

Vancouver Five Charged With Litton Bombing

Fifth Estate Collective

1983

Every crime in Oklahoma was added to his name.

—Ballad of Pretty Boy Floyd by Woodie Guthrie

Seizing five anarchists on 17 charges of sabotage and conspiracy in British Columbia early this year (see FE #312, Spring 1983) gave the Canadian government the excuse it needed to begin “clearing” other unsolved bomb cases by attributing them to the arrested five.

On April 12 Julie Belmas, Ann Hansen, Gerry Hannah, Doug Stewart and Brent Taylor were charged by Ontario authorities with the bombing of a Toronto Litton Industries plant that manufactures guidance systems for cruise missiles (see FE June 19, 1982). Three months had passed since the January 20th arrest of the five on the West Coast charges with no connection to the Toronto bombings being made. Suddenly, the charges were brought two days before a bail appeal was scheduled, forcing the hearing to be canceled since even if bail had been granted, the accused would have been immediately re-arrested and flown to Toronto for the indictment there. This newest ploy insures the impossibility of bail for any of them and ‘greatly magnifies the sensationalism surrounding the case.

The Vancouver 5, as the defendants are called, were denied bail by a Vancouver judge who cited reasons of “public safety” for refusing to set them free pending trial.

An even more alarming development in the case is the Crown’s (the prosecution) decision to try to separate the 17 charges into four separate trials and to ask for life sentences for the accused. This would mean four different judges and four separate jury selections and trials. It appears that the Crown’s strategy is to separate the “political” charges from the “criminal” ones in an attempt to eliminate the strong community support the five have in the Vancouver area. Such a string of trials in itself would condemn the accused to a de facto sentence of years in jail even if they are eventually found not guilty.

The Crown has also used other tactics to insure an unfair trial. The prosecutors have threatened the five with a procedure called direct indictment which would eliminate the defense’s right to preliminary hearings (where they would get a chance to weigh the evidence against their clients) and instead send the case direct to trial. To avoid this, the five had to agree to a shortened preliminary hearing, hence foregoing more of their rights.

Vancouver community support remains strong in the face of official intimidation with rallies and demonstrations marking every hearing for the five, and their defense group is picking up increased support from varied sections of the community. Police harassment continues unabated as well with raids on homes of activists and interrogations of supporters and friendly journalists. International support is also growing with extensive coverage of the case in the libertarian press, protests to Canadian consulates (which have been requested by the defense committee) and fund raising on behalf of the jailed.

Support work is now underway to raise money, prepare a legal defense, and educate the public about the case. Those interested in assisting may send contributions to:

Free the Vancouver Five Defense Group Account No. 91740-1
c/o CCEC Credit Union
205 E. 6th Ave.

Vancouver BC
or for more information write:
Free the Vancouver 5 Defense Group
P.O. Box 48296 Bentall Station
Vancouver BC V7X 1Aa

To contact any of the five captives directly, write to them individually at: Lower Mainland Regional Correction Center, Drawer 0, Burnaby BC, V5H 3N4 CANADA.

AS WE GO TO PRESS: A police raid on Toronto supporters of the Vancouver Five has occurred and the prison support publication *Bulldozer* seized. See page 5 of this issue.

Related

For an update, see "Repression Continues in Toronto," FE #314, Fall 1983.

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