

DES Action: A Subversive Group !?

Well life is never dull living in Victoria. Little did we imagine there were subversive groups in the community that the Victorian police felt they had to keep an eye on - and that we were one of them!

Like many other Victorians we read with interest the investigative reports in *The Age* newspaper (October 6-9) on the undercover activities of the Operations Intelligence Unit of the Victorian Police. We chuckled at Ron Tanberg's cartoons and visualised the undercover "operatives" wading through Lake Buloke to save wounded ducks, while others presented programs on 3CR community radio.

When *The Age* published a list of groups that the police had a file on, we were amazed to find DES Action listed. On reflection we figure we are in good company and, in fact, would have been rather miffed to be overlooked!

We have included some of the headlines and snippets of stories in this issue of DESPATCH (page 3-5).

Also included in this issue is a report by DES Action member Deidre Harrison of the recent DES Action Symposium held in Boston, USA. Deidre attended the one day conference and was rather overwhelmed by the amount of information and issues covered. She was thrilled to attend and found it empowering to be with so many other DES daughters and to share experiences. Her report is a general overview of the Symposium. It is anticipated that a comprehensive Proceedings of the Symposium will be published next year and we will report further on it then.

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DES ACTION SYMPOSIUM - REPORT

by *Deidre Harrison*

The 1997 DES Action Symposium(USA) was held in Andover, Massachusetts on 18th October and by sheer co-incidence my husband and I were holidaying in the USA at the same time. The symposium was entitled "Pills and Potions: Reproductive Technologies, Menopause and our Future". DES Action, Australia has not been able to attend these symposiums in the past, so it was with great anticipation and excitement that I booked my registration for the symposium. The evening before the symposium I attended a dinner with the Board of Directors, which included a nurse who works at the New York DES Screening Clinic and also a DES son. I was warmly welcomed by Nora Cody (Executive Director) and Pat Cody (Program Director).

The symposium commenced at 9am with four guest speakers. The first speaker was Judith Turiel, who is a health educator and editor of 'Preventing Preterm Birth. A Parents Guide'. She is an expert in the field of fertility treatments and has recently completed a book on reproductive technologies and their consequences (to be published by University of California Press) Ms Turiel was born in 1948 - at the forefront of women and men who were exposed to DES. She is a DES daughter who has herself experienced high-risk pregnancy and preterm labor. Topics included in her speech were: world-wide exposure to oestrogens and chemicals, reproductive technologies and choosing a doctor.

Ms Turiel believed that any DES daughter planning a pregnancy and consulting a doctor should ask the following questions: 'Do I have lowered fertility? What are my chances of conceiving naturally? Conceiving is a matter of chance. Does treatment involve invasive procedures?' Other advice included: 'Do not assume that diagnosis and treatment is the same for the general population as the DES-exposed population. Don't assume the worst - the goal is to identify what will help you as an individual. It is important to determine the amount and type of risk you are prepared to take'.

DES daughters also need to be aware that: fertility declines with age. DES daughters have lower pregnancy rates than the normal population. Achieving fertilisation does not necessarily mean a successful pregnancy, particularly for DES daughters. Ms Turiel went on to talk about the pros and cons of IVF and the need for individuals to decide whether to use a certain medical treatment. There is a great need for preventive techniques and prenatal

care. Remember each pregnancy is considered "high risk". In relation to choosing a doctor: 'Find a doctor who has had experience of DES exposed women, who is caring and straightforward and avoids over-aggressive treatment'. In conclusion Ms Turiel emphasised that DES-exposed patients have a special role to play in their own health care - to weigh the risks and benefits.

The second speaker for the day was Janine O'Leary Cobb, editor of the menopause newsletter, 'A Friend Indeed' and author of 'Understanding Menopause'. Ms Cobb explained that menopause was seen within the biomedical model as a 'deficiency' condition but, on the other hand, should be seen as a natural life transition. We need to close the gap between these two poles. Polarisation exists because women are under such pressure to use Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). However Ms Cobb believes there are benefits for some women taking HRT.



Deidre (centre), with Nora Cody (left) and Pat Cody (right)

Continued on page 7

EXCLUSIVE:

Undercover Melbourne
unit spied on community groups,
kept dossiers on
hundreds of
people

**Picketing
nurses
spied on**

The covert intelligence arm of the Victoria Police was called in to conduct secret surveillance on picketing nurses during a seven-week strike in 1986.

A team of three undercover police monitored nurses picketing outside the Mercy, St Vincent's, Freemasons, Royal Melbourne, Royal Children's, Prince Henry's, Alfred and Royal Women's Hospitals.

Using a false identity, one undercover officer also obtained details of planned rallies and demonstrations from the headquarters of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation

By GERARD RYLE
and GARY HUGHES,
investigative reporters

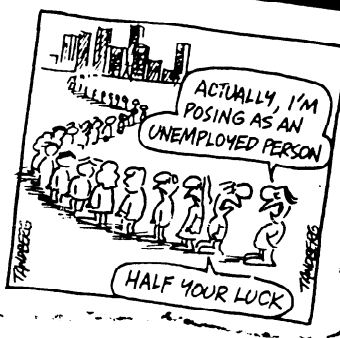
A secret Victoria Police unit has infiltrated and spied on community organisations, kept detailed dossiers on hundreds of individuals and bugged civil liberty groups campaigning for an independent inquiry into the force.

Undercover officers also infiltrated community radio station 3CR, covertly producing and helping present shows — including a weekly breakfast show — to win the trust of groups on which they spied.

Confidential records and files of the Operations Intelligence Unit seen by *The Age* reveal in detail covert operations that extended beyond its official role of openly liaising with community groups.

The records cover

Secret police revealed



cover police were seeking information a senior policer officer wanted to use in the media.

The Victoria Police refused to comment on a series of detailed questions put to it by *The Age* on the operations of the unit, including the bugging of the civil liberties meeting and infiltration of 3CR.

But the force's media director, Mr James Tonkin, said "accurate information and intelligence is vital to policing".

"The Victoria Police, as part of its duty to protect the community, gathers information in a number of ways as part of its efforts to detect and prevent politically motivated crime and violence," he said.

"Threat or risk assessments are used to plan the source

WOMEN'S GROUPS

Female police posed as feminists

By GERARD RYLE
and GARY HUGHES

Female members of the Victoria Police's covert intelligence unit were used to infiltrate feminist groups and compile secret dossiers on members.

Policeman posed as reporter to bug meetings

From *The Age*
6th-9th October, 1997

1200 on secret

By GARY HUGHES
and GERARD RYLE,
investigative reporters

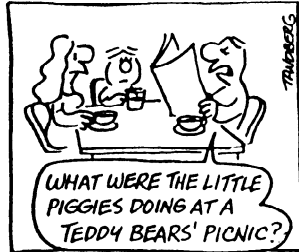
Personal details on more than 1200 Victorians were contained in a secret electronic database kept by a covert arm of the Victoria Police and seen by *The Age*.

The database shows that events "assessed" by the Operations Intelligence Unit included an October 1989 teddy bears' picnic in the Fitzroy Gardens, organised by the Victorian Childcare Action Group to highlight a shortage of childcare facilities.

Prominent politicians, environmentalists, feminists, gay activists, students, ethnic community leaders and ordinary individuals are among the hundreds of names and file numbers obtained by *The Age*.

Also listed are hundreds of community groups and radio and television stations, including radio 3JJ, the ABC and the Handicapped People's Collective Action Group.

Records were kept on people ranging from Midnight Oil singer and environmentalist Peter Garrett to the vice-president of the Older Persons Action Centre, Ms Edith Morgan, and Ms Margaret Berryman, who campaigned to protect the long-billed corella.



Angry community organisations yesterday united to demand a full judicial inquiry into the activities of the OIU and what they believed were other abuses of police power.

"It is our view that many of the activities that were engaged in were clearly unlawful... and ones which the Victoria Police, as upholders of that law, need to be brought to account for," said the executive director of Liberty Victoria, Mr Joseph O'Reilly.

The call followed revelations in *The Age* that the unit had infiltrated community organisations, including community radio station 3CR, and bugged civil liberty groups campaigning for an independent inquiry into the force.

Victoria's most wanted

By RACHEL GIBSON

This is the face of subversion in Victoria. Mrs Edith Morgan, 78, was considered such a risk to society that the covert Operations Intelligence Unit opened a dossier on her.

Mrs Morgan, the vice-president of the Older Persons Action Centre, has never committed a violent or terrorist act, although she has fantasised about it. She has protested, yes. Injustice to older people makes her angry. Things like the Federal Government's nursing homes

legislation, safety for the elderly on the street, access to public transport. These are the issues that make her blood boil.

"We should have the right to raise our voices over issues that concern us," she said yesterday. "If that gets confused with subversion I think we have a real problem in our democracy."



Edith Morgan: Protester? Yes.
Subversive? No.

Infiltrators helped run their targets



police list

By GARY HUGHES
and GERARD RYLE

Undercover officers with the Victoria Police's covert intelligence unit were so successful at infiltrating conservation groups that they helped staff their offices, produced newsletters, maintained files and updated membership lists.

One undercover officer even spent two days of police time helping build shelves at the Collingwood offices of Friends of the Earth. The group was so grateful it paid for a new blade for the electric saw the undercover policeman borrowed from a colleague in the covert Operations Intelligence Unit to build the shelves.

Confidential OIU records seen by *The Age* show that other conservation groups targeted for infiltration and surveillance included the Wilderness Society — which asked one undercover officer to bring a cake to a meeting — the East Gippsland Coalition, Rainforest Action Group and Greenhouse Action Group.

Secret dossiers were also kept on Greenpeace and individual members.

Covert friends of ducks plunged to the rescue

By GERARD RYLE
and GARY HUGHES

The pre-dawn waters of Lake Buloke near Donald were an unlikely setting for a top-secret Victoria Police undercover operation.

But it was here on 8 April 1989 that two undercover officers from the Operations Intelligence Unit took their places among animal liberationists preparing to save wounded ducks. Posing as opponents of duck hunting, the pair had infiltrated a group of 100 protesters assembled at the lake by the activist Mr Laurie Levy. Confidential unit records seen by *The Age* show the officers had spent the previous night with the protesters at the Donald caravan park. After a 4.30am briefing from Mr Levy, the pair joined a convoy of 30 vehicles that took protesters to the lake where duck hunters had gathered. The animal rights activists — including the undercover officers — rescued wounded ducks from the lake until after midday. In February 1987, members of the unit spent seven days shadowing two suspected animal liberationists. In April and May 1989, covert surveillance was conducted on a punk rock musician suspected of being a member of Animal Liberation.

From *The Age*
6th-9th October, 1997

Peace, terrorist groups share list

By GERARD RYLE
and GARY HUGHES

Religious, environment and peace groups were ranked alongside terrorist and extremist organisations, including the Nazi Party, on a secret Victoria Police database.

Among the details of more than 350 organisations and file numbers obtained by *The Age* were such mainstream community groups as the Australian Conservation Foundation, Aboriginal Housing Board, Amnesty International, Australian Women Against Incest and the Handicapped People's Collective.

Religious groups on the database included the Baptist Church-based House of the Gentle Bunyip, Greek

Orthodox Church, Fusion Christian Movement and Christian Pro-family Forum.

Both the Melbourne and Victorian branches of the Coalition for Gun Control had file numbers.

The database was compiled from hard files in 1990 by the Operations Intelligence Unit and regularly updated.

Details obtained by *The Age* show some of the database as it was in 1992. The list obtained by *The Age* is not comprehensive.

An edited list appears below. A full list of the names and organisations obtained by *The Age* can be found on the Internet at www.theage.com.au

Monash Association for the Reform of Marijuana Laws	0.63	Nazi Party	0.311
Monash Association of Students	0.329	New Left Party	0.294
Moral Re-armament	0.403	New Peoples Army	0.368
Motor Cycle Riders Association	0.448	Nicaragua Support Group	0.138
Movement Against Uranium Mining	0.268	Nuclear Free Australia Party	0.313
Movement for Democracy in Fiji	0.377	Olway Action Group	0.222
Musicians Against Apartheid	0.293	Palestine Arab Solidarity Movement	0.304
National anti-nuclear coordinating group	0.106	Spartacist League	900614
National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations	0.349A	Paper Action Group	0.328
National Helms Law Reform Organisation	0.448	Parents Without Rights	0.83
National Overseas Student Service	0.120	Pax Christi	0.106
National Union of Students	0.369B	Pay The Rent Council	0.349
National Vanguard Revolutionary Committee	0.97	Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Action	0.106
Native Forests Action Council	0.104	Peace Education Network (Ballarat)	0.433
		Pensioners For Peace	900128
		People Against Communism	0.292
		People Against Identity Numbers	0.387
		People For Greater Public Housing	0.320

People For Nuclear Disarmament	0.106	Combined Pensioners Association	900128
Radio 3EA	0.277	Vietnamese Community, Melbourne	0.259
Police Watch Action Group	0.297	Wilderness Action Group	0.458
People Opposing Military Expansion	0.457	Wilderness Society	0.458
Ploughshares (Baptist Social Justice Group)	0.339	Wildlife Protection Agency	0.375
The Powerline Action Group	0.440	Women Against Compulsory Motherhood	0.284
Prisoners Action Group	0.142	Women Against Rape	0.92
Forest Protection Society	900647	Women Against Violence and Exploitation	0.414
Public Transport Workers Association	385	Women's Coalition Against Family Violence	0.399
Radical Women	422	Women's Fairlea Action	0.142
Railway Tenant Action Committee	0.52	Women's Liberation Newsletter	L.144A
Rainbow Alliance	0.452	Women's Research and Resource Centre	0.384
Rainforest Action Group	0.438	Women With Disabilities Feminist Collective	0.29
Community Aid Abroad	890190	World Vision of Australia	0.107
Australian East Timor Association	0.116	Young Socialist	P.388
Right to Choose Coalition	0.123	International Socialists	0.244
Right to Life	0.123	National Action	0.299
Right to Work	0.245	Building Workers Industrial Union	900289
Scarlet Women Collective	0.415	Bread Not Circuses	900291
Shiddha Yoga Sect	0.110	Southern Africa Support Group	890027
Socialist Action	0.294	Swinburne Students Union	890032
Socialist Fight	0.242	Australian Arab Libya Friendship Society	890049
Socialist Workers Party	0.294	Australian Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees Association	890151
Sporting Shooting Association of Australia	0.393	South Eastern Arterial Noise Action Group	890068
Squatters Union	0.348	Spanish Elderly	890075
Stop The Racists Committee	0.252	Deaf Services Network	890075
Students Union of Victoria	0.369	DES Action	890075
Synanon	0.125	Down to Earth	890075
Tenants Union of Victoria	0.320	Family Care Association	890075
Theatrical and Amusement Employees Union	0.441	Older Persons Action Centre	890075
The Drop The Charges Committee	0.21	Polish Community Council	890075
Timorese Youth Association of Australia	0.21	JJJ FM	900674
Trade Union Unemployment Centre	0.444	World Wildlife Fund	890075
Turkish Solidarity Committee	0.444	Injured Workers Action Coalition	890078
Turkish Womens Association of Victoria	0.326	Police Powers Group	890092
Unemployed Workers Union	0.78	Koori Information Centre	890095
Unification Bookstore	0.65	Australian Broadcasting Commission	890117
Victorian Action for Intellectually Disabled	355	Friends of the ABC	890117
Victorian Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders	0.143	Reclaim the Night	890119
Victorian Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations	394A	Lots Wife	890129
Victorian Coalition Against Poverty and Unemployment	0.8		

Tall girl experiments posed no danger, says Wooldridge

Hormone tests on teenage girls referred to inquiry

By GARY HUGHES and GERARD RYLE

The National Health and Medical Research Council has been asked to consider amendments to ethical guidelines for medical research after the use of an artificial hormone to stop tall girls growing.

The Federal Health Minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge, made the request following a departmental review of the use of diethylstilboestrol or DES, which has been linked to cancer.

Dr Wooldridge said yesterday the review found there was "no scientific evidence raising concerns about possible lasting adverse effects".

But a spokeswoman for the tall girls who were used in the trial, Ms Janet Cregan-Wood, said no such study had ever been carried out.

She described Dr Wooldridge's response to the concerns of the women treated with DES as "totally inadequate".

The Age revealed in June that more than 160 Victorian teenage girls were used for the trial between

By GARY HUGHES and GERARD RYLE
The Federal Health Department

in Victorian orphanages.
The Australian Democrats failed in an attempt to have an inquiry into the use of hormone

the hormone caused early puberty, obesity, nausea and darkened skin pigmentation.

Page 1 of The Age on 27 June this year.

1959 and the mid-1970s by researchers from the Royal Children's Hospital and Melbourne University.

Ms Cregan-Wood said more than half the women in a group formed to represent those used in the trial had suffered from ovarian cysts — one of the known side effects of DES — and other medical problems.

Other possible known side-effects include infertility, cancer of the cervix and breast cancer.

Dr Wooldridge, who ordered the departmental review following The Age's report, said efforts were made at the time to counsel girls and their families on possible side effects.

He said the review also covered the failed use of the steroid norethandrolone on short children to make them grow taller and found that serious long-term side effects were unlikely.

Dr Wooldridge said: "I have asked the National Health and Medical Research Council to review the available information and consider what amendments, if any, might be required to current research practices in the light of these reports."

Ms Cregan-Wood said most of the girls who took part in the trial were not told it was an experiment or required to give informed consent.

The Age, 10/10/97

More scientific research needed

from Marian Vickers,
DES Action member

So a departmental review has reassured Dr Wooldridge that the experimental use of stilboestrol (DES) to inhibit height in young girls poses no threat to their health. (The Age, 10/10). Well, surprise, surprise! ... How could we expect anything else from a departmental review?

That the review found "no scientific evidence" of adverse effects is hardly surprising as there has been no scientific research carried out — so there is no evidence either way.

This dismissive and patronising response from medical and health authorities is depressingly familiar to members of DES Action. We belong to an earlier experiment involving DES when it was (erroneously) prescribed as a pregnancy maintenance therapy. As subjects of this earlier experiment we have been left with a lasting and ever-widening legacy of health problems including cancer, infertility, pregnancy difficulties and immune problems.

One scientific finding of relevance to the Tall Girls group is

that DES mothers have a statistically significant increased rate of breast cancer 20-25 years after having been prescribed DES. An immediate side effect of administration of DES to young girls is early on-set of puberty. Given that early menarche is a known risk factor for breast cancer, it appears the Tall Girls have the double whammy of two known risk factors — early menarche and exposure to DES. Surely this is reason for concern and underlines the need for ongoing research and follow-up.

Obviously research into the use of DES in Australia is long overdue. We urgently need a national DES register to monitor and facilitate research of the DES population — DES mothers, daughters and sons, and DES "tall girls".

Incidentally, DES Action members are rather chuffed at being included in the Victorian police secret data base of "subversive" groups (The Age, 8/10). We can only assume that the word "Action" in our name alerted the police to possible "activists"!

Marian Vickers,
Burwood.

The Age, 13/10/97

The 'Tall Girl' group requested a copy of the departmental review so they could formally reply to it. This was refused and they had to resort to an FOI (freedom of information) request.

They finally saw the review on December 9 and, to quote Janet Cregan-Wood, ... "The report was quite shameful. It was evident whoever wrote it had not attempted to inform themselves of 20 years of research literature - little wonder that no-one claimed authorship of it."

DES SYMPOSIUM *cont^d*

Ms Cobb noted that there is an inherent power relationship between doctors and women when doctors offer HRT and that women are led to believe that they need HRT. In the 1960's Robert Wilson's book 'Feminine Forever' (which was paid for by drug companies) described menopause as a 'hormone deficiency', 'ovarian under-function' and 'senile vagina'. There is an enormous range of women's experiences when starting menopause. - many women do not go to a doctor at all.

Ms Cobb believes that the "best medicine" is regular exercise, as this optimises the likelihood of a healthy body weight, a good night's sleep and avoiding depression. She also mentioned alternative approaches such as Chinese herbal medicine, acupuncture and naturopathy.

Dr Burton Krumholz, Director of New York's DES Screening Clinic presented new findings from a survey of DES daughters. The youngest presentation of the clear-cell adenocarcinoma of the vagina is 7 years of age. There have been several cases of women in their early forties, with the oldest presentation being 46 years of age. Dr Krumholz emphasized that "we need to continue to be alert." The increase of low-grade lesions of the cervix (eg. dysplasia) in all young women has led to an increase of treatment to the cervix. This can be of major significance to the DES-exposed population because of their increased risk of injury to the cervix.

Regarding DES exposure and pregnancy, Dr Krumholz made the following recommendations: there is no indication for 'routine' cerclage, or for 'routine' hystrogram. Use tocolytic agents only for proven preterm labor.

The most notable finding is that DES daughters have a significantly higher rate of ectopic pregnancy surgery compared to the non-exposed control group. Other issues under study are age at onset of menopause and use of HRT.

The final keynote speaker was Dianne Dumanoski, a reporter on the Boston Globe and co-author of 'Our Stolen Future'. She gave a brilliant talk on the wider meaning of DES and the important lessons to be learnt by the larger society. "The DES story is not over, it continues to unfold as we age. In the larger world, the lessons of DES have a continuing relevance. The hazards of hormone exposure is present in the environment. Persistent organic pollutants cause endocrine disorders. The DES tragedy has played an important part in synthesizing literature re. 'hormone havoc'. The DES experience was absolutely essential for further research. Without the DES historical experience, our scientific argument would not be perceived as valid. She spoke of the lessons of warnings ignored, especially animal research. For example the 1930s studies of DES in rats. The other important (ignored) warning was the 1950s research on DDT.

Dianne Dumanoski described the DES experience as: 'the common fate of Mice and Men...an unfortunate and inadvertent experiment'. She thinks the effects of DES exposure may not have been discovered without the emergence of clear cell cancer of the vagina/cervix. Before DES, it was very hard for doctors to believe that pre-natal hormone/chemical exposure caused developmental abnormalities.

She concluded by saying that there is an '...unfolding story of endocrine disruption. We do not at this time know the magnitude and breadth of the problem'.

During lunch there were several short talks given. The speakers included two lawyers and DES Action representatives from the Netherlands, Canada and Australia. I spoke on behalf of the 'Tall Girls' and delivered a moving speech written by Janet Cregan-Wood (President of the Tall Girls). The afternoon session consisted of five workshops on the topics of: DES Sons, adoption, menopause, infertility and reproductive technologies and general medical questions about DES.

The 1997 DES Symposium was a great opportunity to meet with other DES-exposed mothers, daughters and sons as well as the expert speakers; and I felt very privileged to be able to attend. The transcript of the proceedings is not available as yet, but anyone who is interested should write to DES Action, Australia or contact DES Action, USA directly via Fax 0015.1.510.465.4815 or by email desact@well.com.

POST - SYMPOSIUM NEWS

Deidre's presentation of the DES Tall Girl issue created a great deal of interest in the USA.

Janet Cregan-Wood reports that the Tall Girl Group has been contacted (via the Internet) by both Dianne Dumanoski and Theo Colburn, co-authors of 'Our Stolen Future'.

The group has also been in contact with Dr Shanna Swan, member of the US National Academy of Sciences, who indicated that the 'Tall Girls' experience has until now been overlooked and is of great interest to researchers at the international level.

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DES Action's Health Survey

Thank-you to those who took the time to fill in and return our questionnaire (some in great detail). We will start collating and analysing them in the New Year. **REMEMBER** it is not too late to return the questionnaire - we need a good return rate to make the survey worthwhile.

Subscriptions to DESPATCH

Also a big thank-you to all who subscribed to DESPATCH - our bank balance is looking a little healthier! **PLEASE** support us by subscribing as it is our only way of staying in touch.

Season's Greetings
& Best Wishes for a
Happy and Healthy 1998
