

Veiled Threat Laid On Rescuer Of 'Drag Queens'

by Jennifer L. Thompson

"Did you get my message, Ray?" asked Sgt. Tom Stack after busting 17 so-called drag queens in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco in the wee hours of Saturday morning.

"What message?" asked Rev. Ray Broshears, of the Gay Activists Alliance and the Helping Hands community center.

"You better watch your back," threatened Sgt. Stack, as he spoke to his old foe Broshears. Before the roundup of 33 alleged drag queen and drug - using street people, Broshears had had a knife pulled on him by one of the vice squad's smack - head informers. Broshears had gotten the message.

Only 17 "drag queens," out of the 33 people detained in the sweep were thrown in the slammer, on charges of cross-dressing and obstructing the sidewalk. The cops gave complaints from the Hilton Hotel and a desire to protect drag queens from the Zebra as excuses for the busts, which were made in front of the Body Shop, the Meat Rack, and on the 400-block of Ellis Street.

On Saturday, Broshears appeared at the Hall of Justice to help "his kids", and he was informed that the 17 drag queens did not

want to be released on their own recognizance. Once released, however, they told him that they were not informed of his efforts to spring them.

When Broshears returned to the Hall of Justice on Sunday with a court order from Judge Reynolds, he was told by the police that they did not believe his court order was real. "A court order in your hand, Broshears, is like a gun in the hand of a murderer," said one officer. Once again Broshears demanded to be told by the 17 themselves that they didn't want to be released.

His request was denied, but he was told that he would not be allowed to leave the Hall of Justice until he spoke with Sgt. Patton, Captain Taylor's aide. The chat with Patton turned out to be an interrogation concerning Broshears' involvement (which is non-existent) with the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). Broshears does know members of the NCLC but is not politically involved with the group.

Soon Patton began questioning Broshears about his involvement with Popeye Jackson, who has been using a post office box rented by Broshears (the reverend has reportedly been harassed by the post office over this). When he became

upset with this line of questioning, he was told by the police not to bother calling his lawyer because he was vacationing in Texas.

Needless to say, Broshears' mind was utterly blown on finding what close tabs were being kept on him.

As soon as he was allowed, he left the alleged Hall of Justice.

On Monday, all 17 queens received suspended sentences. The next time they are busted they will be automatically thrown into San Bruno for three months. One reason Broshears was adamant about talking to the defendants was to prevent them from bargaining with the cops, a practice which rarely benefits the accused.

Broshears told me that the message to community organizers in the Tenderloin is to quit, or else....But in true Broshears fashion, the Rev. Ray is not going to quit but is planning a class-action law suit in support of the 17. He warns members of the middle-class Tavern Guild, who like to see gays off the streets and in the bars, that "you are next".

According to Broshears, the police are telling the drag queens they can blame Broshears and the street people for the bust. The street people are being told they can blame the drag queens.