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BLIND SPOT

A DAILY BULLETIN OF UNDERREPORTED ANTI-WTO ACTIVISM

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10,000 marchers call for debt cancellation

Confounding the media stereotype that WTO protesters are young fringe radicals, comparatively "moderate" religious, labor and social groups organized major actions against corporate globalization in the past two days.

The Northwest chapter of Jubilee 2000, an international coalition of religious social justice activists and others, calls for unconditional debt relief for the world's poorest nations by the end of the year 2000.

On Monday night, thousands marched from the First United Methodist Church to the Exhibition Center where the WTO ministers were holding their opening reception. Upon arrival, many protesters were blocked an unanticipated fence and riot police. Instead, protesters encircled the Kingdome and were prevented from entirely surrounding it. The Secret Service granted only 14 members of the organization clearance to the area needed to complete the circle. Opinions conflict about whether the symbolic completion of the hand chain was sufficient to satisfy Jubilee 2000's original goal.

Six religious and civic leaders

The Pagan contingent coalesced around the Reclaiming Collective, brought their own powerful flavor to the rally, beginning their involvement with a ritual. Invoking the forces of the elements, the directions, and other power allies including animal and tree spirits as well as "the activist dead," their opening ritual focused on grounding, centering and connection. Afterwards, the invoked allies were released back into the elements, and asked to support all of the protesters during the week. Following this ritual, the Pagan group joined in with the larger Jubilee 2000 group, anchoring the cardinal points and bringing these invisible forces into the arena of action.



DINA RUDICK

PEACE, OFFICERS! A protester expresses his peaceful intentions to 25 riot police. This intense stand-off between the Seattle P.D. and several hundred protesters took place Monday afternoon at Westlake Plaza. Shortly after the photo was taken, the police lowered their face shields in a gesture of mobilization but later retreated, leaving the streets to the protesters.

were able to take the debt-relief message into the Exhibition Center itself. Former King County Councilmember Brian Derdowski cheerfully opined, "We did what we came to do."

The demonstrators also came up with an original chant for the event. As the rain fell on the gathered thousands they shouted, "We're here, we're wet — cancel

the debt!" The weather did not dampen their spirits, as protesters sang and drummed as they marched.

At a packed Jubilee 2000 service at Saint James Cathedral Sunday night, nearly a thousand churchgoers came to hear the Bible invoked as a force of justice, faith in God as a force for social change, and the Church as the organization that will lead a worldwide redistribution of wealth. The group of largely middle-aged, middle-class Christians gave a standing ovation to radical Christian Jim Wallis as he proclaimed that Sunday's service was a sign of a bigger movement to come.

This was the fourth time in the past two years Jubilee 2000 has organized a hand-linking ceremony around leading world financial institutions, and the first time it targeted the WTO.

(see Jubilee 2000, page 3)

Labor joins enviros in march for Mother Earth

A motley crew of marchers emerged from the United Methodist Church in central Seattle. They ranged from trade unionists, anarchists, animal liberationists to protestors clad in full body turtle costumes. This rainy afternoon the demonstrators hit the streets to point out environmental concerns, united in their opposition to the World Trade Organization (WTO). A few random conversations with marchers revealed the crowd's diversity.

A wise elder, Dorli Rainay, from nearby Federal Way, Washington, came to interrupt mid-day traffic. She's been involved in Vietnam war protests and marches for women's rights. I asked her why this Seattle meeting of the WTO compelled her to march after all these years. "I have always believed in government through representation. The WTO does not represent anyone that I know."

Concerned citizens were warned from speakers around the world that the WTO would eliminate national eco-standards. Already WTO rulings forced hormone-treated beef from the U.S. to enter the European Union. Korean drummers clad in traditional clothing danced their opposition while handing out their views on agricultural standards and food security.

Two turtle marchers, Warren and Joe, talked about how the WTO struck down U.S.-sponsored legislation that would have protected sea turtles from damaging shrimping practices. The two students cut classes, rented a van and spent over 24 hours driving from Winnipeg in central Canada. "Its hard to understand how mainly four nations can rule behind closed doors," Warren told me. He was referring to the 'power quad' that

includes the U.S., Europe, Canada, and Japan. "Its our world," Joe hit back.

Another protester, Jasmine, a housewife from Austin, Texas, took up the invitation of a friend from Bellingham to listen to speakers such as Indian farming activist Vandana Shiva and Canadian geneticist David Suzuki. After watching the enthusiastic crowd march she felt compelled to join in. Jasmine alluded to the importance of public demonstrations. Originally from England, she was involved in the 1990 poll tax protests which helped plant the seed of opposition to Thatcher's economic policies.

Another marcher Daniel Helman, a mild-mannered thirty year old L.A. resident took a 30 hour train ride to make his point. "This movement is about humanity and their voices. Its about the fight for democracy and educating outsiders, and then learning how to communicate these ideas back home," Daniel said as he disappeared into the crowd.

— *David Sadoway*



BEN TUCKER

March of the Sea Turtles

Two hundred forty sea turtles yesterday mingled with steelworkers, environmentalists and international protesters in a march from the Methodist Church on 5th Avenue to the convention hall.

The protesters are trying to make known the effects of the WTO's ruling on the United States' Shrimp-Turtle Law. Despite the general acceptance of these objections, some local media have characterized the environmentalists' response to the WTO ruling as overwrought.

Last year 13,000 dead sea turtles washed up on the beaches of India alone. While no one knows exactly how many sea turtles there are in the world, scientists worldwide agree that of the seven species, all are endangered or threatened. An estimated 150,000 turtles are killed annually by irresponsible shrimp fishing. — *Mary Travers*

COPWATCH

At 6 am Monday, 6 activists scaled a crane at a construction site on Eastlake Avenue for a banner hang. They were arrested at around 11:30 for trespassing and reckless endangerment.

At 12:15 pm Monday, 2 activists — one male, one female — were arrested at 7th and Pine for obstruction and assault.

As of Monday night, no further information was available from the Seattle Police Department.

— *M. G. Luehrs*

SHORT SPOT

One view from the street - Health & Environment Day Rally & March

Johnny Hahn, street performer, comments on law enforcement at this event:

"The police created an incident by virtue of their mere presence. They were wearing what appeared to be the newest in high-tech SWAT team attire. There was a hugely manipulative dynamic use of force displayed by the police, in light of the fact that up to that point, in an over 3-1/2 hour time frame, the Health and Environment Rally and March had been given the freedom to move through the streets of Seattle with close to no police presence, which spoke to the assertion by Seattle Mayor Paul Schell in the weeks preceding the WTO meeting that Seattle would wholeheartedly welcome all those who would be coming to Seattle to air their legitimate griefs with WTO agenda."

— *interviewed by M. G. Luehrs*

Take One — Seattle

Ran into Seattle's Director of Public Health while riding a downtown bus. He said that the city government has planned for months on ways to handle peaceful WTO demonstrations, and that we have a healthy right to air our grievances, but that we had better mind our manners. The cops, he said, are more than ready. He added that it wasn't true that Seattle is shipping its homeless out of town to sanitize the place for visiting CEOs. Said he's inspected the newest tent city for health violations, and "corrections" must be made.

Resident sex worker at the 1910 4th Avenue Club was much more interested in necking than demonstrating. She usually operates out of Pioneer Square. Her longshoreman friend, a Mr. Dyke, said he'd be out marching with labor on Tuesday, and that Seattle's working class is behind us but many are pissed off because we're screwing up their holiday shopping. Mr. Dyke ordered another beer.

An Ethiopian hack said he was going to support us by joining a general cab strike from noon to midnight on Tuesday. We are both admirers of Haille Sellassie.

A beautiful young clinical psychologist commuting to work on the 8 a.m. express from Lake Forest Park said we were just working out our bad libidos on the uncaring public. Suggested Freudian therapy. I think she should read more Jung.

Across the bus aisle a 24-year-old, very white office worker complained that the demonstrations blocked off her usual parking space, and she'd been forced to bus it all week. Very irritated.

A black female bus driver said every line downtown has been rerouted and she's confused. Doesn't know about the WTO and doesn't care, although she does belong to the union.

The clerk in a camera store said that if there's a riot, he's going to walk with two or three of the better Leicas. — *John Bryan*

Building takeover — Day two

Just after 5pm on Monday building manager Jeff Graff, in suit and tie, made an offer to the occupants who had taken over the building at 914 Virginia Street in downtown Seattle. "He said if we gave him a thousand dollars we could stay. Clearly we refused that offer," said an unidentified man who had spent the night in the building. After setting aside the offer, Graff informed the police that the occupants were trespassing, paving the way for criminal charges.

"The police informed us that if we left by 6 p.m. we would not be arrested; if we stayed, they would take over the building at six," said another man, one of the vast majority of people who chose to leave the building before the 6 p.m. deadline. The building was left almost empty as the street filled with supporters.

"Homes Not Jails" was the rallying cry as the rain began pouring on the more than one hundred people who gathered. A police minivan attempted to drive through the blockade, meeting a welter of fists and eventually a

spray can. The vehicle left the scene with "PIC" prominently displayed on its rear door.

Around 7 p.m. Sharon Lee, Director of Seattle's Low Income Housing Institute, offered a deal to the landlord. "I told him that LIHI would provide 24-hour staff to insure that the space was kept safe. I also offered support to transform the space into affordable housing for artists after the WTO protesters have gone," she said.

Council Member Nick Licata, considered the most progressive member of Seattle City Council, had campaigned to open city buildings to serve as housing for activists arriving this week. He took no steps to support the squatters, though yesterday he secured some housing for activists arranged through LIHI. No other elected officials have taken steps to support housing for activists during the WTO.

Around 7 p.m. about 20 people re-entered the building.

Other activists will furnish them with supplies. — *scott winn*

Jubilee 2000

(continued from front page)

However, it may have been the only time the circle was not completed.

Just two weeks ago, Jubilee saw passage of a US law forgiving debts to the world's 45 poorest countries — 3 percent of the total currently owed by these countries. According to Jubilee 2000 co-founder Ann Pettifor, the UK is expected to follow suit and Jubilee 2000 is pressuring France, Germany, and Japan to do the same. But Jubilee South, a subgroup of Jubilee 2000 made up of members from largely developing countries, is now calling for not only total and unconditional debt relief, but reparations for the damage done by first-world nations who loaned money to irresponsible governments.

The world's poorest nations have a combined yearly GNP of \$418 billion, while they owe \$370 billion yearly. According to Jubilee 2000, the sole purpose of maintaining these debt levels is



Many different causes were represented at the Jubilee 2000 march.

to prevent poorer nations from exercising self determination. "This is unpayable debt," said Pettifor. "It will never be paid. Why haggle about how to pay it off?"

"Anger about [globalization] comes from a much broader population than the media admits," said Pettifor. "Our constituency has a lot of gray voters."

— *Chris Evans, Trevor Griffey, Dan Moore, Dina Rudick*

Scenes from the street

JOHN BRYAN



BENTUCKER

Organizer warns against division between direct action & reform groups

A Montreal organizer who helped lead the successful fight against the MAI says that unless the "civil disobedience subculture" and the more mainstream anti-WTO groups find common ground, Seattle's spectacle could do little to promote a sustained, long-term movement against globalization.

Philippe Duhamel, of the Montreal-based group Sal-AMI, says that Seattle's protesters divide themselves between this "civil disobedience subculture" and labor, faith or environmental reform advocacy. The two camps are separated not so much by politics as by strategy: policy reform groups may stay out of the streets, leaving young, committed crowds to encounter police and violence alone.

"We need a continuum of actions, each one reinforcing the other," he said. "We need people inside feeding information to people on the streets, so they can be more effective in their actions."

In Montreal, Duhamel put activists through a five-hour training on legal issues, months before representatives of 29 countries met to plan ratification of the MAI. He notes that

Seattle's anti-WTO organizing has been done on a shorter-term basis

After the protests, Duhamel's group built bridges to the labor movement, recruiting union locals to endorse direct action tactics. He says that Montreal's civil disobedience had participation from people of all ages and backgrounds. In Seattle, "it's obvious to me that we need more mainstreaming of direct action."

Direct action, Duhamel says, is any form of "taking action yourself instead of asking corporations to do it. It could be as simple as feeding the poor. But it tries to go at the root of things."

Duhamel commented just before a nonviolent environmental protest devolved into destruction of property at a McDonald's storefront on Third Avenue and Pine Street in downtown Seattle.

"Civil disobedience is in its infancy," Duhamel said. "We are still experimenting with it." He added, "You have to prepare people for the worst and hope for the best. That's the only way."

— Adam Holdorf

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.

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