others in our neighborhoods and communities; of creating a ward system for improved regional representation—certainly none of this calls for the ruling decisions of an elite cabal, which means that the Vancouver City Councillors, Chief Jamie Graham, and the Provincial Liberals are on a collision course, a course that necessitates a few markers: think Berlin's reconstruction, Montréal's political

negotiations... Imagine converting Vancouver's scenic backdrop beauty to a network node of the West Coast, a city on the flow of the Fraser—blowdown the dam that holds this city & province confine to puritanism & big business.

Jackbootdown BC

From mountain to ocean, the Province has ushered in a new Error. Everything is now in the hands of those clammy humans whose only Earthly goal is the accumulation of fabricated interest, these strange, future-projected visions of profit, and what amounts to, in the end, the future of the CEO: holidays in Cancun. Which all boils down to—as water becomes privatized (don't worry BC, *we'll get our Walkerton too*)—the *quest for power*. The deregulation of the Province, while in some areas welcomed, is not about creating an efficient atmosphere for living. It is about creating a space for the ravages of capital to cruise *out of control*. It's about making the Governmental structure stronger, not smaller. Any Liberal who believed that traditional, Enlightenment & Humanist views, welfare-state or not, were to be "returned to" under Campbell is now having his doubts; and even the Libertarians, followers of Ayn Rand or no, are realising that the current Liberal Government is more solidly anchored as a State than ever, and is no closer to loosening up the deeply Puritan foundations of this Province that even hold back those hidden Supermen. Why aren't clubs open til 4am? Why are the Police still passing out fines for wiggling ass in a café? Why are youth still being harassed for choking a joint? Why can't I carry alcohol in a backpack to my apartment during the Fireworks? Why am I filmed by surveillance cameras on a daily basis in a relatively peaceful Central Business District? The petty issues, perhaps—as they are all signifiers of the major struggles being played out over the very lifeblood of the province: the working classes, a century and a half of what can only be understood as class & anti-racist/sexist struggle, and—for the first time in this history—the fault and failure of the institutional structure that has staged the fight: the Union. The Unions have, for better or for worse, had their Liberal dreams smashed. Kudos to the HEU for rejecting the downsizing & vicious "offer" from the BC Liberals. The time for negotiations is over; the time for collaboration—COPE and Unions vs. the Province—has come. If the Right can easily coalesce diverging splinter-factions to formulate affective strategies, so can the Left—the time for infighting is over, the time for thinking of affect has come: of ways to change the way people *live* in this Province, and that means starting with treating everyone like humans, world citizens—be they in the Downtown Eastside or letting loose a little dancing desire in a late-night café.

Oust the Fuckers.