



Big Brother CCTV installed in Brighton

What are we doing to our town? The One State is upon us. We have given in. We accept that when we are out of our own homes, we are - at all times - to be watched, to be monitored. Fourteen CCTV (close circuit television) cameras are panning across town, like searchlights, looking for any indiscretion, picking out any abnormal activity which may be seen as subversive. They will zoom in on our faces, track our movements, the police like legitimised voyeurs watching our activities, silently and detached. We have welcomed them in and we will come to forget them. Part of the street furniture, part of society. The argument for CCTV is strong - stop one rape, stop one murder and it will be hailed as a success.

Nobody *wants* to be watched all the time - it feels wrong. Surely if we are the ones to witness Orwell's prophesy fulfilled then we should look hard for any alternatives.

Firstly, CCTV doesn't solve crime - it relocates crime. And it smacks of a crippling lack of vision that the answer to this problem is to cover Sussex with blanket surveillance at enormous cost. Private business interests, it seems, are a higher priority than the liberties and freedoms of individuals to walk down the high streets without being videoed.

Secondly, Sussex police can say until they are blue in the face that the cameras will not be used for information gathering but by dividing police and public with machines can only create a climate of deep suspicion and mistrust.

However, there is an alternative. It's quite simple. It's called natural surveillance - people watching people. The same cut in crime that we are told to expect from the spies in the sky can be achieved by the relaxing of licensing laws and the opening of the town at night. Last year Manchester City Council experimented with extended liquor licensing and the results were amazing - all reported crime in the city centre down by 43%. All through the night there were people on the streets. People feeling safe in the knowledge that they are being watched by other people. The cost? Zero. The benefits of the 'night-time economy'? Enormous.

Surveillance cameras are an eerie and sinister development not inkeeping with

the spirit of Brighton and Justice? opposes them with vigour.

FACTS

Cameras cost £310,000 - Agreement has been reached with Brighton Council that the scheme will not use video evidence in court for petty offences (graffiti/flyposting) but it will use the cameras to pick up such 'criminals' - Scheme to be widened to include Horsham, Worthing, Eastbourne & Hastings within 2 years - Scheme financed in partnership with private business/police/Brighton Council - Cameras can identify an individual at distance of 100m - Monitoring room at John St station next to control room. - Det Supt John Smith on record as saying "there is no intention of using the scheme for information gathering"

If by any chance you would like Brighton Police to know that you are watching them watching you, here's where you are being filmed:

If you are catching a train, messing about on the Palace Pier, wandering past the Clock Tower, strolling along the seafront, shopping on Bond Street, admiring the Pavilion or walking along West St or Russell Rd or Cannon Place or Preston St or Western Rd or Clarence Square or Middle St or Duke St or Martin St or East St or Gardener St or Church St or St James' St or the Old Steine or Black Lion St ... please say hello. Act-up!

Justice? evicted from the Courthouse

Q1. What happened to the Courthouse?

We were evicted last Thursday after a rooftop protest. Apologies to anyone who was on the phone tree and didn't receive a call - it was a bit hectic.

Q2. What happened to the Church?

Holy Trinity Church on Ship St was squatted and all the Justice? stuff moved in as a temporary measure. The Church was opened at the weekend for an exhibition on the Courthouse and the Criminal Injustice Act. There are already agreed plans for the church by another group who use derelict buildings and turn them into art centres. Because we didn't want to jeopardise their position (it took them 2yrs to get permission) we agreed with the owners to move out. There was also a problem of fire hazards, dry rot and structural damage which meant the Church wouldn't have been practical as Courthouse Mk II.

Q3. Where's the next squat?

First a bit of history. Justice? was formed to raise awareness of the Criminal Justice Bill in April. Organising a squatted info and action centre was only one element of the work that is done. Although a mad success, the Courthouse did have the effect of neglecting other areas of protest and tied peo-

ple to one place instead of enabling them to take part in other direct action. It seems a consensus is growing that another centre would be a positive move but at a smaller scale and open 3/4 days a week. The office should be in a sustainable rented building. As the squatting law comes into effect in February and the law is not retrospective it would seem a good idea to mobilise a 'squat-the-lot' campaign. Lastly everyone needs a break to recover before this next action. A temporary office has been set up. Tel: 691659

Criminal Injustice Act attacked

from The Guardian 14/11/94

Prison governors warn today that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act will lead to a huge increase in the jailing of people with unconventional lifestyles for minor criminal offences and amounts to a misuse of the criminal justice system.

The joint statement published today by the Penal Affairs Consortium, a group of 23 organisations involved in the prison system, says the legislation could have the effect of criminalising many of these people.

The consortium appeals to the police, prosecutors and the courts to apply the legislation with discretion "to avoid inappropriately harsh treatment of people who should not be processed through police stations, courts and prison cells."

David Roddan, general secretary of the Prison Governors' Association, said: "Until now the purpose of imprisonment has been to help people to lead law-abiding and useful lives on release. This act is a poorly drafted bundle of prejudices that could lead to a massive increase in people committed by the courts and nowhere to put them.

"Imprisoning individuals whose lifestyle simply does not conform to the norm of society and is rarely of a serious criminal nature is expensive, futile and an abuse of human rights."

"On release squatters will not magically be provided with housing, travellers will not suddenly change their lifestyle and young people will certainly not stop partying."

The Penal affairs Consortium says civil noise abatement powers already exist to deal with large unlicensed rave parties if persistent loud music is causing distress to nearby residents, but a sensible use of these powers is a long way from the wholesale criminalisation of young people by banning their raves, parties and gatherings."