

# The Social Peace is Over

## A Thousand "Have-Nots" Storm Montreal Elite Hotel

anon.

2004

Over a thousand angry protesters marched on Montreal's posh St. James Hotel, April 14, causing havoc and disrupting the tea-time of the idle rich. The protest was part of a province-wide day of action marking the one-year anniversary of the elections that brought the Liberal Party to government in Quebec.

Since taking power, Premier Jean Charest has initiated a business-oriented restructuring of the province's government, in an attempt to undermine the many social-democratic programs still running in Quebec. This has taken the form of anti-union laws, cuts to subsidized childcare, plans to reduce the number of people on welfare and other attacks on working people.

The day started with a 10,000-strong union demonstration, as well as protests organized by a number of housing and anti-poverty groups and the North-Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists.

Around 4pm people began to gather for a demonstration co-organized by the Comité des sans-emploi (Committee of the Unemployed) and CLAC-Logement (the Anti-Capitalist Convergence-Housing Committee). After some fiery speeches, the protesters marched down busy Ste. Catherine Street and into a downtown mall, chanting, "The social peace is over!" and "Make the rich pay!"

Shoppers in fancy boutiques were startled by a thousand angry working-class youth in their midst. The demonstration snaked its way through the mall and the connecting train station, exiting several blocks later. The crowd, which had grown in size, then proceeded past the American consulate and ended up at the St. James, perhaps the most expensive hotel in Montreal, where rooms can cost up to \$5000 a night.

Protesters rushed the doors, pushing past the frantic hotel manager into the exclusive first-floor dining room. Businessmen in expensive suits were shocked as black-clad and masked anarchists jumped on the oak tables or tried unsuccessfully to pull the tablecloths out from under the plates and glasses without knocking them over.

Protesters played the grand piano or pocketed silver forks and ashtrays. Other demonstrators sat down at tables with the hotel's dismayed, paying clients and helped themselves to their wine and hors-d'oeuvres. "Down with capitalism," was graffitied on the wall.

Several hotel security guards attempted to grab a demonstrator, but were quickly restrained by other protestors. Another security guard said to one organizer, "Don't worry, I'm not going to stop you. They only pay me \$10 an hour. I'm on your side."

After a few minutes of mayhem, the demonstrators in the hotel made their way out through the connected, ultra-chic, indoor shopping center of Montreal's World Trade Center, tipping over small indoor trees as they went, and joined the union demonstration. As the proletarian hooligans, street-punks: students, and red and green anarchists dissolved into the larger crowd, the completely out-maneuvered police were left with nothing to do but flash their cars' lights and glare from the sidelines: There were no arrests.

The spirit of the day was perhaps best expressed by a large sticker plastered all along the demonstration's route, inside malls, on street signs, placards, SUVs, and police cars. It showed the Quebec premier's face next to the phrase "OSTIE DE CROSSEUR!," which roughly translates as, "FUCKING WANKER!"

# fifth Estate

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