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Students to Protest University of Chicago Law School Professor's support for Red Squads

SUBHEAD: Students to Protest University of Chicago Law School Professor's overturning of the consent decree limiting police power to spy on activists.

Chicago, IL — Students at the University of Chicago will hold a rally on Friday, February 16th at 1pm on the main U of C campus in Hyde Park to protest the decision of Judge Richard Posner, a senior lecturer at the U of C Law School, to overturn the consent decree which restricted political spying and the disruption of constitutionally protected activities by Chicago Police Department.

After eleven years of litigation, a June, 1984 jury verdict and a December, 1985 court decision held that the Chicago Police Subversive Activities Unit, also known as the "**Red Squad**", had unlawfully spied on, infiltrated and harassed political groups. On January 11th Judge Posner wrote the decision for the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals which overturned Federal Judge Ann Williams' 1999 ruling upholding the consent decree.

Speakers at the rally will include Emile Schepers, program director for the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights, and Melinda Powers of the West Town Community Law Office and National Lawyers Guild.

Student groups at the University of Chicago supporting the rally include the Feminist Majority, the Anti-Sweatshop Coalition, Young Democratic Socialists, the Environmental Concerns Organization, Students Together Opposing Prisons, and Creative Progressive Action. The students stressed that the rally will be peaceful and non-violent.

Judge Posner agreed to the city's request to modify the consent decree that had reined in the Chicago Police Department's notorious Red Squad. The student activists seek to remind Posner that the Red Squad spied on, infiltrated and harassed such "subversive" groups such as the American Friends Service Committee, the United Methodist Church and the League of Women Voters. Thousands of paid and unpaid undercover agents were used to compile Police dossiers on hundreds of thousands of Chicago residents. The Red Squad collected information on 14,000 organizations and 258,000 individuals.

Judge Posner granted the Chicago Police permission to resume collecting political data on any community group or organization, and to declare, at their discretion, certain groups to be "extreme" and then place those groups under surveillance. The police are now also allowed to routinely film all protest demonstrations "for training purposes". The reasons given for asking the federal courts for these powers were patently false, as was pointed out by the original federal judge, Ann Williams, when she rejected the city's petition in 1999. It was shown in that trial that the police have ample power to do their investigations without these expanded powers. A police sergeant involved with anti-terrorism work gave a sworn deposition to the effect that at no time did the consent decree ever interfere with a legitimate police investigation, of hate crimes or anything else.

Posner professes distaste for the antiwar and civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s, which he has characterized as an "anarchic outburst." And he agrees with Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia that "people who look to the courts for social reform do not take democracy completely seriously." However, the student activists charge that by allowing the police to infiltrate, spy on and otherwise disrupt social movements Posner himself fails to take democracy seriously.

For more information see: <http://www.concentric.net/~Gutmanpc/>