

Reading the Riot Act

*How the Vancouver
B.C. Stanley Cup riots
were as much about
class warfare as hockey*

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I have to admit I was taken by surprise. When asked if there would be a riot after Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Finals, I said, "No, conditions just aren't right, there's not enough anger out there." The anger I was referring to would be the anger directed at the police and the government. In short, the authorities. I was wrong. It seems there was no shortage of anger. But then, I also thought the Canucks would win the Cup.

For me the question that remains is what is the source of the anger? I don't buy the theory that losing a game results in such rage. The bad apple theory doesn't hold water nor does mob mentality. Too many bad apples, not enough mob. So where does the rage come from? Here's my theory.

British Columbia has just come through the most vicious 10-year cycle of class warfare waged by the B.C. Liberal government under Gordon Campbell. The election of a new leader in the person of Christy Clark promises more of the same in a new "family friendly" style. What is the evidence? Here are the lowlights:

- 100,000 children living in poverty
- \$7,800 for one scalped ticket to game 7 Stanley Cup Final
- \$7,320 = annual income for single "employable" welfare recipient
- \$197.25 plus "handling charges" = face value of 1 playoff ticket for round four
- \$235 = monthly support rate for single



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW ZYLSTRA SAWATZKY

Rioters gather around a burning car in Vancouver following the Canucks loss in the Stanley Cup.

"employable" welfare recipient

- \$10,000,000 = Canucks' goaltender Roberto Luongo's annual salary
- \$1,000,000 = average house price in Vancouver
- \$375 = shelter component for single "employable" welfare recipient
- \$18.17 an hour = estimated living wage in Vancouver
- \$8.75 = minimum wage in B.C.
- 100 percent increase in B.C. college tuition fees from 2000 to 2004
- One in 28.6 million odds of winning the B.C. Lottery Lotto Max jackpot
- \$0 = what British Columbia Premier Christy Clark paid for her two Game 7 tickets

Between 1989 and 2008, the richest 10 percent of British Columbia's families with children saw an average gain in their annual

income of \$84,713 or an astonishing increase of about 52 percent. Meanwhile the bottom 40 percent saw their average annual income drop by more than 4 per cent, or an average loss of \$6,909.

There's a word for all this: revanchism—revenge against the poor. The rich fuck up and the poor pay, that is the primary lesson to be learned in the post-capitalist era. When I say poor, I mean working class. And when I say working class, I mean anybody who does not profit from the labor of others.

Twenty thousand inside the arena, 100,000 outside and a few "looters" chanting, "Fuck the HST" as they redistributed wealth while others attacked private property, smashing windows and burning cars. Was it organized? No. Was it focused? Not really. Will the "authorities" do everything in their power to misread the

rage? Of course—in our one party system (they're all capitalist) there is no room in the public discourse to even question the inequalities that are endemic to capitalism. In the words of Margaret Thatcher: "There is no alternative".

The rich will get richer, the poor will get poorer, just remember the words on the bumper sticker: "If you don't riot you can't complain." Nobody's listening anyway.

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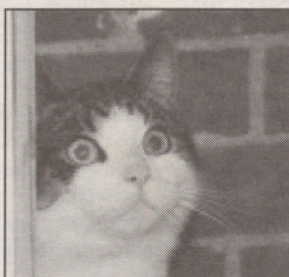
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