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BLIND SPOT

A DAILY BULLETIN OF UNDERREPORTED ANTI-WTO ACTIVISM

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Squatters occupy abandoned building

"We are reclaiming what was private property and making it community property," exclaimed Hagbard, one of over 75 people who took over an abandoned building downtown that was recently affordable housing for artists.

The occupation began around 8pm on Sunday night. After the initial break-in, people began crawling through a small space left open from the boarded up staircase leading from the front door. People immediately got to work.

Within an hour people had covered the windows with black tarps. The electricity and water were hooked up and running. The cooking crew was busy cutting vegetables, preparing spaghetti for the first community feast to celebrate their action. Makeshift stoves were fired up and water was boiling.

"As anarchists, we are working together to create a place without hierarchy, coercion, or centralized power. Unlike people from the WTO we believe that people are good and they don't need masters," explained Hagbard, a Eugene, Oregon, based anarchist.

"Each person is equipped to govern themselves," added Cat.

After about an hour and a half, a police officer arrived. Alex, the police liaison stationed across at a bus stop across the street spoke with him. A list of questions was communicated from inside via walkie-talkies. The cop gathered some information and left.

"The risk of being put in jail should not deter people from feeding people and putting a roof over their heads," remarked Hooch, in town from Idaho. "Everyone deserves a place to live."

"Every form of protest that says No to the existing order is necessary," commented Cat.



"Barricading is going on for our safety," said one of the new residents.

"But I am not interested in a march that begins and ends at a certain place and gets us nowhere. This form of nonviolent direct action is not about just saying No! It is about saying Yes! And creating a real alternative. We are turning this into activist housing during the WTO and hope to keep it as housing for the homeless once we are gone."

—scott winn

Protest no mystery for People's Assembly

"How the WTO raised the ire of such a wide group of protestors remains somewhat of a mystery," reported the Sunday November 28 edition of the Seattle Times.

It is no mystery to Ace Saturay, convenor of the People's Assembly and chair of the Seattle division of the Filipino organization Sentenaryo ng Bayan. His organization has been planning the People's Assembly for over a year. It is taking place Sunday November 28 and Monday November 29 at the Filipino Cultural Center in Rainier Valley at 5740

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Seattle TV: Official Media?

KOMO News has announced a policy of covering only those events carrying an official seal of approval from the city government. Responsible reporting or Pravda on Puget Sound?

ON THE SATURDAY evening news, the news director of Seattle ABC affiliate KOMO announced that his station was going to take part in the city's attempt to control activism around the upcoming WTO ministerial conference.

In an announcement that is now posted on the Web (komotv.com/news/nindexaction.asp), he told viewers that the station was "taking a stand on not giving some protest groups the publicity they want."

The station, he said, "will not devote coverage to irresponsible or illegal activities of disruptive groups."

One person whose action will likely lose coverage due to this policy is Mario Santos, of the Karapatan Filipino Center for Human Rights. Santos traveled here to take part in the International People's Assembly, which will be assembling at Fourth and Jackson on Tuesday morning.

"It's significant that the corporate mass communications won't cover our activity," says Santos. "They're losing out on what organized groups, communities of color, and international delegations have come for."

The International People's Assembly was denied a permit last week (www.indymedia.org/uploads/PA.mp3) despite extensive negotiations between organizers and the Seattle Police Department, and organizers' willingness to cut the length of their march by 80 percent. The march includes delegations from countries ranging from Holland to Honduras. It has been intentionally routed to begin south of downtown, in the city's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

An unpermitted street theater demonstration took place Sunday afternoon in the Capitol Hill neighborhood (SEE ARTICLE); no KOMO news trucks were on the scene.



These protesters from Sunday's march on Broadway are among many who will not be seen on KOMO news.

There are exceptions to the TV station's policy. "If you see us doing a story on a disruption," said Barnes, "but we don't name the group or the cause, you'll know why." Barnes was unavailable for comment Sunday afternoon, so it is not clear how this policy will play out as, for example, hundreds of people get arrested in the course of permitted, legal demonstrations.

"It's easy to cover screaming people," Barnes continued, in a rather ungenerous characterization of celebratory street theater performances. "But we don't think any debate should be settled by the people with the loudest voice." Apparently, the artificially loud voice of the brass at the Seattle Police Department is not included in this policy.

The Seattle Police Department was not available for comment on KOMO's policy.

COPWATCH

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

The National Lawyers Guild needs attorneys and Rule 9s to ensure the civil rights of protestors. Their website is www.nlg.org/wto.

ON THE WALL

As of Sunday, November 28, 1999, Blind Spot has confirmed the arrest of the following political protesters in the past week. In the first dramatic action of civil disobedience, three activists scaled a freeway wall adjacent to the Denny Way off-ramp and strung a banner denouncing the WTO. According to the Seattle P-I, the following people were arrested for this action: Leonie Sherman (age 27) and Shannon Service (age 24), who dangled over the wall, and Mathew Leonard, who provided technical assistance and support. All three were held for 24 hours and released. On November 27, three protesters were arrested for hanging a banner over Old Navy clothing store protesting its selling of sweatshop labor. All were quickly released. Blind Spot will give daily updates on these arrests.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Want to find out if a friend has been arrested? The person to call is Paul Richman at 206-988-8881. He can tell you if your buddy is in lockup.

SHORT SPOT

Kevin Danaher of the Global Exchange in San Francisco at the IFG teach-in:

We're all on a bus. The bus is the planet. The bus driver is drunk. What are you gonna do? Are you going to hide in the corner and wait to go off the cliff, or are you going to get the bus driver out from behind the wheel, keep him tied up in back until he sobers up, and get someone else to drive the bus?

For Bringing the Noise (with a message) !!!

Thanks to Nicole Pearson of Seattle Young People's Project for organizing an amazing spoken word and hip-hop event at the Alibi Room on Sunday, November 28th. Also thanks to 500 years, Hop Hopkins (People of Color Against AIDS Network) and Rice Baker-Yeboah and Company of Prophets (from the Bay area) for keeping the message alive - RESIST WTO.

If you missed this event, you can still make Emergency! a multimedia / musical protest against the WTO at I Spy 1921 5th Avenue on Wednesday, December 1. Show starts at 8 p.m. featuring local bands and guest musicians, d.j.'s and speakers who have come to resist the WTO and spread the vibe of resistance. Featuring the Baroness from San Fran, Toshina, Elemental and more spoke word by Nicole Pearson and others. Sponsored by I Wanna Slap You! productions. Tickets \$15 at Alibi Room or TicketWeb. The shows is promised to run till 4 a.m.

Mothers stand up for Mother Earth



YESTERDAY AT NOON an estimated one thousand protesters arrived at Seattle Central Community College for a street theater festival, march, and human banner production organized by Art and Revolution. The crowd was more than diverse. Environmentalists, labor and human rights activists, and just plain folks who care all gathered to voice opposition to various aspects of the WTO.

One thing distinguished the celebration — the number of activists accompanied by their children. The mothers in particular intrigued me, holding their babies high and proud, twirling costumed toddlers in giggling circles and hollering as loudly as anyone.

What's it like to be a mommy activist? What kind of a world do they want for their children? How does the WTO threaten this? I asked Marie why she brought her son Ocean to the parade. "Parades are fun — people are being free and expressing themselves — and kids can relate."

Margaret, mother of Maya responded, "This event is about kids!" While she spoke, Maya tugged on her pant leg and asked, "Mommy, where is Mother Earth?" Margaret laughed and pointed to the puppet at the front of the parade.

"Maya understands that the trees are getting cut down and the fish decimated," she continued. "When the logging trucks roll by our house she asks if those are the people taking away the trees! She wants to be here

as well as my husband and I want her here. It's really great to have people know that mothers and others are willing to bring their children and that we will take action."

I asked Kim, mother of Lyric and Ferrin, what sort of world she wanted for her daughters. She shook her head and said firmly, "Not a WTO world! I don't want my daughter's favorite plant to be concrete!" We laughed and Ferrin squealed, "Look! Butterflies!" She pointed emphatically at the colorful puppet suspended by a pole fifteen feet above her head. I felt privileged when she whispered in my ear about her favorite things which are "little baby, teeny, teeny turtles."

I asked about the difficulty of combining parenting and activism. Tina acknowledged this problem. "It is really hard to do anything [outside of raising my son Apolinario]. I used to be really active but now I get so little time to myself."

Sarah suggested that mothers would be the fiercest advocates if only they weren't so exhausted all the time. The majority of mothers interviewed recalled intense past activism which ceased with the arrival of their kids. Margaret, however, reminded me that raising children might be the most important activism.

Margaret said, "Becoming a mother changes your perspective. All of sudden it's like, 'Oh! I've got to worry a few more years down the line!' It really makes that whole seven generation idea more real." Erin, mother of Kylin, talked about parental responsibility. "Really protecting your children's futures is more than tucking money away for college. It means getting out there and making a change in the world so your kids have a safe place to live!"

Sarah's advice for suburban soccer moms was straightforward. "If they want their kids to live in a world they feel good about, they better get involved."

The question remains, what special threat does the WTO hold for mothers? Most responded with an expression of "that's-a-stupid-question." There is little that the WTO will not affect — the food one eats, the clothes one wears, the career one chooses, and the environment one lives in. Sarah scoffs at the purported efforts to write a constitution for the new world order. "It's the first constitution that's about profits and corporations instead of people! Sounds great."

— Dina Rudick

Who didn't make it?

State Department denies visas to prominent activists

The Peoples' Global Action caravan came into town last week in a creaky handpainted school bus. Thanks to the U.S. State Department, a few seats were empty.

Visitor visas were denied to former political prisoner Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, Executive Director of the International Institute of Human Rights, Environment and Development (INHURED) and Secretary-General of the Nepal Concern Society. In the past, Gopal has protested the Arun Dam, a World Bank-funded project in his home country. In June 1998, Nepalese troops arrested him and seized evidence of he had collected of police violence against people believed to be involved in the

Maosit CPN, a revolutionary armed force. The State Department also denied visas to six other members of INHURED.

Badrul Alum and Prdip Kumar Roy of Bangladesh's Krishok Federation were also refused visas. The Krishok Federation defends the rights of peasants to claim valuable shrimping land before large businesses can buy it. In 1996, the federation won a case granting local peasants coastal lands. In 1997, 250 of these peasants were wounded in a police attack. The group also helped the people build huts on Char Lota, a small island between two rivers neat the Bay of Bengal, before landgrabbers, provoked by local politicians and private businessmen, burned down their huts and beat up resistors.

"The people who tried to come were both prominent and well-known in Nepal and Bangladesh," says Mike Morrill, the organizer of the PGA Caravan. The State Department let in "people not as well-known in the local community." — *Adam Holdorf*

People's Assembly

(continued from front page)

Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. They will also march on November 30 despite being denied a permit by the city of Seattle. The People's Assembly is the only consolidated group not granted a permit.

Saturay's organization solidified in 1996 in response to APEC (the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation, dominated by the U.S. and Japan). Sentenaryo ng Bayan has been keeping track of globalization policies ever since.

Saturay argues, "Monopoly capitalism is the highest state of capitalism. The people of Seattle should understand what is behind the WTO. It's not simply a corporate conference. It's not only a policy about free trade. ... People are afraid to speak about imperialism." In the eyes of Saturay and Sentenaryo ng Bayan, there is no hope of reforming the WTO because it perpetuates an imperialist legacy.

Saturay considers the People's Assembly part of a continuing tradition of resistance that began over a hundred years ago when American colonization began in the Philippines. He also calls it "the highest expression of International Solidarity against the WTO and against imperialist globalization."

He went on to say that the 500 delegates expected to attend would be representing NGOs, citizen movements and people's movements from all over the world.

In contrast to the teach-in sponsored by the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), which took place in the swank, but somewhat sterile Benaroya Hall, the People's Assembly is taking place in the Filipino Community Center on MLK in Rainier Valley.

Among the U.S. groups who showed up for the opening of the People's Assembly on Sunday were groups as diverse as the UFW, the American Postal Worker's Union, and the Raging Grannies (who performed a couple of musical numbers).

Blind Spot is published by the Independent Media Center, a grassroots organization committed to using media as a tool for promoting social and economic justice. It is our goal to further the self-determination of people underrepresented in both media production and content, and to illuminate and analyze local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities, and individuals. We seek to generate alternatives to the biases inherent in the corporate media controlled by profit, and to identify and create positive models for a sustainable and equitable society.

