

# **Stop the incinerator, Stop the megamachine...**

**Women WEAVE a web of resistance**

Ruby Lips

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Left: Women of WEAVE block incinerator gate after slipping behind the police line. photo/Jake Right: Shouting "Shut it down!," Right: crowd overwhelms surprised cops at the gate. photo/Buster Brown

The continuing movement to stop Detroit's killer incinerator reached a high point on June 3<sup>rd</sup> when over 500 people turned out to protest the existence of the \$438-million polluter.

After gathering for a noon rally called by WEAVE (Womyn Empowered Against Violence to the Environment) the demonstrators took their celebration of life through the Eastern Market, down Russell Street toward the incinerator site. Singing and marching to the sounds of musical instruments, many of the protesters wore masks and costumes and carried flowers to symbolize their love of mother earth and their hopes of healing her.

Everyone stopped for a few moments to stand in a field of high grasses and wild flowers, and one of the WEAVE participants read a statement reminding us all that the land itself was attempting to heal its scars: "In spite of a long history of mindless destruction, the earth fights back...this land left alone for a space of time has regenerated itself somewhat. There are families of wild ring-necked pheasants in these grasses, wild flowers, trees...we see in a short space of time the strength of nature winding and weaving itself in between the cracks of this civilization and its so-called 'progress.'"

Waving their signs and shouting "Shut it down!" the demonstrators arrived at the incinerator in an exuberant and militant mood almost overwhelming the cops who expected a much more passive crowd. When a dozen women from WEAVE rushed forward in an attempt to block the gate, the cops turned mean. The crowd reacted spontaneously to the spirit of the moment and crushed in on the cops who for a few minutes had obviously lost control.

Several of the women, some of whom are pregnant, were shoved and pushed by the cops violently enough to sustain bruises. To hold their ground, the women sat down and blocked the gate while others surrounded them, joining them in singing and chanting.

After hanging their signs and flowers on the fences, cheers went up when word was passed that fellow protesters had blocked the other two gates with their bodies as well as, appropriately enough, with trash—oil drums, bedsprings, concrete blocks, etc.—dragged from a nearby junkpile.

The protest continued through a rainstorm with support people shielding the seated blockaders with an impromptu tent made from picket signs. When the cops finally moved in and began arresting people, clothes were wet but spirits undampened. A spray-painted wall saying "Shut It Down—Cancer No!" remained behind to remind all that we had been there and we would be back again.

In all, 25 people were arrested on a variety of charges—blockading entrances, trespassing and attempting to free prisoners—but all were released a few hours later to the cheers and applause of friends and supporters who had gathered at the 7<sup>th</sup> Precinct to greet them. In court a few days later, a deferred plea was accepted on behalf of ten people whose charges are to be dismissed in two months. The other 15 still have trials pending. All the arrestees agreed that those who could should take the deferred plea to get them out of the court system and back out working against the incinerator.

The protests against the incinerator, and now against a toxic waste handling and storage facility that is to be built next door, will continue until they are shut down. The incinerator, which is to open officially July 1, will burn some 3,600 tons of garbage daily, releasing millions of pounds of toxins every year into the air, ground and Great Lakes water system. And this incinerator is only one of thirty being planned for the Michigan/Ontario area by the turn of the century.

WEAVE was formed by a group of women from the Detroit-Windsor area (several of whom also take part in the *Fifth Estate*) who have been meeting regularly as a study group for some time now. There has been an explicitly anti-hierarchical, eco-feminist, anti-industrial focus to much of their discussion and concerns. This demonstration targeted the Detroit incinerator as emblematic of all attacks against community and the environment and also as "representative of the larger issue of exploitation of the planet for profit."

Stop the megamachine! Shut it down now!

WEAVE can be contacted at P.O. Box 11215, Detroit MI 48211 or call through the Evergreen Alliance, (313) 832-1738.

# fifth Estate

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