

# Wish You were Here

xoxoxo from philly

2000

## **Centerfold insert**

Special Fifth Estate Convention Edition 2000

What follows is a first hand account of a participant in the actions in Philly against the Republican National Convention...

Monday's event was a march against financial inequality. Marchers were gathered at the base of the city hall building in the center of downtown. There were several helicopters overhead and it was clear that there were more police around than a typical Monday afternoon, but they were not excessively flaunting their numbers (yet).

As we waited to begin, the march's organizers tried frantically to keep people on the sidewalk and out of the street. People were eager to start marching. We'd been standing on the same corner for quite a while and there was common concern of being surrounded by police before the march was even allowed to begin.

Eventually we were herded into a single-file line. Although it seemed ridiculous to keep a single-file line all through the march, it did accentuate our numbers and make it appear that there were a lot more of us there may have really been.

Although it was difficult to gauge how many people were actually there, my guess would be that we were somewhere near 1,000 strong. The attendants differed in age from tons of very small children wearing butterfly wings, to the very elderly driving along side us in vans, as well as in racial and political backgrounds.

The energy and diversity of the marchers was encouraging and the march offered a peaceful atmosphere, letting people get involved who may not have been able to participate in actions in the days to come.

After the march we found housing with 40 or so other anarchists and that night held meetings. Although we had not, other people at the house had attended spokes council meetings that day and reported back to the house.

Like Seattle, a grid of the city had been made up. Each section of the grid contained one key point (i.e. George W's hotel, the main road leading to the convention center, etc.). Like the spokes council, only two representatives from each affinity group were present at our meetings. All of the affinity groups within the house would make up one cluster.

Our cluster agreed to all focus on only one division of the grid, but each affinity group would be responsible for planning their own independent actions within that area and, for security reasons, these plans would not be communicated with any other affinities within the cluster (or otherwise). Affinities were to arrive separately and be within eyesight of one building at a certain time and then one by one initiate whatever action they had planned.

Although planning had been thorough, we had not known what to expect and were not prepared for the scene downtown. Unlike the day before, the police were out in full force. Their tactics here were unlike those used in Seattle, DC, Detroit/Windsor, or even LA.

First, unlike the other cities, no attempt was made by Philadelphia to shut down the city prior to the arrival of the protesters. Not only police and reporters cluttered the sidewalks this time, but overwhelming numbers of pedestrians bustled back and forth going about their usual business. Dumpsters, street signs, trash cans, newspa-

per boxes, fencing and other useful tools were not cleared from roads or even chained up in most cases. The streets were filled with rush hour traffic as the sky overhead buzzed, thick with helicopters.

The police had a new tactic...arrest EVERYONE. In similar protests prior to this, they had opted just to beat everyone and employ overuse of pepper spray and tear gas. This was quite the opposite. As far as I know, neither tear gas nor pepper spray were used even once. Although they weren't timid about their use of force against individuals in the streets. The plan seemed more to be to arrest everyone and then treat them as they would behind closed doors.

Their new weapons Are not modernized pepper spray launchers like LA, but bicycles. They roamed the streets in squads of about fifteen waiting to see something going down or waiting to be called to an area. If it was just a few individuals that they were after, they would ram them, full speed, causing their victims to fly forward onto the pavement.

If it was a larger group that they were after, the tactic was to surround them, and by overlapping the bike tires, they would form a makeshift fence around the group.

If the target was a larger crowd still, cops would ride right into the middle of the group and divide the crowd by forming a blockade, by again overlapping the tires.

The use of bikes made them just as mobile as us and enabled them to chase (and arrest) many more people than in previous events. Using bikes against us proved to be very effective, but this is not to say that nothing was accomplished on Tuesday.

Because the grid spanned over such a wide area of the city, it was impossible to get any impression of our numbers. I also had no idea that all at once, there was ruckus taking place all across the city. Roads throughout Philly were blockaded with fencing, dumpsters, bodies, piano wire, and even an anarchist soccer game went on in the middle of Philadelphia's main road, just a few blocks from city hall. A section of highway downtown was flooded with protesters causing a complete standstill of traffic. Close to 20 cop cars were damaged or outright destroyed.

On Tuesday night's national news, out of CBS, NBC, and ABC, all but CBS failed to mention that the protests had even taken place. Although CBS did mention us, they neglected to give any detail and showed no footage. Although the mainstream media reported that several civilian cars were damaged, they failed to mention that those "civilian cars" were limousines. No where was it mentioned that hundreds and hundreds of people had taken over the city or that the police had arrested almost 500 of them.

By Tuesday night many protesters were held in many different jails all across the city making it difficult to track anyone down. Some people were even taken to Holmesberg Prison despite the fact that it was condemned years ago. Holmesberg can only be compared to an old castle. Having been built in the 1800s; it still had only outhouses and offered no running water. Prisoners from inside later reported that the ceilings were caving in letting in black soot.

Inside, an officer admitted to one of our lawyers that the makeshift plumbing that was available inside, still did not provide water suitable for drinking.

Wednesday night, while we were trying to free jailed comrades, there was a "street party" held for republicans only.

The city had blocked off all of the streets surrounding the local community's street market. The purpose of the event was to let the republicans feel like they were really within the local neighborhoods, except for the fact that the local community was not allowed anywhere near it.

Streets were barricaded for blocks in every direction and there were cops standing guard to keep pedestrians out (out of their own streets, in their own neighborhood). It was truly sick.

While this was going on, protesters constructed a tent city outside of the roundhouse (where most of the prisoners were being held). There were approximately 150 people gathered in the park across the street from the jail.

There were tents arranged in a crescent around an impressive drum circle that lasted all through the night. Banners were hung from trees all over the site demanding the release of the "puppetistas" and the like.

Protesters reported their houses being staked out, un-uniformed individuals in unmarked vans working on wires outside their homes, and on too many occasions to count comrades were followed all across the city by police.

By midnight there was a light drizzle, but it was a welcome relief after days of scorching heat. Around 12:30 the sky broke open with torrential rains and furious winds. Tents blew across the park and people scurried to hang up

tarps to gather under. Most of the tarps were tattered with gaping holes letting in streams of water. Despite all that was against us, everyone remained in good spirits and stayed at the city well into the next day.

We took one hour shifts, standing in pairs, next to each entrance of the Roundhouse, to direct anyone that was released to the tent city and to observe the police.

Over the course of the night several groups of 4 or 5 people were released. They came out telling horrific stories. Many people had been badly beaten. Many of our boys had been hog-tied naked and dragged through the jails. They had been denied food, water, and bathrooms and many were being denied crucial medications.

There were lots of people being held inside who were not even connected with the protests. Individuals out on a smoke break from work and stepped onto the streets and instantly been arrested. People on their way to meet friends or to find some lunch had been abducted.

One of the boys released had been taking pictures independently, when his camera was snatched up and stomped on by police and he was arrested. The bonds of people inside ranged from \$15,000 all the way to million dollar bonds. There was even a story of a man taken from his cell for finger printing, who was hog-tied naked and returned badly beaten with his ear partially severed.

# fifth Estate

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