

NEED FOR CRISIS HOSTELS IN THE KITSILANO AREA

The purpose of this short paper is to provide some documentation for the need for crisis hostels in the Kitsilano area of Vancouver. The form and nature of these hostels can be worked out later although material on the possibilities exists. (A women in our association has prepared a paper on crisis housing which can be made available soon. Also the Richmond Fellowship in England has interesting material).

The needs for hostels are greater than we supposed. According to The Canadian Mental Health Association 1 out of every 2 hospital beds in Canada is occupied by a psychiatric patient. (Vancouver Sun, Jan. 31/73, page 20). Much has been said and written over the years about expanding present facilities. As far back as 1967 the Vancouver Province ran a series in which one of the measures suggested was expanding Vancouver General Hospital's psychiatric facilities by several hundred percent. (Province, April 22/67, page 2). All these are preliminaries to the present situation which we are narrowing down to Kitsilano.

Last year the VGH psychiatric unit admitted 2,504 people or 4.7% of the hospital total. (Statistics from VGH come from records and accounts departments of the hospital). At a per diem cost of \$76.35 the number of people and the costs involved are staggering. The Mental Patients Association which operates a drop-in centre in the Kits area faces a constant problem in finding short term accomodation for people in crisis. We reckon about 200-300 people per year who need crisis facilities come to us.

Crisis facilities of a non-institutional nature could begin to meet some of these needs to alleviate both human misery and high costs. What may be required are simply houses with beds and competent people to staff them. Most of these people could be drawn from non-professional ranks and with professional assistance we could begin a joint project. Perhaps further research and action on the needs for half-way houses for longer stay periods could also be undertaken in the near future.

-Mental Patients Association