

Wednesday (15 Aug 01), another allegedly unlawful eviction attempt on a senior citizen occurred at Council House, 1501 17 Avenue, Seattle. The incident took place after a monthly *Coffee with Steve* meeting held by the administrator, Stephen (aka Stefan) A. Mitchell (36), 6126 8 Avenue NW, Seattle. It resulted from a verbal fracas at the meeting between two residents, Virginia D. Lambert (69) and Leon L. Harris (70). Harris must now appear in King County District Court, Seattle Division, E326, to answer harassment charges (27 Aug 01).

The Council House directors have employed Mitchell as administrator for more than twelve months. Before that Mitchell worked for the former administrator Mark Mullen for five years. Both have followed absolutist policies in managing the project by consistently neglecting to comply with HUD directives when managing the building and dealing with residents.

Mitchell holds *Coffee with Steve* meetings each month. He claims that they allow him to hear resident comments and complaints. However, he uses the meetings as a forum in which to self-aggrandize and to attack anyone voicing an opinion contrary to his own ideology.

Harris, a black man, voiced an opinion at the meeting (15 Aug 01) about an incident that he considered racist. Donald L. Jackson (68), another black resident and a witness for Harris at the hearing, evidently saw a Jewish resident looking at children playing in the T. T. Minor school yard across the street from Council House. He then heard her say in front of several black residents: "What is this - the planet of the apes?"

Harris, a long-term activist, former aide to an Oregon governor, and Council House residents' association past president, had previously complained to Mitchell about racist language. However, Mitchell did nothing when a resident used the term "shvarzer" (Yiddish - nigger) in the public rooms.

Lambert shills for Mitchell at meetings and acts as one of his five enforcers or cappers who instill fear into residents. They coerce elderly residents into writing apologetic letters or confessions for making innocent comments and to make false declarations for later use in court. At the meeting she called Harris a liar.

Lambert has a violent disposition. Witnesses say that she physically attacked two black women in the building. They have said that they will testify to that effect in court to support Harris's contention of racism. Evidently, the desk clerk called the police when residents had difficulty separating Lambert from a woman on whom she had a stranglehold in the lobby. On another occasion, a resident saw Lambert attack a woman in the laundry room.

Lambert's apartment apparently contains so much trash that the maintenance staff could not reach the windows to clean them. Consequently, she sleeps in the lounge and intimidates anyone that wishes to change the television program. She has no telephone and spends long periods on

the pay telephone in the hallway. Mitchell allows her to break house rules and HUD regulations at will.

Moreover, Mitchell covered up the condition of Lambert's apartment at a recent HUD inspection while concurrently disciplining other residents. A bag lady, Lambert roams the streets during the early hours collecting trash in a walker basket. She "mentors" gullible residents and gains their confidence then acts in a consort with another unsavory character, Felipe Jacques, to help Mitchell and his staff implement their extremist right wing policies. According to a source who has known her for many years, Lambert reputedly has herself claimed Mafia connections to intimidate other people.

Apparently, Mitchell sided with Lambert in the argument at the meeting then encouraged her to dial 911. The police did not arrive until later that day. In her sworn court statement she accuses Harris of threatening to "wrap that walker around my [her] neck" and that he "constantly exhibits a virtually uncontrolled temper and tells atrocious lies about staff and sometimes other residents." She says that she has concern that "his violence will escalate from verbal to physical violence."

Lambert made similar unsubstantiated statements in her declaration (02 Apr 01) in Trummel vs. Mitchell. Then she swore that: "In discussions with staff and fellow residents I confirmed that much of Paul Trummel's writing convey [sic] false data. Moreover, his writing and his behavior have created an atmosphere of fear and unrest. . . . I am concerned about the emotional and physical well-being of our older residents (as they have expressed to me in their concerns)."

That statement formed part of an organized campaign by Mitchell, Lambert, and Felipe Jacques, to coerce gullible, elderly residents into signing sworn declarations. Mitchell then obtained a restraining order and constructively evicted this reporter without due process. Mitchell filed those false and misleading documents with the court in a batch - tantamount to suborning multiple perjury. The forty-one people who signed the declarations have yet to submit to cross-examination or deposition.

The Harris filing adds to a pattern and practice of behavior by Mitchell to evict residents for political, religious, or racial, reasons. He has constructively evicted three other residents this way during the past year and publicly stated his intention to continue using that unlawful strategy.

Mitchell has hounded Harris with threats of eviction for more than four months as he has the other witnesses in the case of Trummel vs. Mitchell. That case describes another in a series of attempts by Mitchell to silence residents for complaining and reporting his wrongdoing to government authorities. It concerns this reporter (68) whom Mitchell permanently locked out of his apartment four months ago (19 Apr 01).

Both attorneys and news reporters have called the finding by Judge James A. Doerty "draconian". In it he denied constitutional rights and due process of law. That finding presently awaits a

hearing in the Washington appellate court while this reporter pays his rent to maintain his residency and lives in a cheap motel because the restraining order does not allow him to enter his home.

Thursday (16 Aug 01), a full twenty-four hours after the Lambert/Harris altercation, Mitchell instructed his assistant, Katrina M. Ramsburg (23), formerly living at 1024 N Central Avenue, Kent, to drive Lambert to the courthouse to file an antiharassment complaint against Harris. Ramsburg gave Lambert confidential information from Harris's personal file - a contravention of the federal privacy act.

Lambert later testified (05 Sep 01) that Ramsburg gave her Harris's social security number, date of birth, and telephone number, claiming that they classified as public records. HUD regulations strictly forbid Council House employees from revealing any information held in personal files to third parties or supporting legal actions between residents. Moreover, Ramsburg should not have access to personal resident files at all. She neither holds academic/professional qualifications and experience nor HUD authority to access personal documents covered by HUD regulations.

Ironically, Judge James A. Doerty (Washington Superior Court), in a decision now subject to appellate review, censored legally published information about Ramsburg. Her private address, telephone number, and birth date, rank as speech protected by the First Amendment and courts may not enjoin its dissemination. The article did not contain her social security number as he claimed. Reporters may not, and generally do not, publish social security numbers.¹

According to usually reliable sources, Mitchell has said that he will use a finding in favor of Lambert to evict Harris. Harris has opposed Mitchell in the past on racial and religious discrimination issues especially on an incident now known locally as the "Jesus Affair."

Witnesses, and a signed statement by a musician/vocalist, state that Audrey F. Dunbar (32), 14504 Madison Way, Lynnwood, another Mitchell assistant, asked him: "to refrain from using the name Jesus or songs of Christian relevance in my [his] repertoire because of its offensive nature to Jewish residents." On another occasion, Dunbar told a resident that he could not invite a gospel singer to entertain residents because the board of directors had decided that it would offend Jewish residents: despite frequent Jewish festivals and regular services in a synagogue established in the building.

Mitchell has done nothing about this obvious problem and the directors, in full knowledge of these and similar bigoted occurrences in which they have participated themselves, turn a blind eye. Instead of acting according to law, Mitchell ostracized Harris using a kill-the-messenger technique. The Lambert vs. Harris complaint has inflamed the inherent feelings of ethnic minorities both inside and outside the project. By continuing to exhibit a large Israeli flag in the dining room (contrary to federal regulations) the directors pour more fuel on the fire.

Mitchell has frequently choreographed Kafkaesque scenarios to have residents arrested and held under mental observation. He now runs a planned campaign to incite residents to file antiharassment motions against other residents based upon their feelings not upon facts.

He uses the threat of restraining orders to provoke respondents into loud verbal responses. He then obtains an order either personally or through an intermediary based upon coerced or faked evidence. If a respondent offends him then he has them arrested and incarcerated for mental observation on the slightest pretext. At his meetings, he uses those incidents as an example of what can happen to others who do not comply with his dictates. Using Lambert, one of his enforcers, he has orchestrated this case against Harris.

Bizarrely, Mitchell does not ask residents to report what they know, instead, he coerces them into testifying what they think. He tells them to base their thinking upon their feelings. He says that if they do not cooperate with him then he will throw them out of their apartments and they will have nowhere to go. Alternatively, he threatens to use restraining orders to make them prisoners in their apartments.

Mitchell does not allow rational discussion, instead, he quashes complaints. This gives him and his lieutenants absolute power to terrorize residents with whom they disagree. From fear, they decide to cooperate despite inherent ethics or morals.

In the following statement Mitchell repeatedly uses the therapeutic term “feeling” as a weasel word. He coerces residents into thinking that others pose a danger to them when they do not. At a tape recorded *Coffee with Steve* meeting (17 Jan 01) he told residents:

Why don't you residents document that stuff . . . I maintain a file and those of you that have written me letters telling me that you don't feel safe, that's stuff that's very helpful. You know we're working on it and doing the best that we can but have got to do it right. And when it's done it will be done for good. So, we're not going to rush into it.

. . . if you feel like someone is threatening to you, if you feel like verbally they assaulted you or if you feel like they are doing some action that does not make you feel safe then you can go down to the courthouse and get a restraining order against any person that makes you feel that way.

If that person then contacts you or speaks to you or approaches you or posts anything on your door then you can call the police and they will escort that person away. And I would certainly encourage residents that if you do not feel safe and if you feel threatened by someone to go down and get a restraining order.

That's how we dealt with the previous issues. It's very hard to evict someone. Very, very hard to evict someone. In fact, the lawyers are telling me that it's really the only way to evict people in Seattle [except] if they don't pay the rent.

Now the laws are there but it's the judge's determination so there's a couple of ways to do it. One is, if I have a lot of substantial letters from residents saying that this person is making my life hell then I'm hoping that the judge will say, well, you know [sic].

. . . [If] you have a restraining order that says if you're caught in public we're going to call the police and if your out on the roof then we're going to call the police if your on any of the floors of any of the residents who have a restraining order against you we will call the police and you will be escorted away. In a sense you will be a prisoner in your own apartment.

HUD officials have aided and abetted both Mitchell and Mullen through lack of mandated federal oversight. Both administrators have consistently violated federal laws and resident rights. Mullen now manages Fred Lind, another senior housing project a few blocks from Council House, and maintains a "cozy" relationship with Mitchell.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has now closed its ranks by denying access to Council House documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Local auditors and administrators have become part of the problem and not the solution. Through alleged collusion they have covered up resident abuse and misappropriation of federal funds. Those individuals will eventually have to explain themselves to independent government investigators.

The National Council of Jewish Women registered a non-profit corporation to build and refurbish the Council House, a residence for senior citizens on Capitol Hill, Seattle. They obtained federal financial assistance through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the original construction and rehabilitation. Federal, state, and municipal regulations forbid racial and religious discrimination against residents by landlords/owners.

Mitchell frequently punishes Council House residents who complain to HUD and when the media publishes facts that he considers unfavorable to him. Regardless, the majority of sources who contributed information for this article showed a willingness to have their names published. However, this reporter has decided to withhold them. This will protect sources and may avoid more capricious calls to police. Anonymity at this time will also avoid prejudicing government investigation and pending legal action.

Nmesis.

1. City of Kirkland vs. William Sheehan et ux. et al. State of Washington, Superior Court, King County (01-2-09513-7 SEA).

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