

## Youth Hostels and Hostile Locals: Vancouver's 'Battle of Jericho,' 1970

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Volume 48, Number 1, Fall 2020

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1074687ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3138/uhr.48.1.004>

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Publisher(s)

University of Toronto Press

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Mahood, L. (2020). Youth Hostels and Hostile Locals: Vancouver's 'Battle of Jericho,' 1970. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 48(1), 43–65. <https://doi.org/10.3138/uhr.48.1.004>

Article abstract

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# Youth Hostels and Hostile Locals: Vancouver's 'Battle of Jericho,' 1970

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**ABSTRACT:** Chasing tourist dollars was a necessity for many following the Second World War. However, few people in the summers of 1968 and 1969 could have escaped the sight of hundreds of fashionably penniless baby boomers hitchhiking along roads on their “annual summer trek”. Municipal authorities began to receive complaints about “scruffy young people” panhandling and sleeping rough in cities and towns along the Trans-Canada Highway. Tourism, wanted and unwanted, has the capacity to cause conflict between travelers and locals. In 1970, federally funded youth hostels became the focus of Trudeau’s Liberal government’s need to manage youth unemployment as well as radicalism on university campuses. The focus of this article is youth travel to Vancouver and Vancouverites’ responses to the National Hostel Task Force, which led to sit-ins and police-youth and youth-youth conflict, which culminated in the “Battle of Jericho”. Drawing on contemporary mainstream and university newspaper accounts, Vancouver City Police reports, RCMP intelligence files and activities at University of British Columbia, this article argues that failure to understand the diverse needs of Canada’s young people turned youth tourism into the transient youth problem in the summer of 1970.

**Key words:** hitchhike, youth hostel, students, hippie, baby boom, teenagers, Vancouver, British Columbia

**RÉSUMÉ :** Les dollars des touristes étaient devenus une nécessité pour de nombreuses personnes après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Par contre, peu d’entre elles, au cours des étés de 1968 et de 1969, auraient manqué de voir les centaines de baby-boomers, sans le sou par choix, qui faisaient du pouce pour leur « voyage estival annuel ». Les autorités municipales commencèrent à recevoir des plaintes au sujet des « jeunes débrayés » qui quittaient et qui dormaient à la belle étoile dans les villes et villages qui longeaient la Transcanadienne. Le tourisme, désiré ou non, a la capacité de créer des conflits entre voyageurs et résidents. En 1970, des auberges de jeunesse financées par le gouvernement fédéral sont devenues le point focal du besoin du gouvernement libéral de Trudeau de gérer le chômage chez les jeunes ainsi que le radicalisme sur les campus universitaires. Cet article met l’accent sur les voyages des jeunes vers Vancouver et la réponse des Vancouverois à la National Hostel Task Force, laquelle a entraîné une occupation des lieux (sit-ins) ainsi que des conflits entre la police et les jeunes et entre les jeunes eux-mêmes, ce qui a culminé dans la « Bataille de Jericho ». À l’aide de récits contemporains des journaux universitaires et quotidiens, de rapports de la police de la Ville de Vancouver, des dossiers de renseignements de la GRC et des activités à la University of British Columbia, cet article soutient que le manque de compréhension des divers besoins des jeunes canadiens a transformé le tourisme des jeunes en un problème de jeunes vagabonds au cours de l’été 1970.

**Mots-clés :** faire du pouce, auberge de jeunesse, étudiants, hippies, baby-boom, adolescents, Vancouver, Colombie-Britannique

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*Vancouver more than any other city in Canada knows the ugly side of the annual summer trek of young people across the country. It was in Vancouver last year that the migration lost sight of itself and degenerated into a tawdry self-destructive conflict between youthful transients and civic authorities.*<sup>1</sup>

Chasing tourist dollars was a necessity for many people in postwar Canada. To promote the burgeoning tourism industry, the National Film Board and Canadian Government Tourist Board reminded locals that their most valuable asset was “the warm friendliness of the Canadian people.” Residents living near national parks, recreation sites, sightseeing, and historical attractions were used to accommodating “Mr. Tourist Dollar’s” diverse tastes and constant demands.<sup>2</sup> However, few people in the summers of 1968 and 1969 could have escaped the sight of hundreds of fashionably penniless baby boomers hitchhiking along roads on their “annual summer trek”. Municipal authorities began to receive complaints about “scruffy young people” panhandling and sleeping rough in cities and towns along the Trans-Canada Highway.<sup>3</sup>

Older people said the phenomenon was “strangely reminiscent” of the 1930s when “thumbing a ride” was the mode of travel used by jobless men and women; however, charity workers said the “situation was getting out of hand”, complaining that middle-class travelers turned up at the Salvation Army and YMCA wanting handouts, but refused to abide by curfews and rules that prohibited beards, long hair and drug use.<sup>4</sup> While many motorists were happy to give struggling youngsters a lift, others were unsure if they were dangerous, or if they had any influence within the radical youth culture.<sup>5</sup> The poor treatment Depression-era hobos and homeless young people received in the 1930s and the controversy around “thumb-travelers” during the long-1960s, supports Judith Adler’s claim that “freedom of movement” has never attained the status of a “universal human right,” which reveals the fear of the disorderly urban encounters that youth mobility can bring.<sup>6</sup>

Tourism, wanted and unwanted, has the capacity to cause conflict between travelers and locals.<sup>7</sup> Historically, Canadian young people’s leisure time has generally remained their own until “some of its pieces are broken off” and absorbed into mainstream culture.<sup>8</sup> In 1970, federally-funded youth hostels became the focus of the Trudeau government’s need to manage youth unemployment, radicalism on university campuses, and to keep “idle hands busy.”<sup>9</sup> This article looks closely at youth travel to Vancouver, where the Gastown and Kitsilano neighborhoods replaced Toronto’s Yorkville as the center of the counterculture.<sup>10</sup> Vancouverites’ responses to the National Hostel Task Force (NHTF) hostels at the Beatty Street Drill Hall (July–September) and the Jericho Beach Garrison (September–October) in 1970, led to sit-ins and police-youth and youth-youth conflict, which culminated in the “Battle of Jericho”. Riots have many causes; drawing on contemporary mainstream and university newspaper accounts, Vancouver City Police (VCP) reports, RCMP intelligence files, and activities at the University of British Columbia (UBC), I argue that the failure to understand the diverse needs of Canada’s young people turned youth tourism into the transient youth problem.

## On the Road: Baby Boomers and Youth Mobility

In the late 1960s, a conjuncture of demographics, a generally depressed economy, labor disputes, and changing technology hit young people especially hard, transforming them into both a visible and mobile group. The population aged 15 to 24 increased by 53 percent.<sup>11</sup> To facilitate their educational needs and the postwar era demand for a well-educated and highly trained workforce, the federal government heavily subsidized fees and student loans, and opened nine new universities.<sup>12</sup> Nearly 20 percent of 18–21 year olds enrolled in university, which delayed the transition from school to full time work.<sup>13</sup> Cyril Levitt says his generation’s exposure to new ideas at university clashed with “age-old understandings of Canadian identity” and the “cautious superficial conformity” of social life.<sup>14</sup> Despite the rise of the student population, 87 percent of the baby boom generation entered the workforce after leaving school.<sup>15</sup> The Committee on Youth report, *It’s your Turn* (1971), said young workers wanted fairer labor laws, minimum wage legislation, and jobs that were “relevant to the satisfaction of human needs in a community context.”<sup>16</sup> In 1968, the economic recession pushed the overall youth unemployment rate to 4.8 percent; by 1971 it was 13.6 percent.<sup>17</sup> For frustrated young workers and students, the civil rights, Red Power, New Left, and women’s movement articulated the generational idea that they should “do something” about the conditions of their lives.<sup>18</sup> Contemporary sociologists and historians of the global 1960s observed that baby boomers discovered that unstructured travel, backpacking, and “drifting” were ways to have “authentic experiences” and to “run” their own lives without schedules and obligations.<sup>19</sup> Jay Vogt called “wandering” and “tripping” the quest for “independence” and “learning through exposure and detachment.”<sup>20</sup> Between 1968 and 1973, the global frontiers of millions of thumb-traveling backpackers expanded from Europe, to the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Australia, and North America.<sup>21</sup>

In the late 1960s, headlines in Canadian newspapers drifted away from the “scourge” of greaseballs, fast girls, and juvenile delinquents that had dominated the 1950s, toward descriptions of dancing hippies, flower children, and sit-ins for peace, love, and understanding.<sup>22</sup> In 1968, hitchhiking along the brand new Trans-Canada Highway was added to the list of radical activities that defined belonging in the “Age of Aquarius.”<sup>23</sup> Membership of the Canadian Youth Hostel Association “quintupled” in 1969, after newly elected Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau showed up at the Jasper Youth Hostel, and encouraged hostellers to learn about “Canada and the world.”<sup>24</sup> Contemporary writing confirms that by 1970 it was not unusual to see someone traveling with a backpack.<sup>25</sup> In a “Trip Tips” column in Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) *Peak*, students said, “Hitchhikers of the world unite” and many a “lifelong friendship has started in a youth hostel.”<sup>26</sup>

It is not known how many young people decided to travel across the country, but national newspaper headlines and articles described thumb-travelers in blue jeans, beads, and long bushy hair who flipped peace signs to oncoming traffic. Contemporary accounts indicate that the west coast was a favorite destination of Canadian youth. Travelers hopped into boat-sized cars with people the dominant culture called Newfies, Rednecks, Indians, drunks, truckers, weirdoes, cowboys, and

perverts. Travelers, however, visited many traditional tourist attractions, such as Niagara Falls, Banff and Jasper, Expo '67, and the Calgary Stampede. Some travelers did not use drugs regularly, if at all, while others smoked pot and panned for gold in the Fraser River Valley, ate magic mushrooms in the Pacific Rim National Park, and dropped LSD on the Plains of Abraham. Hundreds used local charities, drop-in centers, and social services in times of need. University newspapers called students the “nouveau-pauvre” and said there were “more kids on the road than cars.”<sup>27</sup>

The adult world watched the frustrated Spock-babies come of age and struggle to “do their own thing,” even when it meant being called dropouts, hippies, radicals, and troublemakers. In order to investigate the problems that young people on the road were causing for social services and local charities, Lillian Thomson of the Canadian Welfare Council (CWC) asked the Department of Health and Welfare for money to study the so-called, “transient youth phenomenon.” In May 1970, the appearance of the CWC’s *Transient Youth: Report of an Inquiry in the Summer of 1969*, emphasized how strongly small town people “disliked strangers and squatters” and quoted a church minister who called traveling baby boomers “social misfits” who were drifting in “a private world of rootlessness, drink, drugs, and madness.”<sup>28</sup> On July 8, 1970 the Trudeau government responded to the recommendation that they take a more active role. Rather than create incentives and employment schemes to keep young people at home, Secretary of State Gérard Pelletier created an experiential travel program. Under the auspices of the NHTF, Pelletier’s office committed \$200,000 to a “temporary hostel program” that offered 150,000 bed-nights and free breakfast to young travelers. Approximately 20 hostels were opened until September 8; 14 were at Department of National Defense (DND) armouries and military bases.<sup>29</sup> Over the next few summers, youth mobility and travel would become a social problem.

## Vancouver’s Hairy Hostel Dwellers: Battle Lines on Beatty Street

Following the Second World War, British Columbia’s provincial travel bureau also encouraged travelers from all over the country to see “BC First.”<sup>30</sup> West coast residents were alarmed in 1970 when the CBC announced that the “mecca” for at least 50,000 transient travelers, dropout students, and jobseekers was Vancouver: “Canada’s Los Angeles.”<sup>31</sup> Trudeau’s clarion cry to “See Canada First” pointed young people in the direction of Vancouver and many neighborhood associations and civic authorities were alarmed. Older generations remembered the 1930s, when Vancouver had also been a mecca for jobless young people. The result was a series of violent street riots and clashes between city police and protesters. In the 1950s and 1960s, many blocks of Vancouver’s downtown core, periphery and docklands constituted what urban sociologists called a “hobohemia.”<sup>32</sup>

The demography of city residents shifted to the suburbs in the 1960s and real estate investors and business-leaders saw a chance to rejuvenate the run-down core with new roads, department stores, and high-rise apartments and buildings. There was no place in their imagined community for the penniless bohemians, hippies, and curious travelers that gravitated to the coffeehouses and late-night diners on East Hastings and Main Street, and in the cheap lodging houses in the Downtown

East Side and Historic Gastown.<sup>33</sup> Anti-hippie associations said hippies spread moral corruption and should be arrested for obstructing traffic, indecent behavior, and drug possession.<sup>34</sup> The Children's Aid Society said runaways found in the area were being "taken in by hippies" and at risk of becoming involved in "sexual immorality."<sup>35</sup>

Kitsilano neighborhood on the south shore of English Bay attracted a similar crowd. Local kids called West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, "Love Street" and hippie entrepreneurs opened San Francisco-style bars and shops.<sup>36</sup> The Kitsilano Ratepayers' Association had been embroiled in a fight with hippies since the mid-1960s. On August 15, 1967, they reported that there were at least 2,000 hippies in Kitsilano and identified "suspected" drug traffickers that ran dubious "head-shops," like the "Psychedelic Shop" and the "Horizon Book Store", which had a "crash pad" for those coming down from drug trips.<sup>37</sup> Hippies and anarchists were also causing trouble in Stanley Park, at the courthouse, where they congregated on steps to listen to music and speeches and smoke marijuana. The "psychedelic" streets were indeed places for performance, politics, and play for "counterculturists", and anti-war activists who believed that Canada's dispossessed—students, Indigenous people, the poor, women, queers, and racial minorities—would change the world.<sup>38</sup> This is not to say that all was well with traveling young people. Many arrived in the city, hungry, sick, and homeless. Local students and teenagers formed their own "youth friendly" charities, like Cool Aid, which raised money from rock concerts and local churches and community groups for feed-ins and crash pads for travelers. In the summer of 1968, Cool Aid provided 3,100 billets in private homes and their own house at 1822 West Seventh Avenue. In 1969 CoolAid placed between 60 and 100 people in accommodation every night.<sup>39</sup>

The announcement, in July 1970, by the NHTF that the old drill hall on Beatty Street in the downtown core was about to become a 350-bed hostel for young men baffled many sectors of the community—the mayor of Vancouver, Tom Campbell, was furious. Since his election in 1966, the wealthy real-estate developer had been trying to construct a freeway through Vancouver's downtown Chinatown as well as promote the gentrification of Gastown, Kitsilano and the "respectable Westside."<sup>40</sup> For personal and political reasons Campbell had become an outspoken enemy of the counterculture, which he called "parasites on the community."<sup>41</sup> The old drill hall, opened in 1901, was situated on the escarpment overlooking the CPR rail yard and remnants of the BC Electric Coal Gasification Plant; only a few blocks from Chinatown and Gastown. Campbell believed the hostel would attract more "drifters, bums, and freeloaders" to the neighborhood. He was also angry because the NHTF appointed three alleged members of the Youth International Party (Yippies)—Denni Robineau, Gordie Mullin and Lynn Atkins—to run the hostel. Campbell told the press that the RCMP regarded the young men as radicalized members of the Yippie Party; with them in charge there "would be no supervision at all."<sup>42</sup> Campbell predicted that the hostels would become "a rallying point for radicals and encourage sexual misbehavior" and threatened to ban hitchhiking in the city.<sup>43</sup> To postpone the opening he instructed the city to delay the "sewer hook-up" at the drill hall, which it did for so long that the "hostel staff rented port-a-potties."<sup>44</sup> Under the headline, "Hitch Bitch," an underground newspaper, called the *Georgia Straight* called Campbell's hitchhiking ban "fascistic", because it

would harm the environment, the young, the poor, and students “who must travel to and from school.”<sup>45</sup>

Mayor Campbell’s meddling did not prevent the Beatty Street Hostel from opening or from becoming a lightning rod for political activism, but not because of anything the travelers did. One sector of the community willing to cooperate with the NHTF was the RCMP. Marcel Martel has shown that the RCMP had a long history of using undercover surveillance to infiltrate radical and seemingly subversive organizations.<sup>46</sup> Under the directorship of John Starnes, of the RCMP’s Security Services, the youth counterculture was the target of numerous intelligence operations.<sup>47</sup> A federal youth hostel was the ideal location for covert operations. Junior officers grew their hair, dressed as hippies, and moved to Beatty Street and immediately began recording the comings and goings of residents, staff, people associated with the Yippies, Students for a Democratic University, and alleged “anarchist” environmental groups, including a group of countercultural New Leftists out of SFU called the Vancouver Liberation Front (VLF).<sup>48</sup> The VLF’s mission was to lead a people’s revolution against corporate capitalism by stirring up trouble through “social animation” stunts, consciousness-raising events, and people’s (re) education rallies with the Yippies, which inevitably attracted the attention of the police.<sup>49</sup> Two months before Beatty Street opened, the VLF organized a “sit in at Stanley Park” and “sip-in” at the Hudson Bay Company store. The former was a protest against plans to build a Four Seasons Hotel, and at the latter, 400 protesters condemned management’s refusal to serve “long-haired youths” in the Bay’s coffee shop.<sup>50</sup> When the police arrived, protesters pelted them with eggs, rocks and bottles. The following day, the Yippie/VLF alliance led a group of 600 protesters across the Peace Arch border at Blaine in a symbolic invasion of the USA to protest the Vietnam War and the Kent State shootings.<sup>51</sup>

The Vancouver Liberation Front also regarded the NHTF hostel as an ideal location from which to carry on its mission to make trouble for “the establishment” and also boost membership. The RCMP files indicate that VLF leaders moved into Beatty Hostel “disguised as young transients.”<sup>52</sup> On July 25, the VLF organized a rally on the courthouse stairs. A crowd gathered to hear the VLF’s “fiery speeches” that called for Campbell’s resignation and ridiculed his proposed ban on hitchhiking. Twenty-five people were arrested after the VCP, dressed in riot gear, arrived to break up the crowd. A *Peak* reporter said many Granville Street “merchants applauded and young people looked sick, so did the straight adults, especially the women.”<sup>53</sup> On July 13, Station CKNW did a program on Beatty Hostel. The host asked Mullin if the staff had attended any VLF activities. Mullin said he could not recall, but declared that his friends were “radical” and “oriented toward” the VLF and the Yippie Party.<sup>54</sup> A “Hitch-Hiking Manual” published by Rochdale College in Toronto told hitch-travelers that if they “need bread” they could sell copies of the VLF’s Marxist-anarchist *Yellow Journal* in Gastown or in front of the Hudson Bay store on Georgia and Granville streets.<sup>55</sup>

Many young male travelers, from diverse walks of life, arrived at the Beatty Youth Hostel; the records indicate that 6,280 men through the ages of 16 and 29 stayed there. Thirty-nine percent were from English Canada, 30 percent from

Quebec, 16 percent from the United States, 8 percent from Europe, and the rest were from British Columbia.<sup>56</sup> Women were permitted to visit during the day and accommodation for female hitch-travelers was provided at the YWCA on Burrard Street and Alexandra House, a former Women's Christian Temperance Society Orphanage in Kitsilano.<sup>57</sup> A survey asked the Beatty Street hostellers why they were traveling; half said they were looking for work and half were out to see the country.

The contract between the DNF and NHTF stipulated that the federal hostels would be open until September 8. A Beatty Street staffer said "everything was fine until we got word from the Big Enchiladas [the federal government] that we were closing in six days."<sup>58</sup> The hostellers, staff and members of the VLF decided to hold an "emergency meeting." At the meeting 600 hostellers and local kids divided into tribes and voted to stage a non-violent sit-in and resist passively when the militia arrived to reclaim the building. The VLF offered to lobby support from students returning to UBC, SFU, and Vancouver City College. Some students offered to move into the hostel on a rotating basis. The hostellers also created a list of demands called, "The People's Proposal." The demands included allowing resident-occupants to run the hostel year-round and assistance to make the hostel self-sufficient by finding the residents "meaningful work", such as cleaning parks or possibly working with children or the elderly, so they might be of service to the community. Robideau took the proposal to Ottawa and the VLF shared it with Channel 8, CBC TV, and the *Vancouver Sun*.<sup>59</sup>

While the hostellers spoke only in terms of a peaceful occupation, the property was leased from the DND to the Secretary of State and therefore fell under the jurisdiction of the RCMP. Both police forces began to prepare for a "large and violent" demonstration, because they knew that the VLP had the power to stage demonstrations that had drawn crowds upward of 5,000 in the past.<sup>60</sup> On September 8, when the janitors arrived to clean up the hostel they found the hostellers barricaded inside.<sup>61</sup> The only sounds were bongo drums and hoots and hollers. While everyone waited for Pelletier's reply, the hostellers read back issues of the *Yellow Journal*, decorated a wall with a Ho Chi Minh poster, painted a "clenched fist" over the maple leaf on the flag, and amused themselves with Second World War memorabilia and other "symbols of occupation" in the showcase.<sup>62</sup> Nine hours after the sit-in began, the decision arrived from Ottawa. Pelletier's office agreed to extend the contract for three weeks on the condition that the "ragtag army" move to the Canadian Forces compound at Jericho Beach Garrison.

The hostellers declared the building "liberated" and "threw open the doors" and ran outside shouting: "We've won!"<sup>63</sup> The new hostel, which accommodated 300 men, was located close to Kitsilano in the prestigious Point Grey neighborhood, in the vicinity of some of the oldest and most beautiful homes in Vancouver. The hostellers were delighted. Their commitment to anti-war and non-violent activism was reflected by their decision to call their garrison hostel the "Jericho Hilton." It was a nod toward the Vietnamese political prisoners and American POWs detained in the notorious North Vietnamese H a L  Prison, sarcastically nicknamed the "Hanoi Hilton."<sup>64</sup> Pelletier's office hoped the extension would give the travelers a "cooling-off period."<sup>65</sup> The VCP were instructed to stay neutral and adopt a watch and wait "nonenforcement" tactic.<sup>66</sup> The VLF stayed on to "agitate" the "Jericho People."<sup>67</sup>

## The Jericho Hilton: Hostel Policy and the Escalation of Violence

On September 12, the men decamped and moved six kilometers across town to their new quarters in Hut 47 at the Jericho Canadian Forces Base. One of the first changes that occurred in this new context was a gender rebalancing of the hostel population. Hostellers broke NHTF's gender segregation rule and allowed women to reside at the Jericho Hostel. The number of hostellers dropped to 375, however women came to constitute 30 percent and by September 21, 50 percent of the 160 residents were women.<sup>68</sup> Newspaper editorials repeated Mayor Campbell's earlier prediction that Trudeau's hostels would become "immoral brothels" where "free love took place."<sup>69</sup> In 1970, the "old fantasy of hitchhiking nymphomaniacs" was still the "king of mythology" of men's magazines, bars, and locker rooms. The author of the *Hitchhiker's Field Manual* (1972) said the new stereotype of the "adventurous hippie chick" had become "fair game for John Q. Public's secret lust."<sup>70</sup> Campbell's remark that "they have moved the brothel to Point Grey" is indicative of many middle-aged men's fantasies about sexually liberated hippie women.<sup>71</sup>

Vocal opposition to the federal hostels also came from the military families that lived at the Jericho Garrison. The *Vancouver Province* described how "close-cropped army men watched as the long-haired young men and a few girls loaded with duffle bags and bedrolls" moved onto the compound. The married personnel quarters were, indeed, only 50 feet away and servicemen were "very upset with the prospect of hippies living" next door. A 21-year-old serviceman threatened to put "a shot gun guard on his family's adjoining barracks home." The mother of three little girls said she "had no idea these long-hairs were moving in." She wondered how she was supposed to raise her children "next to a barracks-room full of drug-taking hippies?"<sup>72</sup> Complaints about the sight and sound of "20 nude youth" dancing to the "beat of drums" were behind the construction of a 900-foot, three-foot high fence between the properties.<sup>73</sup> A woman claimed that a superior officer told the "army wives" to "shut up or move off the base."<sup>74</sup>

Over the next month, mainstream and underground media coverage ensured that support for the hostellers would remain marginal. Campbell told homeowners in Point Grey to bring in their lawnmowers and lock their doors, because they "put 300 hippies with nothing in their pockets and with no supervision in a residential area."<sup>75</sup> By all accounts, a peaceful ethos and a commitment to the countercultural values of making love not war prevailed in the hostel. Hostel leaders spoke of "the Woodstock ... love trip [and] ... the power of peace" and were determined to make it "work—even on an army base."<sup>76</sup> They set up a communal leather shop and earned a bit of money selling coffee and rice.<sup>77</sup> Seven tongue-in-cheek rules conveyed their vision of democratic existence, the first being: "don't tear up the rules; (2) no balling [sex]; (3) no drugs inside; (4) no booze; (5) 16–25 age limit; (6) 11pm downstairs activity only; and, (7) if any rule is broken you will be evicted."<sup>78</sup>

An unexpected source of support for the hostellers came from some of the most established labor organizations in Canada. The "September 8th Occupation" at Beatty Street was on the monthly agendas of the Vancouver District Labor Council and the Longshoremen's Union Local 5000. Union members and veterans heard about the

youth hostels and went to see how the hostellers treated the Beatty Street building. However, when veterans saw a red flag with clenched fists over the Christian cross and military medals missing from showcases, they threatened reprisals.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, union leaders condemned the “hard-hat” tactics of some of union members and announced their support for the hostellers in the press and on radio call-in programs. They said the hostellers were “not bums nor hippies, but Canadians, and as Canadians they have a right to travel any place, any time they wish across this country!” They were “under no obligation to get the consent ... to come and go!”<sup>80</sup> Socialist lawyer and alderman Harry Rankin, a frequent advocate for dialogue with the late 1960s youth counterculture, also supported the hostellers. He wrote:

the spectacle [of] our millionaire mayor Tom Campbell trying to whip up public hysteria against a few hundred homeless and jobless kids being moved from a hostel ... is more than shameful. And to refer to youth hostels as brothels and ... these young people as thieves, is to strike a new low even for him ... It's the act of a political charlatan and demagogue looking for cheap votes by the dangerous method of arousing bigotry and prejudice.<sup>81</sup>

On October 2, when it was scheduled to close for the second time, there were still approximately 200 residents in the Jericho hostel. Ninety percent were from outside of Vancouver and 30 percent had been there for less than a week.<sup>82</sup> The CWC's assertion that the “hippie movement as an idealist cult died in 1966,” enabled them to argue that transient youth were bored suburban teenagers imitating “the hippie lifestyle in terms of dress and language.”<sup>83</sup> Presumably, a well-managed monitored pseudo-hippie holiday could be a valuable coming of age experience for restless middle-class youngsters. The CWC overlooked the fact that 50 percent of the unemployed hostellers said they were looking for work. Using social work terms as “troubled” and “troublesome” youth, which included those fleeing “disturbing personal and family tensions,” former clients of the Children's Aid Society, foster-homes, and the victims of racism and discrimination enabled the CWC to misrepresent the real circumstances of young people's lives and the needs of kids on the road.<sup>84</sup>

By 1970, many young Canadians were fed up with federally-funded studies, conferences, think-ins, and research projects “that engage in endless target practice but never go to war.”<sup>85</sup> During the September 8 occupation a staff member observed a “lot of games being played.”<sup>86</sup> The *Georgia Straight* indicated that, by October, Jericho was “not a happy place.”<sup>87</sup> A hosteller told the *Straight*:

We people are not the government's summer students out to see the country so that they can relate to blindness ... [We are] orphans, smack freaks, love freaks, acid freaks, heavy freaks, stepped on, laughed at, spat on, shat on—the lost and the found.”<sup>88</sup>

Disillusionment among the hostellers was reflected in a “Special Issue” of *Georgia Straight*. Hosteller's letters, poetry and graffiti show how the world looked inside the hostel walls. On the cover was poem written by, “A son from God” that said,

“We are God’s children ... hiking day in day out to the mountains looking for help ... We are tired of hiking and looking ... Maybe “God” will help you land at the foot of the mountains take our hands and hold us up ... Maybe then the rain will come, the sun will shine, and you will watch us grow.”<sup>89</sup>

On the door of the men’s toilets someone had written, “One day this world will fucking end. And ours will take over. Peace is not giving a shit.” An essay described an evening in the hostel. Residents watched a movie called, *The Loss of Innocence* (1961) on a tiny portable TV, a movie about the sexual awakening of a young girl. On the other side of the room, “pot-heads” and bikers watched a 14-year-old topless girl dance. An open letter asked Trudeau to “bring some purpose and meaning into our government. Otherwise it would be fairly dumb not to choose anarchy”<sup>90</sup> The editors concluded that, “It’s IN this year to listen to problems and solutions of young people—it is not IN to do anything meaningful about problems or to respect any of the solutions.”<sup>91</sup> The perceived failure to understand the real needs of young people was compounded by the mayor’s anti-hippie rants, previous antagonism between the police and the VLP, and the restless “mood” on Vancouver’s campuses. Many groups appeared to be exploiting the transient cause to promote their own left, right and center agendas. *Sun* columnist Allen Fotheringham said “the Pig Press ... are the messenger boys ... the only loser[s] were the kids with no place to sleep.”<sup>92</sup>

### “All We Want Is Love and Peace”: The Battle of Jericho

The Jericho hostellers planned a sit-in for October 2. Their demands continued to be permission to stay until another residence was found, meal provision, and some support for their leather co-op. They urged each other to “remain cool and don’t blow it” and go “on living as we normally would.”<sup>93</sup> They reasoned that it would cost more to put them all on welfare than to let them remain in the hostel. Planning meetings were also organized by the Secretary of State, the RCMP, city controllers, and private welfare organizations who agreed that the mood at Jericho was “too explosive” to risk trying to close the hostel without a confrontation.<sup>94</sup> The *Vancouver Province* ran the headline, “Only the Deadline Passes, all Stands Still” and the *Globe and Mail* said, “Jericho Army Base Stays Occupied as Youngsters Defy Orders to Quit.”<sup>95</sup> The VLF circulated instructions on how to behave at a “sit-in.” The leaflet said, bring friends, musical instruments, food, cameras and sleeping bags, but do not bring dope or alcohol. Do not fight back, run or panic; stay together and lock arms and sing.<sup>96</sup>

For the next three weeks the RCMP, the army, and the VCP were in daily contact with representatives from Pelletier’s office and it was clear to all that the hostellers were not going to quietly drift away.<sup>97</sup> In a botched attempt to force the hostellers out on October 8, the Vancouver office of the Federal Justice Department terminated the food service contract it had with the Inner City Services Project and Cool Aid, and ordered the city to shut off the water, heat and power to the building.<sup>98</sup> The hostellers retaliated by filling water bottles from garden hoses in Point Grey backyards and they pulled a manhole cover off one of the compound’s sewers and erected an outhouse. Fearing an outbreak of hepatitis, the Vancouver Health Department and Point Grey neighbors insisted that the city restore services at Jericho. The *Globe*

and *Mail* denounced cutting off the water as a contemptible “landlord tactic” that was against city bylaws. Inner City Services continued to serve meals and treated the hostellers to a grand Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings. The hostellers celebrated with a mini rock festival where two hundred “bearded youth and lank-haired girls” danced on the grass to a rock group called *The Motherhood*.<sup>99</sup> Behind the scenes the hostellers stockpiled rice. The RCMP intelligence files indicate that the VLF “was quite impressed by the militancy of the hostel group.”<sup>100</sup>

Finally, on October 13, after weeks of media scrutiny and passing the buck to avoid a public relations nightmare, serious property damage, or another riot between police and young people, the Attorney General of British Columbia ordered the DND to evict the occupants and board up the building.<sup>101</sup> The lease was between the Secretary of State and the DND meaning that the army was the official landlord and the hostellers were “invited guests.”<sup>102</sup> Under the law, trespassers are not allowed to resist their own removal from the premises. If they did they were deemed to have committed an assault; such an assault would justify the use of police action and arrest.<sup>103</sup> Over the previous year, Chief Fisk of the VCP had acquired a bad reputation for “looking for opportunities for confrontation with the youth.” He had been warned by the Attorney General to “establish a dialogue” with “dissident youth.” This was his chance to impress his supervisors and not upset “this dialogue through any precipitate [*sic*] action.”<sup>104</sup> After a great deal of discussion it was decided that Colonel C. L. Rippon, from the Judge Advocate General’s Office in Esquimalt would arrive in civilian dress and read a proclamation announcing the DND’s intention to retake possession of the building. Behind him, a few RCMP officers would move in, clear out the hostellers, and secure the building. The VCP would not be directly involved with the eviction, but available to handle any breach of the peace. The RCMP would send back up troops to the surrounding streets and 100 officers from the VCP, dressed in riot gear with motorcycles and horses, stood ready and waiting to provide support.<sup>105</sup>

The day of Rippon’s eviction proclamation the *Vancouver Province*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Georgia Straight*, *Globe and Mail* and radio and TV crews from CBC, CTV and Channel 6 were camped on the grounds outside the hostel waiting to report on what would become known as the “Battle of Jericho.” After Rippon’s notice all but 42 of the 150 occupants immediately departed. Those that stayed filed on to grass and followed the VLF’s instructions to stay calm and sing, “We shall Overcome” and other songs from the civil rights movement. Hundreds of supportive local kids, university students, members of the Yippie Party, Cool Aid, the Jesus Army, and Hare Krishna monks with cymbals quickly joined them and danced and chanted. RCMP officers and enlisted men went inside the building. The army packed up the hostellers’ belongings and removed them from the barracks while the RCMP raided the rooms and found a “nickel pack of marijuana, a pipe and several cubes of hashish.”<sup>106</sup>

At 5 p.m. Chief Constable Victor Lake declared the assembly “unlawful” and gave a five-minute warning. The anxious crowd began to chant, “All we want is Love and Peace ... All we want is a Place to Sleep,” and yelled “Here come the Pigs,” “You took our Home. You took our Home.” Next they moved from the grass onto the road and sat down and “emphatically refused to leave.”<sup>107</sup> When the motor traffic

quickly backed up on West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, witnesses said the police removed their ID badges, took out their riot sticks and shoved, jabbed and booted the protesters. A staff member said:

I told the kids to get off the fucking road ... the policemen were chasing kids across the lawn to the School for the Deaf. [They were] on horseback and whipping them ... They would knock them down and they would get up again and they would keep running ... I am covered in blood ... A little old lady ... driving a convertible was yelling: "Leave them alone. Leave them alone." I got into her car ... we went around picking up people ... driving to UBC and dropping kids off.<sup>108</sup>

It is a sociological truism that authorities often mirror the behavior they set out to control.<sup>109</sup> The approach of law enforcement, such as the sight of the police dressed in riot gear with "three foot sticks" can provoke aggressive responses, violence, and resistance.<sup>110</sup> Eight police officers and 25 hostellers and supporters were injured in the Jericho riot. Seven people were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly under Section 66 of the Criminal code for "taking part in a riot" and given a few months' jail time and fined.<sup>111</sup> The mainstream press ran such headlines as, "Riot sticks help clear way for traffic," "Battle of Jericho ends in victory for police riot sticks," "150 Police drive out Rebels at Jericho," and "Jericho Hostel Crisis 'Avoidable'." The VCP were unhappy that their actions resulted in fresh accusations of police brutality. Civic authorities and the media concluded that the police and military had restored peace and order to the city, albeit by the excessive use of force.<sup>112</sup>

## Youth Subculture and Conflict: The "Heads" Against the "Straights"

Michael Barnholden argues "a riot is always part of a larger story that includes more than one point of view."<sup>113</sup> The Battle of Jericho lasted only three hours, but it began much earlier and cannot be analyzed in isolation from factors such as social class expectations and regional disparities in opportunities for jobs and education. Hans Arthur Skott-Myhre argues that kids occupy a space of "otherness" due to the social worker's production and reinforcement of discourses of fear, idleness, and status marginalization. Consequently, youth workers often believe it is their responsibility to control the very people they set out to serve.<sup>114</sup> In the late 1960s, youth mobility made young people difficult to monitor, however the NHTF hoped that a network of sex-segregated hostels would reduce the number of young travelers charged of vagrancy, squatting, and public indecency, provide a solution to the overtaxed YMCA and Salvation Army, and reduce the growing popularity of the "hippie-friendly" crash pads and freak out rooms competing with Children's Aid Society. At the same time, NHTF regulations and rules like the three-day limit, curfews, frugal meals, assigned chores, and daytime closures were intended keep young people moving and ease their transition back into society when they were ready to leave the road.

Doug O'ram argues that the counterculture in Canada "politicize [d] the non-political," but it did so in different ways.<sup>115</sup> In the early 1970s sociologists and

youth welfare workers concluded that the transient lifestyle was a form of deviance sustained by the media, peer pressure, and weekend hippies, teenyboppers, draft dodgers, black leather jacket types, and student radicals, while the purpose of the NHTF was to meet the needs of students and young workers on a “carefree holiday.”<sup>116</sup> The arbitrary division of Canadian youth in the “transient youth movement” favored middle class students, disregarded the needs of youth at risk and revealed Canada’s status and class-based youth subcultures.<sup>117</sup> For example, the dominant media stereotype of the radical hippie student concealed real differences of status and ideology among generational cohorts. Conservative teenagers in Vancouver shared their parents’ values and agreed with Campbell’s suggestion that “support” should go to good youth, Boy Scouts, and “decent children.”<sup>118</sup> University administrators responded to student protests by abandoning the traditional *loco parentis* role, which Roberta Lexier sees as a positive consequence that increased power of student clubs, leaders, and student unions; however, conservative (i.e., “straight”) and non-activist students often decried left-leaning protests, boycotts, and sit-ins as “disparaging Canadian values, norms and traditions.” They shared establishment values, even when they enjoyed listening to countercultural music, wore hip clothes and long hair, and expressed themselves with slang that exaggerated their opposition to the culture of conformity that much of society espoused.<sup>119</sup> In May 1970, delegates at NHTF planning meetings noticed that “the life view of the ‘heads’ and the ‘straights’ didn’t meet.” A conservative teenager suspected the “‘heads’ only wanted an easy situation for drug taking, extramarital sexual relations and a non-working way of life.”<sup>120</sup>

In the fall of 1970, the needs of young Canadians from all walks of life came together in the federal hostels in Vancouver. In September, the Canadian University Press called students the “new poor”. The lack of affordable student accommodation and limited space in residences was a problem at many Canadian universities.<sup>121</sup> In Vancouver, students held “tent-ins” to protest the housing shortage and the September issue of the UBC’s *Ubysey* informed students in search of temporary housing that they should “get a bed at the Youth Hostel in the old Jericho army barracks” just east of campus.<sup>122</sup> When the fall semester resumed the VLF approached the UBC student society, called the Alma Mater Society (AMS), on behalf of the Beatty Street hostellers to invite them to the non-violent sit-in, should the Secretary of State decide to evict them on September 8. The idea was that if the hostellers were evicted they could move into the Student Union Building (SUB), which was only five kilometers away. This had been done at the University of Waterloo, where the students “unofficially” invited 50 transients to move into the Campus Centre after the Kitchener youth hostel closed for the season.<sup>123</sup> The left-leaning AMS agreed to discuss the matter and voted 9 to 7 in favor of allowing the hostellers to move into the basement of SUB. The AMS also offered to organize a series of consciousness-raising meetings on behalf of the People of Jericho with and to pay for 4,000 extra copies of a special “Hostel Issue” edition of the *Ubysey* to be distributed at SFU and Vancouver Community College.<sup>124</sup>

The VLF and left-leaning students constructed the closing of NHTF hostels as a confrontation between capitalism, the state and young people. Students in favor of sharing SUB with the Jericho People wanted to show that “the university

is stepping down from its middle-class pedestal.<sup>125</sup> The president of the Graduate Student Association said the issue “gives us a chance to show we are different from the people who came before. We can say we believe in human beings.” A grad-student representative on the student council said, “[T]he kids aren’t the problem, the problem is a government that can’t provide employment. Their problem is our problem.”<sup>126</sup> Another said the hostellers were a “symptoms of our society.” They are “our age,” reasoned a member of the Anglican Student Society, “By rights they should be in school too ... Since unemployment is on the rise we all could feel the pinch next summer.”<sup>127</sup>

At UBC, the Jericho Youth Hostel occupation exposed entrenched ideological divisions in the student body. Historically, youth subcultural rivalries have long reflected ideologically and economically grounded class, race and gender inequalities, as described in Stan Cohen’s study of violent conflict between the middle-class “Mods” and working-class “Rockers” in the 1950s.<sup>128</sup> Baby boom intragenerational alliances proved to be shaky, and on and off campus, leadership fractured into various left, right, and centre ideologies. All over Canada, hitch-travelers reported hassles with local youth, “grease-balls” and “rednecks.” In Vancouver, the police knew that gangs of greasers bullied and beat up longhaired freaks. Lawrence Arson said “upper class frat boys allied themselves with the lumpen-greasers element in a larger cultural rejection of hippies” and “hippie girls” complained that UBC frat boys cruised Fourth Avenue to sexually harass them with “obscene remarks and propositions.”<sup>129</sup> Neither the police nor the courts did much to prosecute sexual assault against hippie women and female hitchhikers; due to their supposed belief in free love, they were “asking for it.”<sup>130</sup>

The announcement that the AMS voted to let the Jericho hostellers move onto campus did not sit well with all members of the student body.<sup>131</sup> Angry students in the “hard-hat” College of Engineering, Agriculture and Forestry, some residents of Fort Camp and Place Vanier, and students in the colleges of Education and Home Economics expressed strong objections to “dirty hippies” moving into the Student Union Building (SUB) and threatened a mass march of their own.<sup>132</sup> Due to growing opposition, the AMS was forced to put the question to the entire student population. On September 29, 4,000 students voted against allowing the Jericho People to stay in the SUB.<sup>133</sup> At the meeting, Engineering students shouted “anti-hippie rhetoric” and “pounded their desks and stamped their feet.” Someone yelled, “The dirty long-hairs would depreciate our SUB.”<sup>134</sup> Jericho supporters, like Bob Smith were “pissed off,” when they found out that Education Faculty voted 4 to 1 against the idea of “turning their (stress their and private property) SUB into a hostel.” He thought “the decision” showed that UBC students “were trying for a place alongside Campbell, among the gallery of City bigots.”<sup>135</sup> A Jericho hosteller observed the shouting match and yelled: “We don’t want your fucking SUB.”<sup>136</sup> It should be noted that, after the hostel was boarded up on October 15, one hundred members of the Jericho Family did spend the night in the SUB, “Brooding, sleeping, talking, or smoking ‘grass,’” they waited “for something to happen.”<sup>137</sup> The next morning YMCA staff quietly arrived to collect them. They warned them, “a few Engineers with some beers under their belts have no minds ... it was like running

into a buzz saw.”<sup>138</sup> Under the protective arm of the youth workers the shaken up and injured “People of Jericho” moved to the YMCA.

## Conclusion: Youth Mobility and Democracy

With hindsight, and in view of the turbulent events of the years between 1965 and 1975, it is easy for scholars of the “the sixties” to understand why baby boom children had different ideas than their parents about what it meant to be productive citizens. The young people on the road who participated in the CWC’s inquiry did not describe themselves as “drop-outs.” They wanted to “acquir[e] knowledge of life and people at first hand.” The most frequent response to the question: “Why are you traveling?” was that the question was “irrelevant.”<sup>139</sup> The NHFT cautiously suggested that a hitch and hostel backpacking experiences could be an excellent educational opportunity for youth to “know” Canada.<sup>140</sup>

Robert Hollands argues that the “pseudo-liberal tolerance” for freedom and lifestyle negotiation expressed in a lot of late-1960s social work, the NHTF youth hostel program, and the Canadian Welfare Council and Committee on Youth reports played upon the old gang instinct explanation of juvenile deviance. In 1970, the Secretary of State’s solution to the youth problem was not prohibition, but practical surveillance by way of a network of sex-segregated youth hostels, that would be chaste, clean and cheap. Trouble at the hostels in Vancouver in September and October in 1970 influenced attitudes toward NHTF hostels in many regions of Canada the following summer. In London, Ontario, the “Committee Against Parasites” called hostellers, “pigs, freaks, and kooks” and blamed said youth centers for transforming girls and boys into “wandering scroungers.”<sup>141</sup> Committee members threatened to burn the hostel and somebody fired a gun shot through a window. The *London Free Press* warned that hostels would “lead to the same outcome” as at Kent State University where the Ohio National Guard opened fire on anti-war protesters.<sup>142</sup> In Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, the “Community Improvement Committee of East Royalty” started a petition after hearing that a youth hostel was opening in their neighborhood. When the petition failed, thirty-six “housewives” erected a barbed wire blockade that led to a three-day standoff with the police. Two hundred people watched the RCMP escort the women home in the pouring rain, amidst “tears, shoving and hair pulling.”<sup>143</sup>

The sit-ins and violence at the Vancouver hostels was part of a larger story that comprised many perspectives. 1970 had been a year of protests and riots between young people and the police. The CWC’s construction of hostellers as “transient youth” and the VLF and underground media references to the police and establishment media as “pigs” instigated a “them” and “us” attitude that escalated tension among various interest groups, including students at UBC.<sup>144</sup> The civic authorities’ resistance to Trudeau’s hostels, as well as class and political-based animosity among generational cohorts that escalated into the “Battle of Jericho”, was also due to previous altercations between the police and the VLF, which worsened when they moved into the hostels on Beatty Street and the Jericho compound. A poster on the wall at Beatty Street Hostel said, “We’re Out to Smash Capitalism and We Mean Business.” Hostellers became caught between the VLF and the hippie-taunting

mayor who saw the NHTF as interfering with his downtown redevelopment plans. Campbell's proposed ban on hitchhiking was perceived by *Georgia Straight* readers as an "undemocratic attempt" to "deny the people freedom to help one another."<sup>145</sup> Past, present and future bitterness paved the way for the Gastown riot in August, which was one of the most brutal of the 70 street demonstrations that occurred in Vancouver between August of 1970 and August of 1971.<sup>146</sup>

In the summer of 1970 over 7,000 youth stayed in federal hostels.<sup>147</sup> In the summer of 1971, funding was shifted to the new Secretary of State's Opportunities for Youth program. The staff in these "receiving centers" represented a new breed of hip youth workers who could refer hostellers to job banks, education programs, family counseling, VD clinics, psychiatric centers, and the police. When young people travel they may form friendly and cooperative relationships with locals, but they may also become cynical and feel exploited.<sup>148</sup> The morning after the riot at the Jericho Hostel, the VLF organized a public rally to renew support for the "People of Jericho." The date was October 17 and, overnight, Pierre Trudeau had invoked the War Measures Act in response to the FLQ kidnappings. Under the slogans, "Return Jericho to the People" and "Smash the Police State" the VLF swiftly stated publicly their support for the Front de libération du Québec. The VLF rally failed to ignite a "people's revolution." The few bruised and bedraggled Jericho hostellers that turned up to listen to the speeches were disgusted and disappointed. The hostellers did not want separatism, collectives or communes. One hosteller said, "I don't want to blow up this town, I love this town, I just want a place to stay."<sup>149</sup> By the end of the summer of 1970, the Vancouver Hostel Coordinating Committee encouraged the public to think of young travelers as future tourists because, regardless of the hospitality offered or the welcome they received, "we cannot stop young people from coming to Vancouver."<sup>150</sup>

## Notes

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