

Pope Squat starts July 25

Ontario Coalition Against Poverty plans to open an abandoned building to highlight homelessness problem

**POPE
SQUAT**



**Thursday, July 25th
7:00 PM**

Meet at Masaryk Cowan Park
Queen St. W. & Cowan Ave.
east of Lansdowne, west of
Dufferin - in Parkdale!

Info: www.ocap.ca

*"When the government
refuses to build housing,
people have no choice but
to take it themselves."*

The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty will open the Pope Squat, on Thursday, July 25. The City of Toronto is spending millions of dollars funding the Pope's visit for World Youth Day while neglecting the basic needs of the thousands of people deprived of shelter as a result of skyrocketing rents and evictions. Squatters will occupy an abandoned building in a Toronto neighborhood during the Pope's visit; their demands of all levels of government include the creation of 2000 units of social housing a year. The Pope Squat will ultimately be transformed into self-managed social housing and a community centre for neighbourhood use.

In order to celebrate the opening of the Pope Squat, OCAP is inviting neighbourhood residents, social activists and squat supporters to a Summer Street Festival on Saturday, July 27, featuring:

- performances by bands and DJs
- circus stunts and face-painting
- speeches by your favourite Toronto politicians
- a community barbecue
- an atmosphere of festive resistance & reappropriation.

The Festival will start at Noon and continue on well into the evening. It will take place outside the Pope Squat; the exact location will be announced at the opening of the Squat on July 25th. Check your email or the OCAP website (www.ocap.ca) for updates. There are many ways you can contribute to this celebration of resistance and reappropriation:

You can participate just by showing up, getting to know the squatters and the neighbours, sharing good food and celebrating the capacity of people to take and create the shelter they need in order to survive and flourish in this city.

If you are an artist or performer, and would like to support the Pope Squat by performing at the Summer Street Festival, please get in touch with John at john@tao.ca or at 416.925.6939.

If you would like to speak in support of the Pope Squat during the festival, or know of good speakers who might, please let us know. See you at the party!

When the government refuses to build housing, people have no choice but to take it themselves! Fight to Win!

OCAP demands:

1. Convert the squatted building into social housing.
2. City-wide inspection and repair blitz: Inspect and order repairs on all unsafe and substandard housing in the City of Toronto.
3. Stop economic evictions: Raise the minimum wage to \$10.00/hr. Restore the cut to social assistance.
4. Restore rent control.
5. Build 2000 units of social housing every year.

(Note: by "social housing" we mean rent-geared-to-income affordable housing)

For more coverage, visit: ontario.indymedia.org



History of excessive police force to end housing squats

Toronto — March 22

Visit the Ontario and Ottawa Independent Media Centre web sites for more multi-media coverage of these and other events

with info from articles #7844, 8125
by L. Zimmerman, S. Holliday

After about 1000 anti-poverty activists snake-marched around downtown Toronto in protest of the Ontario Tory government convention, activists decided to squat in an abandoned building. The squatting action was an act of symbolism to protest the increasing number of homeless and the need for affordable and subsidized housing: problems that the Tories have been ignoring with frigid contempt and advancing with utter cruelty since they took power in 1995.

After breaking down boards blocking entrance into the Mission Press building (on Victoria and Dundas), about 60 activists went in to spend the night. It was only minutes before hundreds of armed, masked riot police began surrounding the building and the protesters outside.

After being closed in by police for a little over an hour, the large group outside the building was forced away from the front by swarms of riot police.

Police then took formation in front of Mission Press to arrest the activists squatting inside. Protesters hung banners out of the win-

dows reading “we need housing now” and “stop the war on the poor”.

After a couple of hours, activists began to “surrender” when police started firing tear gas canisters in through the upstairs windows. As the activists came down the stairs one by one, tactical officers aimed their laser targeting guns at them.

Activists were then placed on the ground, handcuffed, and hauled off to jail. A group of female arrestees were kept in police paddy wagons for a number of hours before being taken to jail, where they underwent strip searches. In all, about 65 people were arrested.

As the police sealed off the street, some protesters took refuge in the Imperial pub. Pub regulars and people trapped inside all voiced their outrage against the police actions together. They exclaimed, “this is what our tax dollars are supporting!?” and “the Tories can’t even give affordable housing to people, but they can pay overtime for hundreds of riot cops to arrest some kids for squatting in an abandoned building.” It was a genuine show of solidarity between activists and “ordinary citizens” just out to have a beer!

Ottawa — June 26 to July 3

with info from articles
ottawa.indymedia.org/2002/07/...
...920.shtml — by Paul Matisz
...756.shtml — by IMC Ottawa

On 26 July in Ottawa, Canada, activists seized an abandoned house on Gilmour Street as part of the “Take The Capital” anti-G8 demonstrations that brought thousands of protestors to the nation’s capital. The squat demonstrated the importance of local action within the context of larger events and showed how the anti-globalization movement could support local struggles. For a week the “seven-year squat” became a living, vibrant community in the centre of Ottawa, supported by activists, unions and the community around it.

In the early hours of Wednesday July 3, OC Transpo (transit) buses dropped off about a hundred cops, some in riot gear, to secure the surrounding area stretching several blocks.

Cops proceeded to ask the occupants to leave, after which they declared the entire block a crime scene. Anyone who refused to leave would be arrested for interference with a police operation. This included the private property across the street belonging to the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), where legal observers and media (independent, public, and corporate) had been

given permission by PSAC to use the property to observe from. Cops cleared all witnesses to be out of sight of the house.

Ottawa-Carleton police in riot gear began a systematic and brutal assault on the house, using tear gas, clubs and a new chemical irritant (similar in deployment to pepper spray, but more severe, possibly with a pharmaceutical additive, and highly resistant to established “street treatment”) to subdue and arrest the almost two-dozen unarmed people barricaded inside the squat. Several protesters were injured and one was hospitalized — but only after being abused and denied medical treatment until he signed release conditions under duress.

The versatility and vitality of the spontaneous organism which developed on Gilmour Street grew and became stronger with every challenge. The final challenge, the police invasion and brutality, failed to destroy that organism. The storm which topples a tree also spreads its seeds far and wide, and so too in Ottawa.

The house on Gilmour Street is now boarded up and the tribe has been scattered, but protestors say that the spirit lives on.

They are stronger than ever in their determination “to live, to be defiant”, and to reclaim that which they “hadn’t even known had been stolen”.

