

# MENTAL HEALTH TEAM COMES TO KITSILANO

Mental health, like physical health, affects everyone. The days of placing mentally ill people in jails are thankfully gone, yet some attitudes and institutions remain which are shameful and, in some cases, barbaric.

What is a mentally ill person?

To answer that, one has to answer: what is mental illness?

Mental illness, in most cases, is differentness. To be extremely different from the 'average' is to ensure one's committal in some mental institution, and the laws reflect that fact. The trouble is, interpretation of how different is vague and usually in the hands of people who shouldn't be making such decisions, like police. There should not be laws against mental illness. There should be treatment. There should also be the removal of the causes of mental illness.

Many people break down because they cannot cope with the pressures imposed upon them by poverty, inflation, family hassles, racial injustice, sexual discrimination.

It essentially boils down to being recognized, to being allowed dignity, and to possessing amenities of life. There are other causes of mental illness, like brain damage; yet, the vast majority of people committed to mental hospitals or given drugs are not 'sick'. Rather, they are socially disabled.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

ANYONE WHO HASN'T EXPERIENCED STRESS... PLEASE HOLD UP YOUR HAND



The Kitsilano Citizen's Committee was formed to ensure adequate citizen participation in any mental health program conceived for this area. A glance at the accompanying charts will indicate that high-level decisions involving millions of dollars are being made by medical-professional personnel who, while their hearts may be in the right place, require our suggestions to make this program really successful.

This means *YOUR* involvement on the Citizen's Committee, which has been active for some months now, meeting with administrative personnel, forming budgets, holding public meetings.

What type of mental health team do we want in Kitsilano?

We want one that is responsive to the needs of the community, knowledgeable in the problems and resources to be found here.

This means people with a different approach to the field of mental health. It means people willing to cooperate and function with citizen guidance; people willing to recognize that living conditions play a large role in making people unstable.

In other words, we want a special kind of person, unfettered by the old methods, willing to try new ones to meet new problems.

We want to keep people out of hospital. We want to provide alternatives to Riverview.

Mental illness, you know, is not some weird disease. It is what happens to people, to anyone, when the pressures get a little too hard to take. It therefore involves you.

Join the Citizen's Committee and do something about it.