

# Effects of shock treatment studied

Every day many people in Vancouver receive electroshock therapy for treatment of depression (especially involuntional melancholia), catatonic schizophrenia, manic-depressive psychosis.

Suicidal tendencies, lack of insight, agitation, refusal to eat or talk, delusions, crying spells, apathy, stupor, negativism (refusal to co-operate) and hostility are all characteristics which suggest to many psychiatrists that EST may be in order.

During the month of September, 187 treatments were administered at Riverview Hospital alone. The majority of shock treatments are administered to the patients in psychiatric wards of the general hospitals (Vancouver General Hospital, Lion's Gate Hospital, Health Sciences, etc.).

The technique of administration of electroshock therapy at Riverview goes something like this.

The person is not allowed to eat or drink anything for four hours before EST. During this period tranquillizers or sedatives may be used to reduce the subject's fear and "resistance to treatment".

Graphite jelly, applied to the two areas of the head where the electrodes are to be placed, increases conductivity and prevents burns. A fast-acting intravenously-in-

jected anaesthetic renders the subject unconscious in moments.

Then succinylcholine, a muscle relaxant, is administered to reduce the risk of bone dislocations and fractures. It causes almost complete paralysis, including respiratory paralysis, so that the subject's breathing must be assisted artificially.

The psychiatrist presses a button which releases 70 to 175 volts of electricity for one-tenth to 1½ seconds. The electricity penetrates the skull into the brain. This induces a convulsion, the movements of which are modified by the muscle relaxants. The convulsion is followed by a coma lasting several minutes.

## Remember?

In the light of the recent Social Credit campaign, which was based on non-issue emotional catchwords like "communists" and "welfare cheats," it might be good for the people of B.C. to remember another party which swept to power on a wave of similar fear and hysteria — the German Nazi party.

BILL STOREY

2738 West Third

Upon reviving, the subject experiences some of the following: headache, dizziness, muscle ache, nausea and vomiting, confusion, disorientation ("where am I", "who am I"), fear, panic and combativeness, physical weakness and memory loss.

The nature, extent, and duration of EST-induced amnesia have always been a controversial subject. The Committee to Investigate Shock Treatment is a group of people working out of Mental Patients Association. We are going to hospitals to talk to psychiatrists and reading material written about shock treatments.

More importantly, we want to collect reports written by people who have received shock treatments because we feel that these are the people most able to report the ongoing side effects of shock treatment.

If any reader has received shock treatment or knows someone who has received shock treatment, and would be willing to share this experience either verbally or in writing, please contact the Mental Patients Association, Committee to Investigate Shock Treatment, 2146 Yew, phone 738-5177 or 738-1422.

LAWRENCE BELFRAGE

KATHY KIDD

(MPA's Committee to Investigate Shock Treatment)

2146 Yew