

HUMAN RIGHTS

ALERT

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ISSUE # 9

A Psychiatric Survival Broadsheet



ONTARIO CTO Legislation:

'Brian's Law' Introduced

The Government of Ontario yesterday fulfilled its most recent threat against vulnerable members of the community when it introduced legislation that will grant police and 'mental health' professionals *carte blanche* powers to detain people deemed 'mentally ill' and compel them to submit to unwanted 'treatment' even in their own homes.

Bill 68 or 'Brian's Law' (named for sportscaster and former NHL player Brian Smith, who was murdered in Ottawa in 1995 by a supposedly 'mentally ill' man) will also render the already biased appeal mechanism for involuntary 'patients' completely useless, by rewording language in the Mental Health Act that at least currently places some small degree of obligation on the cops or shrinks to verify the person in fact poses an 'imminent' risk of harm to self or others.

'Need for Treatment'

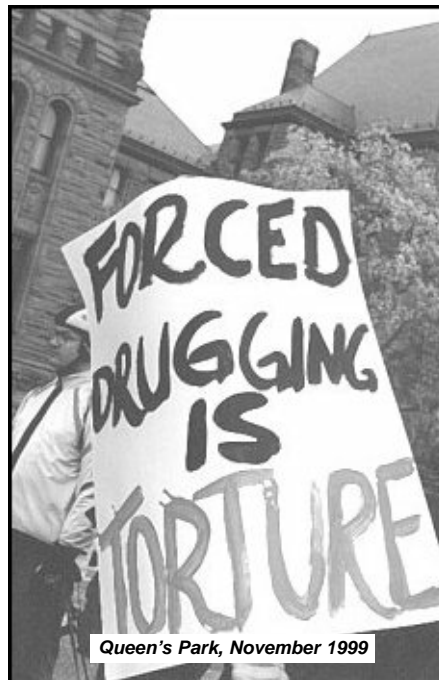
Instead, the newly reworded Act will contain revised standards for involuntary committal (in- or out-patient) that will be based solely on a totally subjective determination of an individual's supposed 'need for treatment'. (No explanation is given of precisely what this is supposed to mean).

In addition, the requirement that a police officer actually *observe* a person behaving in a 'disorderly' fashion before being able to detain them under the Act will no longer apply, thus paving the way for any third party's say-so to suffice as basis for loss of liberty and forced intervention.

The community treatment order component is being presented in a

totally misleading fashion, as being a 'voluntary' arrangement to allow supervision of psychiatric 'care' in a 'less restrictive' environment than a hospital setting.

The primary flaw in this 'logic' is that any arrangement entered into under duress (in this case being the threat of possible indefinite confinement as the only alternative) or that is legally binding and ultimately enforceable by the cops, is about as 'voluntary' as any course of action that a person is forced into at the point of a gun.



Happening parallel to this legislation has been the widespread creation of 'Assertive Community Treatment' teams, that in all likelihood will be pressed into an active enforcement role once the new law is in

place. Such teams already play this role in some of the more than forty U.S. states that have CTO or 'outpatient committal' laws on their books.

The relaxed standards for involuntary detention under the Mental Health Act will provide Toronto's campaign of 'targeted policing' with a powerful new weapon with which to persecute homeless persons, panhandlers, squeegeers and anyone else who is deemed incompatible with the new social order or current vision of Yuppie heaven. Since the new law is likely to be in effect by the end of the Spring session of the legislature, we can look forward to it being enforced vigorously over this summer, as the equally Orwellian 'Safe Streets Act' is already being.

This new legislation will likely have an especially high appeal to these agents of social cleansing as it conveys no legal obligation for arresting officers to verify their cases in court, thus sparing them having to run the potentially embarrassing gauntlet of lawyers and judges.

Join the PSYCHIATRIC SURVIVOR CONTINGENT

in the Ontario Coalition
Against Poverty's March
on Queen's Park!

THURSDAY, JUNE 15
Assemble 12:00 noon
ALLAN GARDENS

SURVIVORS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!

THEATRE

'Angels of 999 Queen Street West'
- a powerful self-portrayal of Survivor history and culture

Playwright and historian Dr. Geoffrey Reaume has utilized his research into the early history of the Toronto Hospital for the Insane (now the Center for Addiction and Mental Health - Queen Street Division) to craft this incredibly powerful narrative depicting a patient's-eye perspective on life in a large turn-of-the-century mental institution.

'Angels of 999 Queen Street West' (This being the street address of the institution in question, prior to it being changed to 1001 Queen St. W. in the mid-1970's) depicts in vivid detail the daily lives of several inmates of this institution as they face the challenge of incarceration lasting for decades at a time, backbreaking forced labour, staff abuse and outside community attitudes ranging from indifference to outright hostility.

Carpenter and violin-maker 'Winston O.' (Heinz Klein) spent fifty-eight years behind the walls before dying shortly prior to his 90th birthday, while the lovelorn youngster 'Egbert G.' (Liza Soroka) saw the handwriting on the wall early, subsequently scaling it to freedom after a mere three weeks' incarceration. 'Jane the Story Teller' (Penny Riegle) maintained continuity through her smooth narrative flow, while the 'protagonist' (Ken Innes) placed aspects of the story into a modern context by wielding a thoroughly engaging comic flair, while keeping cast and audience alike on their toes throughout.

Based on portrayals of several actual inmates of the asylum (The names were changed to respect peoples' privacy) along with a number of skilfully created composite characters, these were just some of the people depicted in this study of the remarkably rich tapestry of 'patient' life and culture, inside the walls of one of Canada's most oppressive institutions.



'Angels of 999'

'Marcia F.' (Ruth Ruth) was a woman who spent a combined total of nineteen years in two separate asylums (Toronto and Hamilton), merely for being a woman who wished to control and freely express her sexuality, which earned her the diagnosis of 'erotomaniac.' 'Emily O.' (Lucia Costa) was a devout Christian and former domestic servant whose repeated letters complaining of abuse earned her the enmity and contempt of the medical staff during a period of imprisonment that spanned five years.

This play, which was two years in the crafting under the loving touch of the Friendly Spike Theatre Band, surely stands as one of the most important renderings of the history of an oppressed people, from the perspective of the people themselves.

The book *Remembrance of Patients Past: Patient Life in the Toronto Hospital for the Insane 1870-1940* by Geoffrey Reaume, Ph.D is now available through Oxford University Press.

Psychiatric Survivor Resources in Toronto

People Against Coercive Treatment

P: 760-2795 F: 368-5984

Internet: <pact@tao.ca>

<www.tao.ca/~pact>

Queen Street Patient's Council

Room 2059, 1001 Queen St. W.

Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4

P: 535-8501x2018 F: 325-9749

<patientsco@icomm.ca>

<www.icomm.ca/patientsco>

No Force! Coalition

(c/o Queen Street Patient's Council)

<www.tao.ca/~pact/noforce.html>

Sound Times Support Services

96 Granby St.

Toronto, Ontario

P: 979-1700 F: 979 5863

E-mail: <stimes@icomm.ca>

<www.icomm.ca/stimes>

C/S Information Resource Centre

c/o Day Centre

252 College St. 3rd Floor

Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R8

P: 595-2882 F: 595-0291

E-mail: <csinfo@icomm.ca>



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Contributions welcome!

(Contributions may be edited for space)

<http://bacque.graeme.tripod.com/HRA/HRA.html>

