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BLIND SPOT

A DAILY BULLETIN OF UNDERREPORTED ANTI-WTO ACTIVISM

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Protestors in Solidarity and Limbo at Sand Point

Seven articulated buses were filled with nonviolent protesters arrested Wednesday morning and were taken to the Sand Point Naval Base in north Seattle. The arrestees refused to leave the buses after being denied an opportunity speak with their lawyers, and went for over 13 hours without food or water.

According to a Direct Action Network (DAN) legal team, legal advisors were only allowed access to a few people on the buses. When attempting to enter one of the buses, DAN lawyers were denied entry.

As the evening wore on and the temperature dropped, the buses were turned off, leaving them unheated. When asked how long they would be held without food or water, a plain-clothes officer told the press "it depends on what they choose."

"The rule is they need to leave the bus, be processed, and the food is inside," the officer informed us. At about 10:45 p.m., two groups of people brought bread and water to the detainees but were turned away by the police. Though people on the buses chanted and yelled "Thank you! We love you!" to the gift bearers, the food remained untouched in the rain.

Reports conflict about whether pepper spray or mace may have been used on protesters inside the bus, and could not be confirmed at press time.

A man named Forest, who escaped arrest, described what led to the arrests. He had been part of a 2,000 person protest that set off after a Steelworkers' rally at Pier 61-62. "We thought it was all right," he said. "We were nowhere near [the no-protest zone]." Police continued to cut the group into segments until only about 500 headed down Western in an attempt to get away from police. "A policeman pointed down a street and said, 'Go that way,'" he said. Forest was suspicious and lagged behind, avoiding arrest. He said tear gas was shot as people in the area were squeezed



CHRISTINA LARSON

Nonviolent protesters are hauled away on Metro buses Wednesday.

between two cordons of riot-clad police.

Ann Cook, a Seattle resident who lives across the street from the naval station came to the scene of the detention, after hearing helicopters in the area, because she was concerned about what the police are doing to protesters.

Cook was most concerned about a group of women she saw at about 3:30 p.m. brought around from the back of the facility who reported aloud that they had been "drug by their hair, kicked, and pepper sprayed."

Some of the arrestees voluntarily left the buses to be taken inside and processed.

At about 11 p.m., a facility dumpster next to one of the parked buses began smoking, with fumes blowing directly into the bus.

Also at the scene were KOMO TV and KING 5 TV. At about 11:30 p.m., all the press in the area were also detained by the police. Told that the area was "blockaded," we were told we could leave the area, but that we could not take our vehicles. After about 20 minutes, a police officer, the only one who would dialogue with any of the press, escorted us out.

At approximately 2:30 a.m., the Independent Media Center received a call that everyone remaining on the buses had been forcibly removed.

—Fran Harris and Mary Travers

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.

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Farmers of the World Unite!

"The WTO sees agriculture as an end product. We believe it is not just the trade of goods but a way of life!" exclaimed Lamine Sonko, a farmer from Senegal, West Africa. Sonko was one of more than 200 farmers and farmworkers who gathered from around the world to protest the WTO.

The focus of the Farmers Forum on Wednesday night was the effects of the 1995 Uruguay Agreement on Agriculture on small-scale farmers. The meal the attendees ate was provided by local Northwest family farmers. They also had Roquefort cheese from a cooperative farm in France. The World Trade Organization has charged a 100% tax on all Roquefort cheese imported into the United States. Some say this is punishment for France refusing to import Bovine Growth Hormone infused beef from the U.S.

"The day before I flew to Seattle I was plowing in my field," remarked a farmer from Japan. "Rice is central to food and farming in the Japan, but under the Japanese Government's Farm Bill which was passed in order to comply with the Uruguay Agreement on Agriculture, we now must set aside acreage in our rice paties and not grow rice."

"U.S. based transnational corporations have performed a hostile takeover of our food and of our food policy," declared John Hanson, a farmer from Nebraska and a member of the National Farmers Union. "The United States has a man-made economic national disgrace: family farmers cannot feed their families. The U.S. government's response is to stay on course with its policies." He then spoke of the alarming rate of suicide among farmers in Nebraska.

"We must find strength in unions. We must change neo-liberal policies which have taken us farther away from our way of life," proclaimed Alicia Munoz Zolado, a Chilean farmer as she summed up the feel of the night. "My hope and our struggle is for worldwide unity of farmers."

Nelson Carasquillo representing migrant farmworkers in the United States reminded everyone that most farmworkers in the United States are former farmers who were forced to leave their countries due to economic conditions. "The protests in Seattle should remind us that farmers and farmworkers need to take our demands to the streets." At a press conference earlier in the day La Via Campesina, a worldwide movement of peasant and family farmer organizations stated: "We deplore the violent reaction against the marchers."

"The governments and corporations tell us to become cannibals," declared Aina Edelmann of the Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union. "They say we should eat our neighbors so our farms will grow bigger so we can compete. ... We need more land, but we need our neighbors more!"

Edelmann interrupted cheers and continued, listing the demands of Via Campesina, of which she is a member. "We demand that agriculture be taken out of the WTO! We demand the right of each country to define its own agricultural policy and food quality criteria. We demand support for local production and an end to food dumping. We demand the recognition of community and farmers' rights instead of intellectual property rights. And we demand agrarian reform to give women and men access to land and the right to produce their own food!"

—scott winn

"No Patents On Life: Biotech in the Global Economy" teach-in

One of the hottest issues of the WTO Conference are the negotiations concerning the Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPS) or laws concerning corporate ownership of patents on genetically engineered organisms like seeds, fruits and animals. Yesterday, Ralph Nader and organizers lectured at a teach-in discussing the biotech industry and the relationship of corporate power and the public ownership of air, navigable waters, seeds and common pasture land.

Nader told the enthusiastic gathering that genetic licensing agreements by corporations like Monsanto are a "power grab" and a "quiet coup d'etat to end-run local, state, and national governments with secrecy that would never be tolerated in a democracy."

The teach-in, held at Plymouth Congregational Church, encouraged a diverse audience of indigenous organizers, environmental activists, NGO representatives, labor leaders and scientists to become local "epicenters" for organizing in their own neighborhoods. The teach-in emphasized using new technologies such as the Internet to bypass mainstream media that has effectively ignored the issue of the biotech industry and gene patenting. Nader called patents on genetically engineered life forms "greatest relinquishment of power and sovereignty in US history."

—Sue Allen

DAN legal team arrested

In the drizzly morning hours Wednesday, members of the Direct Action Network, a coalition of protesters, met a police line and mass arrest as they moved from Denny Park to begin the day's nonviolent protest. Their legal team was arrested and all papers confiscated, according to Kelly Quirke of Rainforest Action Network.

The arrest was confirmed by a representative of the National Lawyer's Guild. Denny Park is outside the approximately one-and-a-half-mile area the Mayor of Seattle declared at approximately the time of the arrests as "off-limits" for protesters of any kind.

—Mary Travers

Council to discuss emergency

A City Council meeting to address the State of Emergency declared by the Mayor will be held today, (Thursday Dec. 2) at 1:30pm in the Municipal Building at 4th and Cherry.

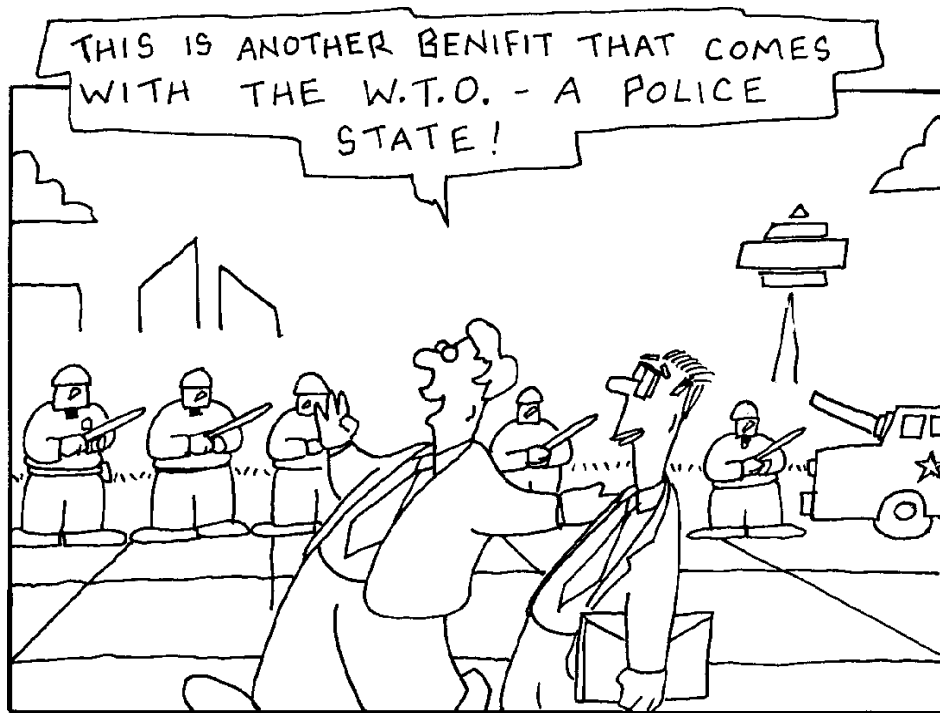
Violence by the numbers

Estimated number of people shot with rubber bullets by police: **100+**

Estimated number of people shot with rubber bullets by protesters: **0**

Estimated number of people gassed and pepper-sprayed by police: **1,000-3,000**

Estimated number of people gassed and pepper-sprayed by protesters: **0**



AMBRO SAVAGE © 1999

ACLU seeks legal options regarding No-Protest Zone

The American Civil Liberties Union is contemplating legal action regarding the “no-protest zone” established downtown, according to Doug Honig, Public Education Officer of the ACLU of Washington. “It intereferes with the right of people to protest peacefully”

In downtown Seattle, in the area bounded by Lenora and Seneca to the north and south and Fourth Street to I-5 east to west, ordinary citizens were met and interrogated by the police as they attempted to pass on the sidewalk. If the police deemed that they “had business” in the area, or in some cases were merely dressed as if they might have business, they were let in. If not, they were turned away. Protest was not considered to be appropriate business. Police necessarily decide enforcement on a case-by-case basis.

“The police have the right to arrest people who are breaking the law, including people engaged in non-violent activities,” said Honig. “They shouldn’t lump together all protesters,”

“The police must distinguish between lawbreakers and those exercising their legal rights,” said John Crew, Director of

the Police Practices Project of the ACLU, headquartered out of San Francisco. “While their job is obviously to enforce the law, to protect property, that responsibility does not trump the individual’s rights under the First Amendment.”

Can the city establish security zones? “Yes,” Crew said, “in normal crowd control, for purposes of traffic control or safety.” They might clear an area as much as 300-feet around a convention center or hall, according to Crew.

And, what if people are allowed in the zone? “People with a point of view to express cannot be treated more harshly or as inherently more suspicious than others allowed in the area,” Crew explained. “A non-expression zone is very different than a security zone, which is normally in relatively close (perhaps a half block) physical proximity.”

“We give the city credit for having had good intentions as they approached the event,” Honig said, “but we believe the No-Protest Zone goes too far. In our view, the city can’t ban First Amendment activity in a large area. A blanket ban on all protest activity is not justified.”

—Mary Travers

Analysis

Who’s violent?

Let’s talk about violence. Over the last two days, there has been much condemnation of “violent protesters,” coming from both the right and the left. On the right, of course, people are looking for any pretext to dismiss and marginalize the protesters. On the left, nonviolent protesters have been quick to publicly deplore downtown vandalism and to disassociate themselves from it.

This is understandable, and marks an important distinction. The dozens of protesters who have engaged in property destruction are vastly outnumbered by the tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators. At the same time, these denunciations serve to legitimize police violence as attempts to “restore order.”

Some perspective: How many protesters have shot people with rubber bullets? How many have gassed anyone? How many have wrestled people to the ground and beat them with clubs?

Many anarchists believe property destruction is a legitimate form of protest, but even the most militant among them draw a clear line between destroying property and harming people. They further distinguish between personal property and corporate property. Their actions have been targeted accordingly.

The police, on the other hand, have been indiscriminate in their assaults against protesters and bystanders alike. One example: A man was in a shoe store on Broadway Tuesday night with one shoe on and one shoe off. Police came in, said they were clearing the building, and ordered everyone to leave immediately. The partially shod man said he would not leave without both shoes on; the police demanded he leave right away; the man refused. The police then dragged him out, threw him down on the sidewalk, and peppered sprayed him.

This is just one story among hundreds. If we are going to condemn violence, lets be clear about who is doing what to whom, and keep things in perspective.

—Lansing Scott

Tenuous solidarity between labor and direct action

A definitive moment in the process to forge lasting links between labor and environmental/social groups emerged yesterday as Dan Taylor (from the umbrella group Direct Action Network) addressed a steelworker's union meeting on Seattle's waterfront. Drenched in driving North Western rain a crowd of about 2,000 cheered as Taylor outlined the need to build a lasting network between movements: "When environmentalists and unions join up we showed we can, and did, shut down the WTO."

With the crowd jiving to the sounds of acoustic guitar riffs and passionate speeches declaring that the WTO "had forged in this city a 'sword of resistance'" George Baker, President of the United States Steelworkers' Union stepped into the limelight. He was clearly a greatly valued asset to his rank-and-file members as the cheer was long and loud.

"It's our job to fight for worker's rights around the world," he declared, having just explained to delighted union members that workers up and down the West Coast had downed tools in solidarity. Referring to the union's past as a defender of jobs in the industrial sector Baker listed the impact that cheap imports and rationalization has had on member's interests.

Baker called China a "rogue nation" whose

entrance into the WTO would spell disaster for working Americans. When he declared China fundamentally undemocratic and oppressive to its own people, shouts from the crowd reminded him that the United States has a tarnished record in many similar fields. Listening to Baker declare that it was time to "buy American" as he opened his jacket pocket and pointed at the label marked a low point in the proceedings. A dubious nationalism seemed to be present in his comments.

What unfolded next was as symbolic as it was significant for those present. As various speakers streamed onto the stage young protestors began to call for the march to begin and make its way from the port front into the downtown area. "Downtown! Downtown!" shouted parting Direct Action protestors, while the visible electric-blue rain ponchos the steelworkers were wearing remained at a standstill. A Republican candidate described by Baker as a "friend" of the movement continued to talk and the divisions between two groups emerged once more.

The solidarity that had united the two groups only minutes before seemed to disappear as protestors made their way up nearby stairs to the downtown area.

—*Sam Wild*

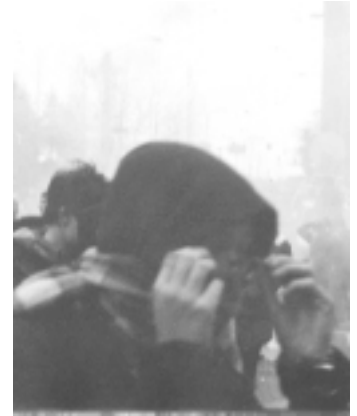
Did the cops have other options?

The various police agencies working crowd control in Seattle Tuesday chose to disperse nonviolent, often seated demonstrators using painful chemicals and blunt trauma, rather than simply arresting people. Indeed, of the hundreds of people who trained in nonviolent civil disobedience in preparation for being arrested, only 60 arrests were reported as of 11 p.m. Tuesday. Wednesday, the tactics switched to some use of arrests, but the police continued to use tear gas.

Meanwhile, those people who were being more disruptive, breaking windows and igniting trash cans, were ignored by the police

The police could have chosen far less violent tactics. They could have given clear, loud orders to disperse. They could then have allowed people to disperse before taking action. This occurred at Westlake Plaza on Wednesday — a welcome relief. But even then, they couldn't be satisfied simply with arresting people. They still banned legal observers from the area and arrested or harassed journalists covering the events.

Why did the police decide to act with such overwhelming force and without allowing protestors to leave? That will be for the inquiries — and probably, the courts — to determine. For now, it looks like a blight on the record of the departments.—*Steven Bodzin*



When the gas comes, who wipes the tears?

During the massive protests of November 30, when protestors, shoppers, and even ministerial attendees were sprayed with CS gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets, certain people at the protest wore red crosses and carried first aid kits. Medics, protestors with training ranging from basic first aid to former army paramedics, ran throughout the day treating wounds and calming the masses.

John, an activist and medic, said, "It was the worst police brutality I've ever seen, in 12 years of direct action." Medical care is an important part of daily life and extremely important in mass protests. The Direct Action Network welcome center for activists runs a free medical clinic.

Djennifer, a long time activist and massage therapist, organized the clinic and the medical care for the WTO protest. Djennifer said she "was not surprised at the police violence that occurred. What did surprise me was the lack of outside medical care." This lack was countered by the activists themselves.

Medic David, worked from 6 a.m. through the chaos of the late night described the role of the medics during protests: "If I can get people holding their signs again, then I'm doing my job."



Welts and bruises from rubber bullets.

CHRISTINA LARSON