

BATHURST: THE WAR THE POLICE WANT

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At the insistence of MRA (Motor-cycle Riders Association) NSW, a meeting was held recently between representatives of the MRA and the Police Department. But before any discussion took place, the MRA was notified of the following changes for 1984.

- 1) The fence surrounding the police compound will be extended to protect the power supply.
- 2) The woodpile will be relocated.
- 3) The road in front of the compound will be tarred.

And although the MRA NSW presented a detailed submission for relocation of the police compound, no support was received. Furthermore, no response was received to references made of violence by police. Nor was any responsibility accepted and no promise of any improvement given for the police public relations' part in the exaggerated media reports.

With no consideration given to preventing further trouble, the police attitude is very much: "There are going to be more confrontations so let's be better prepared".

Police Paranoia

The deep-rooted and dangerous nature of the Police paranoia is no better illustrated than in the issue of the 'NSW Police News' published shortly after the Bathurst race meeting.

That publication produced six Bathurst-related pages, five of them from an FBI special agent describing motorcycle gang behaviour in America. It is recommended reading, according to the story's introduction, "particularly in view of the events which occurred at Bathurst".

Naturally Special Agent Davis is convinced that "...Motor-cycle gangs pose a serious threat to our society..." and the author skirts the psychological profile of motorcycle club members while citing extreme examples of initiation rites, criminal activities, community fear, territorial battles, and so on.

The ultimate distortion of the material is better served by local sources. Under a picture of a wedding held recently in Sydney we read a caption..."A huge column of bikie gang members headed by two newly-wed couples ride out after the double wedding with its strange rituals".

A story could be written about that caption alone. It is incorrect, deliberately-slanted drivel - a smear tactic on which those clearly identified in the photo could launch a nice case for damages.

The wedding in question was that of Trudy to Barry, in Sydney's Parramatta Park. It was attended by members of Bikers Limited Wests and the Harley Davidson Riders Club of Australia. There was a marriage celebrant (no strange rituals) and one (only) couple were married. It was merely a modern wedding. The guests arrived and left on motorcycles.

Policemen, writing for policemen, never let facts stand in the way of a good story.

Rabid Condemnation

Even more startling in its rabid condemnation of motorcyclists is the opening page of the "NSW Police News" Bathurst treatment.

Under a heading "The Annual Bathurst Brawl Must Be Banned" a highlighted editorial from an author using a pseudonym treats readers to some aspects of the potentially tragic ineptness and obvious paranoia that hides behind uniforms.

We quote directly some sections...
"...They were and are rioters. Their intent is malicious and malevolent.

"...The worthy citizens of Bathurst may complain that to ban the races would deprive them of an annual income of millions... but the social cost and the impact of an already sick community must also be taken into account. The Mayor (of Bathurst) proposes that means of controlling liquor sales and consumption on Mount Panorama should be considered. That's tinkering with the problem - not solving it.

"If no firm action is taken now, how much longer must the community wait before it is? Already the streets and countryside of Australia are cluttered with bikies whose very presence is an offence to any decent member of society. And it is intended to be...

"When they ride their souped-up machines into any community, let there be no doubt that fear as to their intentions immediately arises. The police are powerless to act against them because they are tolerated.

"When they go to some excess which attracts publicity to them, they waffle away about the amounts of money they raise for charities. This is supposed to make up for their generally offensive behaviour...

"Enough is enough. Or must society wait for the first policeman to be killed at Bathurst before the politicians act?"

Outside Observations

This - and more - is what the

police tell themselves about motorcyclists and Bathurst.

What then do others report to more level-headed readers?

The newspaper REVS preferred to say very little indeed, despite the fact that one of its staff was caught up in the action. A couple of barbs were aimed at over-sensationalist Sydney newspapers.

It was left then to TWO WHEELS, ACMN and OZBIKE, all of which, totally independently, produced remarkable material detailing pronounced police provocation from various angles. OZBIKE carried the best 'police action' photos of what went down.

TWO WHEELS made clear the extent of the deterioration in police behaviour by titling its story 'Blood On The Mountain - Part Two' - a reference to an exceptional piece of journalism penned by Julia Cullen in her description of the trouble on the Mount in 1981.

What was particularly interesting in our reading of the various specialist magazine Bathurst reports was their detailed similarity of what occurred.

Quite independently, various journalists have noted the same violent, provocative occurrences the police would have citizens believe did not occur.

The police then, are liars.

But more sinister mien prevails, in 1982 Bathurst was quiet - significantly more so than during the big car event there we've been told (by police). In 1983 the police used different tactics and themselves began a whole new ball game. It nourished provocation and bred violence.

In 1984, the community is advised, the police at Bathurst are gonna be stronger still.

The police force has long sought more men, more power and (occasionally) more armament. Bathurst is just one event that can be manipulated to over-emphasise the necessity of those demands.