

Harsh Sentences in Toronto

Fifth Estate Collective

In a decision that outraged the Toronto anarchist community, Ken Deyarmond was sentenced to six months in jail for assaulting two cops during a demonstration in September 1983 against British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Deyarmond was grabbed by pig Dusko Markovic during the demonstration for “lunging” at Thatcher and during the resulting fracas, as Ken tried to squirm free, he was manhandled by three cops.

During the trial, the stupidity of the charges was obvious. Markovic stands 6 feet 4 inches and weighs over 280 pounds, while Ken is 5 feet 2 inches and weighs in at 130 pounds. Not a very even matchup. Ken was, in fact, pushed. At least one witness was willing to testify on the stand that she saw a man in a blue suit deliberately push him. The defense lawyer chose not to pursue that angle, rather simply implying that Ken had been pushed forward by the general commotion of the demo into the gentle and waiting hands of officer Markovic.

The trial itself had all the appearances of being “fair.” It was only during sentencing that the Crown prosecutor and the Judge revealed their prejudices against political activists. The judge said it was necessary to make an example of Ken so that people going to demonstrations could be protected from those people who went prepared to do violence. It was clear that this message was intended for Ken’s supporters who had been attending the trial.

The broader implication is also clear, that the Courts will judge activists harshly for any disturbance at a demonstration even if they are the victims rather than the instigators of police violence.

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