

BC RAMA

AT AN ANTI-WAR VIGIL ON 4TH AVE packed with pre-Christmas shoppers I spied Gordon Campbell strutting down the street. In his black leather jacket and blue jeans he looked almost human until I saw his dead eyes in his prison pallor face. It was just before he brought down the budget. There were ugly rumours poisoning the air about how he was going to shred up social services like a psychopath on speed. I asked “would you like to help end the war?” When he stopped to take a pamphlet I leaned up as close to him as I could bear and said “you’re bordering on facism.” I was giving him a break, a window of opportunity, a chance to not unleash his sick ideology and become the monster he was about to become. I’d said it softly but he flinched anyhow, his shoulders hunched as he ducked into Soupspoons, a fancy soup restaurant where he spent a long time. But, Meany Pants and I, we’d had our moment.

The next day I was walking down Stephens, another of Kitsilano’s sometimes wicked streets. It was dusk so I almost missed the obviously lost black puppy shivering and shaking by the curb. It didn’t take much coaxing to get him to walk with me into a pizza parlour to read the tag whose name and number corresponded with George Puil, the hateful city councilor responsible for last year’s 4 month public transit strike.

There was no answer or answering machine at the Puil residence at Kits Point. I was in a terrific dilemma about what to do with Buster, the spectacularly mis-named buttercup of a puppy. Should I rescue him from his odious master and raise him myself? Or dognap him, hold him for ransom, donate the loot to the Bus Riders’ Union? He was a rare breed of poodle, worth a fortune. Salah, the pizza man, was already as in love with Buster as I was and pleaded to keep him a while longer. The next day he told me a member of the Puil family finally came to pick up Buster but didn’t leave a reward though he’d taken care of the puppy for hours. Salah was new to the country so I explained, “Puil is a very bad man”. He said “okay, next time we find his dog, we don’t give it back.”

I went directly from Kits to a Howe street office to participate in a 90-minute pitch for time-shares, which I knew absolutely nothing about. I’d been solicited

by phone. Focus and special sales groups always pay something so if you want to make some extra bucks, listen carefully, you can usually fit into their demographics. I got accepted for this session by claiming from the multiple choices I had an income of over \$100,000 annually. I was lured by the promise of two Canuck tickets or a \$70 credit to Milestones and opted for the restaurant since if you don't use the voucher up they give you the balance in cash. The meeting was about buying shares in a hotel in Vancouver where apparently 9 million tourists visit a year. This didn't sound accurate to me but who was I to argue? After a whacked out video about Vancouver's greatest tourist hits and a passionate motivational speech by a man covered in evangelical sweat, we were divided into couples to be personally encouraged to invest in the scheme.

I was the only single person there and got assigned to Sonja the only middle-aged saleswoman there. She took me to a "typical" room in the hotel across the street. The suite was tiny and tedious, done in tones of corporate beige—even the decor of the bathroom almost put me to sleep. I checked out the art on the walls some of which was all right. Sonja said, "I'm an abstract painter though I don't look like one." "What does an abstract painter look like?" I asked but she wouldn't tell me. In the crowded elevator leaving the hotel Sonja kept angling me for my age. It turned out we were born the same year. "I don't like getting older" she whispered. "It's either get older or be dead" I whispered back. "You're a real piece of work," she snapped very audibly but I sensed some affection. Then Sonja recognized Nancy Greene, champion skier from a while ago. I said "you were a hero to my children." Ms. Greene's eyes glazed over, she'd heard it all before, but she got real animated when Sonja engaged her in Whistler business instead.

At the office to collect my Milestones coupon and help myself to more free coffee and cookies, I caught Sonja evaluating me with her boss. "How do I rate as a potential time-sharer?" I asked. She said, "I gave you six out of ten." But I knew she was lying.