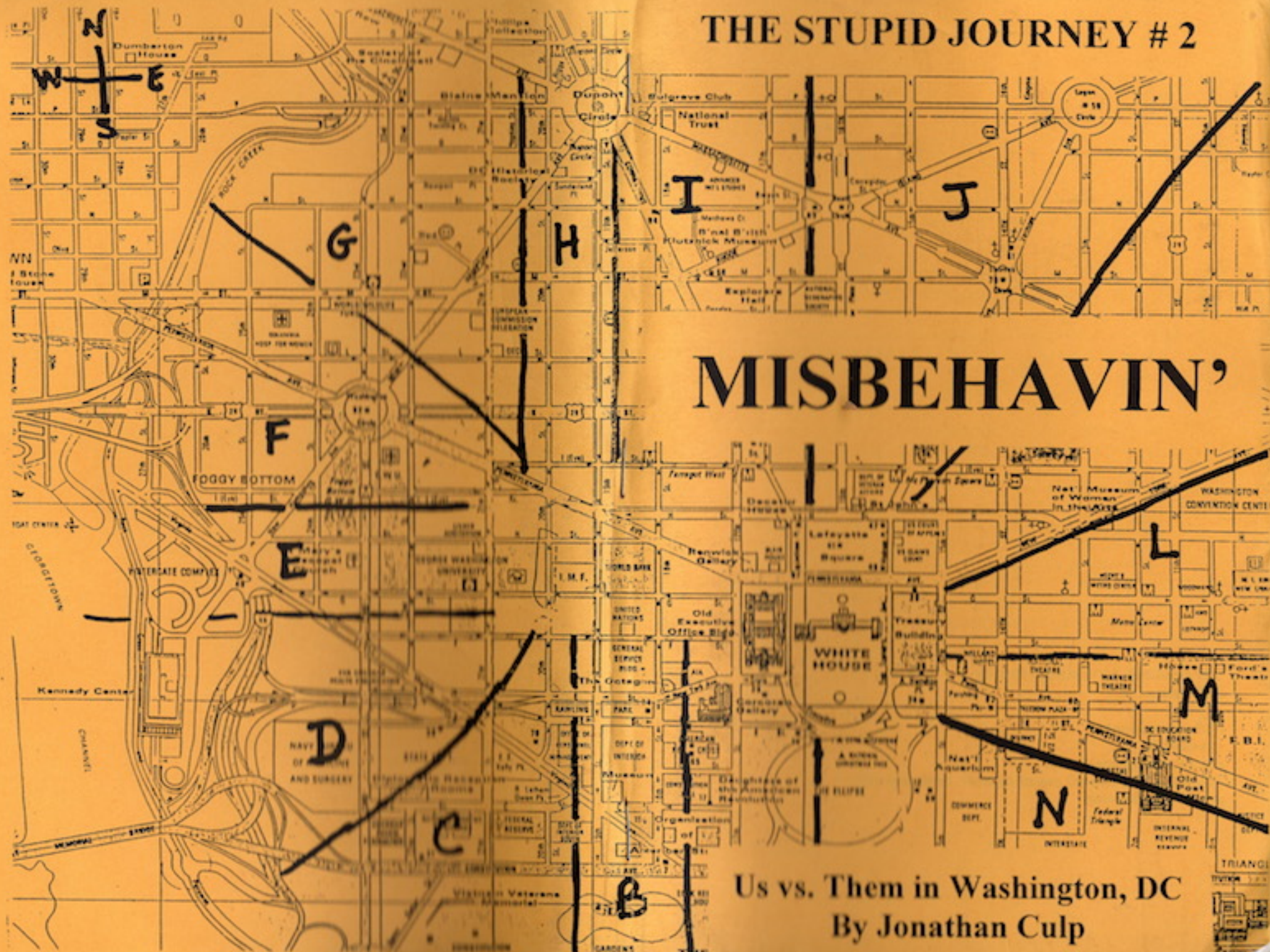


THE STUPID JOURNEY #2

MISBEHAVIN'

Us vs. Them in Washington, DC
By Jonathan Culp



DISCLAIMER

This also is like that stupid Journey Number One.

- The first one covered four months - this one covers eleven days.
- The first one was falling high - this one is even higher.
- The first one was heavy on the lyrics - this one is words and more words.
- The first one had a classic title - this one doesn't.
- The first one happened in Canada - this one happens mostly in the U.S. at A.
- The first one was written in two days - this one took two weeks.
- The first one was gentle - this one is (arguably) more current.
- The first one was "political" first and foremost - this one leans toward the "political".
- The first one I was alone - this one I was part of a large group.
- The first one was written immediately after the fact - this one was written five months after the fact.
- The first one was a big hit - this one is the epitome of a flop.
- The first one had the benefit of a large study that showed factual accuracy, but that anyone could prove false - this one is written largely from memory, and I will get in trouble for listing some of the details that question journalists and artists - those already carved in stone.
- The first one documented events that were still at the front of my consciousness - this one covers a number of related and mostly interesting events, which I have documented on video for "The Short Film about the Q&A" and "Misbehavin' #1" and "Q&A" like a very long time ago.
- The first one I know exactly why I was telling - this one I was struggling with.
- This one is stupid.

STUPID JOURNEY # 2: MISBEHAVIN'

By Jonathan Culp

Anti-copyright 2000

Published by

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I hope it's all right

Jonathan

DISCLAIMER:

This zine is not like Stupid Journey Number One.

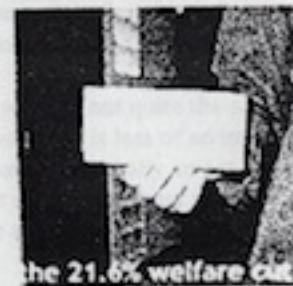
- The first one covered four months - this one covers eleven days.
- The first one was fucking huge - this one is even bigger!
- The first one was heavy on the layout - this one is words and more words.
- The first one had a cassette tape - this one doesn't.
- The first one happened in Canada - this one happens mostly in the U.S. of A.
- The first one was written in two days - this one took two weeks.
- The first one was episodic - this one is (marginally) more coherent.
- The first one was 'personal' first and foremost - this one leans toward the 'political.'
- The first one I was alone - this one I was part of a huge group.
- The first one was written six months after the fact - this one was written five months after the fact.
- The first one was a big hit - this one is the exploitative sequel.
- The first one had the benefit of a huge diary that ensured factual accuracy, not that anyone could prove otherwise - this one is written largely from memory, and I will get in trouble for fudging some of the details that countless journalists and activists have already carved in stone.
- The first one documented events that were still at the front of my consciousness - this one comes after a summer of related and steadily intensifying events, which I have documented on video (qv. "38 Short Films about the OAS" and "VideoActive #2"), and feels like a very long time ago.
- The first one I knew exactly why I was writing. This one I'm struggling with.
- This one is cheaper.

I hope it's all right.

Jonathan



the pro-landlord
Tenant Protection Act



TORONTO



TORONTO

Saturday April 8, 2000

2 pm

Anarchist Free Space, Toronto

After weeks of preparation, I finally get to co-facilitate a Video Activism workshop with two of my friends from the Toronto Video Activist Collective. With an unexpectedly large and enthusiastic turnout - over 20 people - we discuss the benefits and pitfalls of video for social justice movements: outreach and empowerment, versus the drain of energy and resources, and the lack of effective, direct distribution. We break down the surprisingly various subsets of video activism: witness video, documentary, campaign video, news footage, "art." We discuss several project concepts - real and theoretical - and the need for a clear sense of goals, audience, structure and deadlines. We watch several examples.

One of the points I emphasize is that video work is not quite the same as front line activism. Documenting civil disobedience is less of an immediate physical risk, requires less absolute commitment - basically an act of the brain rather than the body. If you don't step out from behind the camera occasionally, I say, and take on more active and challenging roles, you risk becoming alienated from your movement.

I have been a video activist for two years.

Sunday April 9
11 pm
Crawford Street

Me and Siue are just heading for bed, when the phone rings. It's late - who the hell is it?

Well, it's our pal Pat - and when Siue answers, he realizes that he has called the wrong number. When we're done laughing about this, he somehow lets slip that he's riding down to Washington, DC on Tuesday, and that there may be an empty seat in his friend's car.

Hmmm.

Weeks ago, I made up my mind that I would not be going to Washington for the World Bank/IMF protests on April 16. At first I had planned to drive down, and went so far as to solicit friends to come along. But I just moved back to Toronto in September, and I still didn't feel settled. Travelling like that now would be weird. I had thought about it, and decided not to go.

Besides, there's a lot of important 'activist' stuff going on right here in Toronto - such as homeless people dying in record numbers. And gas is expensive. And I am newly unemployed, and broke.

And I definitely don't like the idea of taking a union bus down and putting around for a single day of hey-hey ho-ho. Having failed to secure a ride to Seattle, I had watched from home as that enormous labor demonstration was dwarfed by the tenacity and organization of the Direct Action Network - and, yes, the Black Bloc anarchists, who traded broken windows for the protesters' broken bodies, which I considered entirely just.

No, if I was gonna do one of these things, I had to do it right. And having no way of making it happen, I wrote it off. But here, on my telephone, entirely by chance, is an open invitation - my passport to protest.

I tell Pat to save that seat for me. The gears are turning.

Monday April 10
10 am
Crawford Street

For all my reluctance to travel, the logistics are actually pretty easy - not much going on. A planned video release screening - a political documentary on my old alternative school, Maple Grove - has just fallen apart; so has my job, an easy but deadly boring gig at an internet company with serious organizational sickness. I have also been completely frustrated in my efforts to start a new band, so that's no obstacle either. In the meanwhile, a job is being dangled in front of me for May: curating a screening gallery for a local video co-op. If I win that one-year contract, there will be no travel for a long time. That's the clincher - I have to go NOW!

The one Herculean obstacle to my journey is my commitment to record a video soundtrack by the end of this week. It is for an anti-chip mill piece by my friend in Tennessee - featuring their inspiring and creative organizing work against such environmentally crummy corporations as Willamette. I have to lay down five short but complex pieces on my four track. This takes me a frenzied three-hour morning to record and mix.

My last task is to get a sub for my radio show, so I call the station manager. Having not heard from him one single time since I started at the station half a year ago, I am somewhat surprised when he tells me that he doesn't like my show and he is going to pull it soon, giving no substantive criticism, constructive or otherwise. But since the station in question is being transformed by the campus Tories from genial open format community radio to Molson-driven, tightly streamed, onegroove.com-pimping corporate wannabe, I'm hardly scandalized.

It is now time to pack.

Monday April 10

4 pm

Crawford St.

I return home from an errand. Siue tells me that Pat has phoned back - my promised ride has fallen through.

I have spent the day manically preparing to go to DC, now I'm all ready to go, but I have no way of getting there. What do I do?

The momentum of nervous energy is carrying me out the door like a tidal wave. I have to go. I have to. Commercial bus? That would be admitting defeat, and anyway I'm broke. Bicycle? I would have to clear 150 km a day after four years of utter sloth. Hitch-hiking? For some reason I'm feeling paranoid about that.

That leaves only one option. I will travel to Washington DC on a freight train.

Monday April 10

10:30 pm

Vineland, Ontario

I arrive at my mom's place - stopping for the night on my way to the border. Mom feeds me tomato soup and grilled cheese while I formulate my strategy.

For years I have read, planned, and discussed freight hopping, and in '98 I tried to do it, several times, to no avail (see SJ #1). Now is my chance to do it, and do it right.

You don't train hop with expensive equipment, unless you want to die. So I have left my video camera at home. This is fine with me - no third-person journalist-observer schtick this time. I am going as an ACTIVIST. Total commitment. Something I've never done before.

I spend hours poring over my information resources - a four-year-old 'hobo bible' given to me by my train-hopping friend in St. John's; a sketchy train map photocopied from the Toronto Reference Library, and a road atlas. I am playing a game of probability - does this track still run? Are the schedules even close? A lot can change in four years. I rule out hopping from Buffalo when I find it in a list of the seven toughest yards in America - a bad place for an amateur.

Then I find a crew change in Salamanca - a mysterious town about 100 miles south of Buffalo. After poking around on the internet a while, I have my plan. I will take the bus to Salamanca, and catch a crew-change, hopefully all the way to Baltimore.

I explain all this to my mom, who listens with quiet interest as I describe the vagaries of hobo strategy as they exist in my ill-informed brain. Eventually - I think I was describing how not to get your legs cut off by the train - she sighs and says "I think the less I know about this the better." We both go to bed.

Monday April 10

4 pm

Christine St.

Monday April 10

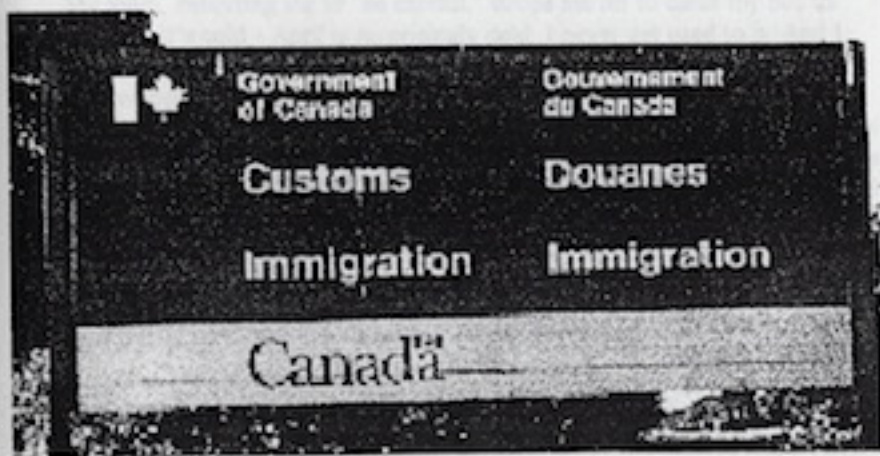
10:00 am

Christine St.

Tuesday April 11

8:45 am

St. Catherine's Hospital



TUESDAY

Tuesday April 11

8:45 am

St. Catharines bus terminal

My mom, exhorting me to "be careful," drops me off to catch my bus to Buffalo. It's cold - April is surprisingly cold, I never get used to it. And I have no tent - only a small tarp, a sleeping bag and my Thermarest. My newly-acquired \$2.00 canvas travel pack - frameless, as trainhopping requires - weighs a fucking ton even so. At the top of the deep, broad bag is my book for the journey - Steven Bach's "Final Cut," the story of 'Heaven's Gate' and the ruin of United Artists. Waiting for my bus, I crack it open and start reading.

But my concentration is repeatedly disrupted as my mind races ahead to the border. What will I tell them? Purpose of journey: to hop a freight train to DC in order to disrupt the World Bank. Obviously this will not do. I could leave out the train-hopping part, but that seems an unnecessary risk. Finally I settle on my story: I am going to visit my friend in Buffalo. I will be there for a week. Will they notice the train maps? What about the tarp? But what can I do. I repeat and refine my story for the entire bus ride there, my heart racing.

Tuesday April 11

10 am

Canada-US border: Niagara Falls

Crossing the border by bus, you are first grilled on the purpose of your visit, then led to a separate room for the search. This is kind of a relief - no need to square my fabricated story with the contents of my bag. But, suddenly, I can't find my wallet.

I run back to the bus - not there. It's not in my pocket. The line moves me closer to the inspection. I feel sick. I close my eyes, concentrate really hard, and finally remember that I've stashed it in my day pack. I don't know why. I snatch it out and bring it to the first border guard, who buys my story.

I am dressed conservatively and am trying very hard to speak calmly and smile, but at the inspection I remember an offensive item I had overlooked: my day pack itself.

This was given to me as a gift when a film of mine played at the Inside Out festival. A compact black vinyl bag, it read:

UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON - TREVISO ITALY

I hate Benetton, as I hate corporations generally. I was certainly not going to be a walking billboard for these guys. So, immediately upon receipt, I blacked out the letters so that it read:

UNITE OR R I O T

I am quite sure that this gag will expose me as an anarchist subversive, and that I will be strip-searched, arrested, and tortured.

He doesn't even look at it.

By the time I get back on the bus, I feel like I have been raped. Lying is a drag.

Tuesday April 11

11 am

Buffalo

I arrive in Buffalo. Here I am obliged to kill four hours.

I can hardly believe that the institution which exchanges my currency is a bank. It's this vast cavernous thing with fifty-foot ceilings and huge expanses of useless space; it feels like Union Station, with all the cold stone and echoing footsteps. It seems to be designed to encourage feelings of inadequacy, and with the enormous canvas slab on my back I know I am The Enemy. I get out as soon as I can get directions to the library. Here I spend a long time on the internet, seeking and copying street and train maps of Salamanca. The vibe here is totally different - everyone seems friendly, helpful, communicative. They don't even make me pay for my copies.

I turn up my nose at a lengthy procession of restaurants. I don't feel like eating, but I know what I'm about to get into. Eat now, starve later! Eventually I go for the worst lunch of all, a cheap cheese pizza in a clamorous food court, above a fashion store hilariously named "Hit or Miss." Here I reflect on what, in my rush, I have left in Toronto: flashlight, compass, cup. Pretty bad. I miss Siue already. What the hell am I doing. I'm a wreck.

And it's snowing.

Tuesday April 11

3:30 pm

Southbound on Hwy. 219

At the terminal, I had been looking for the proper bus. At what I thought was my platform, I saw a bus marked "Dubois." You know, French, like Claude dew-BWAH, right? I looked it up on my map, which I continued to clutch manically. I asked the driver if he went to Salamanca. He said yes. "And you end up in Dubois?"

He gave me a funny look.

"Doo-BOYZ."

At that moment I knew I had entered another dimension.

As the bus glides down the highway, I note that it would be a fine one for hitching. I had felt this consciousness ever since my first big trips - now every highway was evaluated for sightlines and available sleeping cover. Lately, this impulse had detoured into an obsessive perusal of every passing freight train for rideable cars. Now all I have to do is choose one and get on. A very different thing.

Outside my window, the snow is turning into freezing rain. Through the torrent I can see that the scenery is beautiful - and mountainous too, which I had not expected, but which rationalizes the big green blob to the south of Salamanca's dot on the map.

As I read my book, annoyances are piling up - buddy in the back chortling at his portable TV, lady up front smacking her lips; sleepy legs blocking my path to the scary open-pit toilet. As we near my destination, the sleepy-legs guy asks me the time and where we are. He doesn't speak English very well, but we talk a bit about the mountains' names, which neither of us know. I am getting jumpy.

Tuesday April 11

4 pm

East Salamanca

I am deposited at the side of the road - gray and ripe-smelling from the spring rain - in this weird place that, by my pathetic map, looks like the Eastern edge of town. Several 24-hour convenience/gas bars; a darkened redwood shack with beer signs in the window; a 'drug-free zone' wrapping an impregnable-looking high school. All the houses are dilapidated wood things; they are interspersed with tiny, overgrown woodlots. A Small Town.

On the left I discern some grassy, dead-as-a-doorknob train tracks, old grainers rusting away on them. I hope this isn't all that's left. By my notes, the crew change happens at 9 tonight. Right now, I need groceries.

When I see the cop car for the second time, I decide to get off the main drag and ditch my backpack. This is not a tourist town - I must look suspicious. Heading toward town, I walk under a bridge with badly-eroded pillars - wouldn't it be funny, going trainhopping and being killed by a collapsing bridge? Ha ha ha. A nearby insurance billboard featuring two grimacing Buffalo dweebs is the newest, shiniest thing in the whole town.

Not long after a truck absolutely plastered with multicolored Jesus-is-doom stickers, I duck into a library to avoid the increasingly torrential rain. Here I read more of 'Final Cut' - this chapter is an account of the founding of United Artists. Chaplin, Griffith, Pickford and Fairbanks aiming to create an apparatus where artists, not businesspeople, controlled the production of art. Sounds like what I've been working on for years, only on a much larger scale. Theirs didn't work too good either. I'll have to do an analysis of this some day.

WEDNESDAY

Tuesday April 11

7 pm

East Salamanca

I'm back - I've got my groceries, plus Tylenol for my splitting headache. Back at those beached grain cars, I duck into the undergrowth, scampering across a wide, open lawn that feels like no-man's land. I don't have to go far. On the next block is a chugging, steaming freight train, headlight staring into the encroaching dusk. This is the place.

This is not a major yard, that's for sure. The station house is good and derelict. No security to speak of. Conveniently, a street curves around and runs the length of the yard, so once again I ditch my pack, and stroll along to take stock.

This train isn't going anywhere, just moving cars around the yard; I haven't figured out how to read this kind of activity yet. This side of the tracks is half dead industrial buildings, half treed-in homes; the other side is solid jungle. The rain is still coming down, now light, now heavy.

As the road curves back from the yard, a dirt trail leads off and follows the tracks, and I take it. Now there are trees on my side, too, and a deep gully which I decide to investigate. Surveying the gully in the end of daylight, I find that the area is flat, not swampy, and well-placed to catch out.

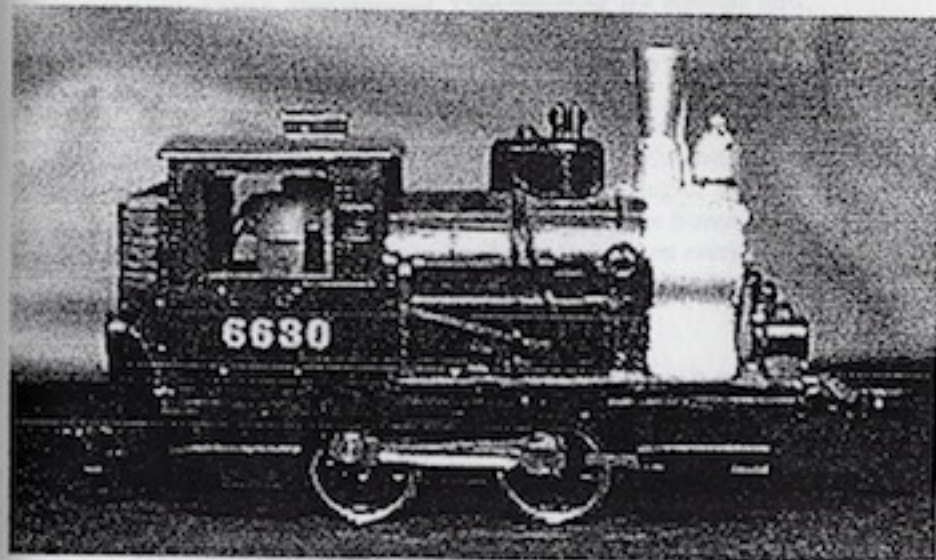
Then I run across the tracks, and, even as it gets steadily darker and colder and rainier, I sit on my fallen hydro pole and watch this mystery train, its air brakes spitting sporadically, engine running, but standing hopelessly still. I don't even know what I'm looking for - I'm just mesmerized, fascinated by the workings of the train, hypnotized by the little lights, the shadows of the workers. But this was clearly not the 'crew change' indicated in my hobo bible. After well over an hour of this I have to move or risk hypothermia, so I decide to go to bed. I cross back to retrieve my pack, narrowly missing a run-in with an angrily hectoring skunk.

Back in the gully. The rain isn't going away, so I use a half-fallen tree to hang my tarp (fastened on with soft sapling twigs - ingenuity!), and excavate an old hunk of fiberglass to lay under me. I hunker down, with my jeans hanging from the trunk above me, and try to sleep.

Wednesday April 12

Am

Gully



WEDNESDAY

Wednesday April 12

4 am

Gully

For a while the tarp kept me dry. I think I slept a bit, early on...I could hear the rain coming down, then stopping. Then resuming, but different now, lighter but also heavier if you can believe that...a pit, not a pat. It was dark, and I had no flashlight, but I knew what that sound meant: snow.

The awareness of being snowed on, plus the cold, equalled not much sleep from then on. Then, after a couple hours of self-pity, with dawn still to come, I hear air brakes and a horn. Another engine coming in, Southbound - this has to be the one. I reach up for my jeans, and they were frozen, two solid crunchy tubes. I put them on over my green pants, I put on every shirt I've got, plus an extra pair of socks. Then, peering up the ridge, I see that the unit is in fact Northbound. I retreat into my sleeping bag.

Then the train stops, right above me. Then it reverses. Now it starts lumbering back and forth, coupling and uncoupling again, this goes on a long time. I love this sound - I grew up next to the train tracks, and the chugging clatter lulled me to sleep every night. Through the freezing eyehole of my bag, I watch the movement of the lights and listen to the stainless steel lullaby, drifting in and out of lucidity. Eventually, I can tell the sun is up - not from any rise in the temperature, but because of the syncopated bird chorus that erupts. Almost too horrified to look, I lift the bag from my head.

There is a good inch of snow. It has covered the foot of my sleeping bag, it sits sagging above me in the tarp. It's caked my backpack. It's everywhere. Let's pack up and forget this situation as fast as possible.

Wednesday April 12

7 am

The tracks

I clamber up to the tracks, and follow the train North, away from the yard, to see if the engine was on that end - nope. This train is Southbound. I maneuver down the street to the other end of the yard, where the engine is running. I scope things out. Lots of auto cars, which are no good for riding, the only hospitable cars are toward the front: some grainers, boxcars mostly closed, and farther back, a small section of gondolas, heaped with snow. There should be something rideable here, but to catch out, I have to run across the tracks, well south of the engine.

Immediately after this, I see that the forklift at the other end of the yard has turned and is headed in my direction, fast. Did they see me? What is it doing? I don't know, but paranoia has taken over. So I run like hell, heading south for the highway, where I continue walking briskly, panting, trying to look innocent. The forklift drives right past me, gives me a dirty look, but doesn't stop. I keep walking for quite a while before deeming it safe to turn around and re-enter the yard.

There is a truck parked across the tracks - is this security? I hide in a strange, long indentation in the ground, and wait for the train to move. It's a long run out to the Southbound track, and my pack is pretty heavy with that gallon of water - can I make it out before the rideable cars are past? Can I keep pace with the train? I grit my teeth as I see the train moving forward. I crouch down and prepare to sprint as it comes closer, picking up speed. It takes forever for the engine to pass. As soon as it does I bolt out and head for the train. The grainers are long gone - my only hope are the gondolas, and the long, rickety ladders up the side to the top. I don't think security has seen me. Now there's only one gondola in reach, so it's now or never. Running furiously alongside the train, I grab on to the ladder with my hand, pull up, and step on to the bottom rung. I clamber up quickly, and hurl myself into the basin of the car.

I'm in. I'm going.

Wednesday April 12

9 am

Southbound

Immediately after I was ensconced on board, the train stopped and reversed. Had they seen me? Was I in trouble? I heard some chatter, laid low, and read my book. Soon enough, we were off again - this time for real.

Mine is the only gondola whose load isn't steaming. It's some kind of metallic slag, small shavings of something or other, hopefully not radioactive. It is piled close to the top of the car, but there's about a three foot trench at the front, so I wedge myself in, laying the tarp down to keep dry. The sun's coming out, and it warms me a bit, although the air is still cool.

It's fun riding past crossings and gazing over at stopped cars. I wonder if any of them see me, but don't care much. From the tracks, you see the backside of every town - the real scuzz, the kind of dirt and decay that thrills me to no end. I don't quite understand this attraction of mine to industrial decomposition...I tend to talk about it in ideological terms - evidence of the impermanent nature of corporate rule. But I think it has more to do with the "take-apart center" we had in kindergarten, where we gutted old radios and TVs to look at the insides. It's primal, playful. There are no rules back here, for better or worse.

Wednesday April 12

10 am

Middle of nowhere

About fifteen minutes later, the train wheezes to a halt, AGAIN. I lay low, hear some clicking and clanking, and peered ahead to see the train driving ahead - without me. It has uncoupled from the whole line of cars, leaving it where it stands, next to another silent chain of boxcars on the next track. Panicking, I get off, whereupon the strap of my backpack breaks. Then I see that it is reversing to couple with the other train; it advances again, and rejoins with my line of cars, now far in the rear.

By now I have learned my lesson: if a train does weird shit, it is probably recoupling. It also means that this train is probably a service run and is not going too far. But I want to know for sure; so, acting as innocent as possible, I backtrack alongside the train and approach the train worker, who is checking the couplings. We look each other over, and I speak:

"Where you headed?"

"Johnsburg."

"Where's that?"

"Oh, it's about fifty miles up the line, in Pennsylvania. We're ditching these cars there."

"Oh yeah. Yup, I'm headed for Washington DC."

"DC? You're heading the wrong way." (I had approached him from the South.)

"Oh...uh, well, where's the highway?"

"Over there. Shouldn't be too hard to hitch a ride."

"Thank you."

My mission to gain an invitation into the engine - I hear it works sometimes, really! - has failed. So I walk away from the train and into the adjoining field...and, as soon as he heads back for the engine, I bust ass back to my gondola - now totally remote from the front of the train, not to mention stationary, hopping on was more casual. No way I'm going to give up a guaranteed ride for another 50 miles.

And the journey is gorgeous - a slow drive through the mountains, mostly off road, along rickety old tracks, through sprawling gray forests, past dead demolished train yards, over iron bridges. In fact it was more like 100 miles, and it makes me understand why I have been so driven to do this, sitting on top of this enormous load, eating chick peas and sugar cookies. This is the final frontier. I'm flying high.

Wednesday April 12

1 pm

Johnsburg, PA

The train starts to slow down. We have reached our destination. Slowly emerging from the unbroken greenery, I look ahead and see a bizarre, enormous edifice - an impossibly high, tent-shaped structure of tubes, running an incredible length, dwarfing me and the train, like nothing I've ever seen before. The train grinds to a halt, I hurl my pack overboard, clamber down and scurry up the hill and into the trees.

It is atop this hill, having changed out of my slag-stained outer layer into something relatively civilian-looking, that I see what this thing across the tracks is. It is a chip mill. The horizontal pipe at the top of the vast supports leads to a series of funnels, which spew out wood chips into impossible piles perhaps a hundred feet high, maybe more. As I clamber forward along the hillside, I stare at this nasty piece of work in slack-jawed amazement. Two days earlier I was composing a soundtrack to the story of these things - now here I am face to face with one. I get totally emotional.

Chip mills, FYI, take mature growth forests and reduce them to tiny chips for the pulp-paper industry - the absolutely worst, most wasteful, pointless way to destroy a forest. You don't need a hundred-year-old tree to create a fragment of fibre. Why not hemp, or something? They create very little employment, too, and it's not long before they use up all of a region's resources and get the hell out. They're evil, straight up - I'm standing in the shadow of The Enemy.

They do not, however, have any visible security, and once I figure out that all available trains are bound for Pittsburgh, I amble down the hillside, across the tracks, and through the gates without any questions from anybody. Out front, I take note of the owners of this monstrosity - Willamette.

I could definitely go for a sub right now, but I end up walking away from the center of town, and out for the highway. My hobo bible points to an active train yard down in the West Virginia panhandle. I will hitch-hike that far, and from there I will hop out for Baltimore.

Wednesday April 12

3 pm

Highway outside of Johnsburg, PA

My lunch was three peanut butter sandwiches at a sorry little picnic-table area on the outskirts of town. I had to walk a long way to find a decent hitching spot, but here it is: At the top of a long, straight hill, with a few metres of paved shoulder left ahead of me and enough sunshine to keep me relatively comfortable. It's cool, so I've had to put my smutty train clothes back on, which will not endear me to the motorists; I try to compensate with a big ridiculous grin.

Obviously I haven't hitched for a while; half an hour of thumb-wagging has me convinced that I will never get picked up. But as usual I am rescued, today by Brian. He has just started working in Johnsburg as an auto mechanic, which he considers a step up from the shop in his home town, one hour away. He is a Vicarious Thrills ride, says he's never been out of state, but has always wanted to hitch-hike. He's a good guy.

Wednesday April 12
4:30 pm
Brockway, PA

Brian lets me out at the 7-11 in this town, which is tinier than Johnsonsburg. He says if I'm still on the highway when he's through visiting his girlfriend, he'll pick me up as he continues South. I am pretty sure that this will happen.

Once I'm past the decrepit ex-movie theatre - the highlight of every small town - and a stunningly enormous and incongruous mystery mansion, Brockway gives way to a long climbing hill. I know I will never be able to hitch on this hill - there is no shoulder, and one lane both ways barely leaves room for me to walk. So I lose myself in my book, tramping slowly upward as I bury my nose in the author's first encounter with Woody Allen.

This is the longest hill I have ever seen; my ascent continues for at least 45 minutes. Habitually, I scan the sides of the road for sleeping areas, but the hillside is almost sheer. There is a narrow ledge below the road, however, and there I see at least four bleached deer skeletons. This makes me wonder: did they wander down here after the car hit them, or did the street sweeper deposit them there? Either way, grimacing skulls do not spell hospitality, so I keep slogging.

The big hill ends but the road keeps going slowly up, widening out to three lanes but still no shoulder. I pass a private school, hydro-company lawns, and a small cluster of retirement cottages. I start to worry that Brian has passed me already, where the hell's the shoulder? The answer comes half a mile ahead, in front of a 'drive-in' restaurant with full seating and a ten-year-old giving me thumbs-up through the window.

It's getting on dinner time by now, so I am tempted to go in for food. But I know I have to wait out here, or Brian will miss me. Come to think of it, I can't remember what Brian's truck looks like. And my stupid grin is losing conviction as the vehicles whizz by. I start to wonder if I'll be stuck here for a while. Will I get to DC in time? How much will I miss? That's what I get for not planning better.

Twenty minutes pass, and as I continue craning my neck behind me to watch cars that aren't pulling over, I see a guy jogging down the street, from a fair distance. I ignore him and keep on thumbing; but as he gets closer I hear him call out:

"Hey, don't you know hitch-hiking is illegal?"

Oh, fuck, worst case scenario. Now I'll have to *explain* myself. I turn around to address the Yankee jogger - and there, staggering to a halt, is my friend Dave.

I have (in SJ #1) documented numerous freakish coincidences in my travels - running into the same friends twice in two middle-of-nowheres a thousand miles apart; meeting friends-of-friends on BC back roads. But this is different. I'm in the middle of the United States; I'm well off the main highway; I'm not even supposed to be hitching! And yet, standing in front of me is my activist buddy from Toronto. *This is the #1 greatest coincidence of all time!*

We embrace before I can think, but that doesn't last long. I need answers - what the hell is he **DOING** here? Leased a van for DC, as it turns out, with a bunch of friends and some help from OPIRG-York; driving past, he just happened to see me on the shoulder.

Dave offers me a ride to Washington.

Wednesday April 12

6:30 pm

Dark highway

The van is so jam-packed that I have to sit in between seats on the floor, but I don't care. I've got a ride to DC, and I'm with friends! In fact, I only recognize two passengers: Dave, and Jessie, a former resident at one of Toronto's premier bohemian party pads. Soon enough I recognize Chris too - he had been present at one of the few internet collective meetings I had bothered to attend.

The others are all strangers from York: Anthony, Kole, Maria and Meredith, whose dark curly hair and narrow, intense features remind me of my aunt - except my aunt can drive.

Despite the advancing hours, everyone is still excited and energetic. We are quietly speculating about what lies ahead. Will it be crazy like Seattle? Will we shut down the IMF/World Bank meetings? What role would we play - direct action, labour march, medical? Anything goes.

We finally stop at a 'family restaurant' (that means something different in the States) called Aunt Lu's, which does have a salad bar and vegetarian soup, so the vegetarian half of our group is pacified. We come up with a great slogan for them: "You can't lose at Aunt Lu's!"

Huddled among the cheesy old baseball and black-and-white movie star pictures, I lean into a pay phone and call Siue, to tell her my situation. She can't believe it either.

Thursday April 13

2:30 am

Washington DC

We are driving in circles around the confusing one-way streets of Washington. Somewhere in here is Kole's mother, who will put us up for the night. I normally hate city driving, but tonight I barely notice, because the city is Washington DC and I am HERE. The long stretch of forested highway on the way in only intensifies my sense of disbelief - makes this feel like a hidden fortress, a remote outpost.

The apartment, once we find it, is a tiny one-bedroom in a high rise - and it must sleep nine of us. Kole had mentioned in the car that his mom actually worked for the IMF in some capacity, so I had fears of Dumb Parent Syndrome, but she is impossibly hospitable, practically doting over us, and tonight ideology is not an issue. Sleep is what we need, and with my still-soggy sleeping bag on the hard floor I grab a few paltry winks.

THURSDAY

Wednesday April 12

4:20 pm

Dart Highway

Thursday April 13

10:20 am

Washington DC

Thursday April 13

10 am

Subway station



THURSDAY

Thursday April 13

10 am

Subway station

Sleep was fitful and short. Now we're out trying to find the 'convergence center,' but the subway maps yield no clues. Whatever the virtues of this group, the collective directional lobe is wanting; plus I am noticing the first creaks of antagonism between certain parties, which bodes ill. Besides, their plan makes no sense to me from what I can make of the city's layout; so I decide to strike out on my own. I bid them farewell and wander away, followed by Chris.

Walking along, Chris and I talk about - what else - activism. We compare awakenings of consciousness - his among the West Coast First Nations, mine amid the elite theorizing of Z Media Institute. And we talk about the generation gap and familial incomprehension - where his family seems reactionary in the blue-collar tradition, my frustrations have more to do with genteel liberalism, a reformist spiritualism that I find wanting in practical understanding of how oppression works.

In some ways this is even harder to deal with, because it's not just idiocy, it's a convoluted variation on my own sense of justice, and putting it down feels counterproductive sometimes. But the reverse is true too - when nonviolent protesters turned against the trashers in Seattle, they were the ones undermining solidarity, I insist. This nonviolence thing is torment for me - not that I would engage in violence, but if I condone it, then how will I fit in with the culture of these demos? I wonder.

My train of thought is interrupted when we run smack into an enormous procession of protesters bearing down on The Gap to expose their sweatshop-generated fortunes. Wow, that was fast - the demo came to us! We turned right around and followed the masses back down the street. I looked at all the camcorder nerds scurrying around the periphery - ha ha! None of that for me, not this time. Freedom. However, I made a note to drop by the Independent Media Centre later on, for research purposes.

Soon - after bumping into still more Toronto friends and chatting up the crowd - we decide to split. Time is marching on.

Thursday April 13
12:30 pm
Convergence center

I had heard for years about DC dualism - shiny monuments on one end of town, run-down ghetto on the other - and by now we are definitely among the latter, thank God. The neighborhood, while not big on exciting storefronts, is fascinating and hospitable, and with some help from the locals, we navigate the twisty roads to reach convergence.

The place is located down a wide alley and around a bend, inside an old warehouse. People are playing basketball, painting props, practicing songs, sitting around. There are maybe a few hundred there, not the thousands that were expected, but it was still early in the week. It has a good feel, everyone seems focused but relaxed. I check my pack in the lockup, grab all the literature I can find, study the schedule of events on the wall, register at the sign-up table. They ask what role I would be taking in the protests; I still have no idea.

Sure enough, Dave and the gang are there too. There is a general excitement about the legal training, and while I have no idea what this entailed, I decide to follow as they head in its direction.

Thursday April 13
1 pm
The first in a series of churches

The Legal workshop turns out to be an indispensable part of the organizers' itinerary - basically a role-playing exercise in direct action. We are greeted at the door by people with cardboard cameras asking stupid questions, just like real media - "So how do you feel about all this violence?" etc. Then, having been led into an enormous main room, the Midnight Special Law Collective presents us with the vital action guidelines:

1. We will use no violence, physical or verbal, towards any person.
 2. We will carry no weapons.
 3. We will not bring or use any alcohol or illegal drugs.
 4. We will not destroy property.
- (# 4 featured an amendment about how breaking down barricades was OK, but this had been crossed out)

As these points are reviewed, my contrarian instincts start rising. 2) and 3) are understandable - though I recall that my friends in the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty have always done fine without them. No violence against people - I can even get into that, violence is depressing, right, and how effective was it likely to be. But the classification of verbiage as 'violence' seems puritanical and silly, and the property-destruction thing calls up the spectres of division from Seattle.

The thing has hardly begun, and I'm really getting pissed off. After all, I struggled my way down here to fight for justice, not to 'demonstrate' but to pursue real goals and authority be damned. Of course the fight had to be tactical. But as I sit seething, 2) and 3) seem more like passive capitulations to the rule of law. Acknowledging the ethic of the cops while disowning that of your partners in struggle - what kind of solidarity was that?

Complicating all this, of course, was my awareness of the other side of the debate that had raged around Seattle - most persuasively put by Mike Albert from good old Z Mag - that these things have to have parameters that are geared both to outcomes and the needs of the participants. Philosophy aside, nonviolence is a tactic, designed to emphasize principle and commitment and

make the brutes on the other side look bad to the home audience. If an action is explicitly organized around such principles, the argument goes, then it is tantamount to sabotage to use violent action within that setting.

Oh, what to do. Now I find myself locking arms in a deep tangle of bodies before the dais. Wisely, they use their own volunteers in the cop roles - they do a great job, are energetically menacing as they try to drag individuals out of the group. The tactics are laid out: point and 'om' at trouble spots - pull bodies back to un-arrest, but never touch the cops; 'puppy-pile' bodies on bodies to inhibit dispersal. And when (or if, I guess) they finally drag you away, go limp - but not your head, or else you'll hurt yourself.

Next is an enactment of 'jail solidarity,' which is fascinating to me. The key principle is absolute solidarity under all circumstances - everyone gets the same charges, the same court date, no separation of prisoners, no ID information. Internationals are to be included - breaking the law in a foreign country being a big no-no - and we start reminding ourselves to stop giving away our Canadianness. We are taught the jail-solidarity mantra:

I am going to remain silent.
Uh-huh uh-huh.
I would like to see a lawyer.
Oh yeah oh yeah.

And we act out vivid and confusing playlets on what to do in event of injury, with many forms of duplicity visited upon us by the mock-cops.

As the theatre goes on, I realize that the internal dynamics of this kind of disobedience were in fact pretty brilliant - I am impressed. In fact things are so carefully worked out that they seem to demand *absolute* compliance on the part of the protesters - this being the reason, of course, for all this vigorous training. Of course, if it works, the emphasis on uniformity would be somewhat justified, and though it goes against my instincts, I'm starting to appreciate the tactical reasoning here.

And then the workshop leader - a very articulate woman, on crutches to support a broken leg, stationary at the podium throughout the workshop - makes the following, unsolicited remark regarding resistance tactics: "There

are people who believe that the police are just bad, and so they won't co-operate with police or the government; and so they don't use tactics. And that's fine."

Coming just as I am managing to align myself, this sends me into a quiet, but blinding, fury. The implication is, of course, that anyone who doesn't submit to this protest regimen is completely beyond any tactical reasoning - that those who advocate force are responding to some primal instinct or hormonal imbalance. This is just wrong - the tactical use of force has been theorized to death, in fact - and it seems petty and sectarian. Besides, who says the cops AREN'T just bad?...but I'll save that for another time.

I call out a considered reply, but the conversation drifts forward, and I am once again alienated and unsure. What am I doing here.

Thursday April 13

5 pm

Independent Media Centre

Following the group once again (well, part of it), I trot an hour across town, toward the boxy building that houses the Independent Media Centre - and outside the door, working security, is Pat! He plumbs me for travel tales as he takes me inside to get a press pass - I'm still reticent to play media guy, but I need the pass to get into the place, and anyway I'm leaving all options open in my state of post-Legal depression. I do, however, decline to put my name on the pass - I'm still covert, after all.

The IMC is in fact an occupied art gallery. It consists of several work areas, with computers of various capacity creating text, stills, audio and video for the IMC-DC web site. Considering what a splash the IMC movement has made - I got almost all my Seattle news from its chaotic, info-packed pages - I am a little bit surprised at the obvious *otherness* of this crowd. What I see here are mostly thirtyish guys in expensive shirts, toodling around their expensive machinery. Several of them I have trouble picturing seated on the pavement, cops or no cops. They look like...like...media pros. (I went to school with a bunch of them, so I know whence I speak.)

Hmmm... so there are class divisions here. I wonder how this colors the reportage, and how such division at this early stage bodes for the future. And all of this inferred from a few flashes of fashion sense.

Having failed to locate my friend Jay, whom I met at ZMI and who is a certified indymedia bigwig, I crawl into a car with a stranger and head back up to convergence to pick up dinner.

Thursday April 13

6:00 pm

Convergence center

Outside of the warehouse, a cube van full of food is parked; in front of it, multiple workers are toiling over dinner, a soupy stew full of tofu and greens. They tell me they've fed 1,000 people today, and are expecting 2,000 tomorrow. So the numbers are growing. The food is good, too.

After helping secure IMC portions, I elect to stay here, eat and help with the dishes - taking on the shit work like a true communist. Then I'm off to a nearby community centre for a talk on Third World debt.

Thursday April 13
8 pm
Community centre

The lecture is inspiring in that it is represented by delegates from countries from Africa to Central America to the Caribbean. They tell stories of their respective social and economic struggles, and what these meetings mean to them. The South African guy leads the room in an attempt at a Zulu war dance.

Although the cavernous acoustics, squealing PA, and somnolent translators render the details somewhat hazy, this is a good opportunity for us to reflect on why all this is going on in the first place: corporate globalism. Of course, the focus in DC is on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but the really important thing about these protests as they grow and diversify is that they are not about one institution, but about attacking the supporting pillars of a larger evil. The target of all these protests, folks, is capitalism itself - in spite of all the reformist wishy-wash in our midst, the cumulative effect of direct action is to destabilize the unquestioned monopoly of big business over workers, of moneyed countries against the underdeveloped world - and presumably, eventually, create an opening for real change.

So we question the IMF's "structural adjustment" policies - tying loans to restrictions on social spending and organization, in the process diverting control over basic and vital resources to international big business. But we don't *just* question the policy, in isolation - we question the whole organization of industry, the control of the wealthy over decision making, the squandering of resources, the inherently anti-democratic nature of capital, the whole chain of fundamental implications that spring from the first symbol. And we follow these leads into questions about genetic modification of plants and animals, about the nature of police repression, about the dubious validity of our states and governments themselves. Well, anyway, I do, and I can tell you that in DC I don't feel lonely.

The question is, first, if the movement will be committed enough to remember these implications when, as will eventually happen, the big guys throw us a bone; and, second, whether the political power that we have marshalled can be cultivated and expanded into a comprehensive and

ongoing answer to these social diseases - namely, the facilitation of a good, sustainable life that is not subservient to money.

Who the hell knows? In the meantime, I dedicate a Zulu war dance to the collapse of this particular summit, and continue to scheme toward the goal beyond.

Thursday April 13
10:30 pm
Convergence center

The talk is over, and my friends have all dispersed to their domiciles, but I am drawn back to convergence - still giddy, still looking for something to do. Emerging from a couple rooms full of inaccessible and intense debate, I come to the Singing Room, where a single acoustic guitar is making the rounds from folkie to folkie.

Let me honk my horn here and say that I am displaying enormous tolerance and cultural empathy by hanging around this room for more than an hour, because I HATE FOLK MUSIC. And I ESPECIALLY hate fucking *activist* folk music - somehow the form tends to bring out the pristine self-righteousness in whoever it touches, and the result is a kind of hermetic self-congratulation that has more to do with wanking than art or, God knows, entertainment. And to make matters worse, the justification for the aesthetic seems to be couched in some notion of earth-mother feminism, so as a big bad male I have to feel all guilty about my contempt! Fuck!

I don't think the songs themselves are the problem: the singalong leader, who seems to be held in bedazzled reverence by a good portion of the room, turns Woody Guthrie's "Deportees" into some Jessye Norman fantasy lullaby at around 15 bpm. What the song *needs* is a fake Okie accent, dummy! That's the problem with all this 'spirituality' stuff - no matter how well-intentioned it always seems to wind up as an escape from the degraded trappings of mortal sinners such as you and I.

Nonetheless, I bear with it, singing along where I can, applauding with everyone else as folks displayed their misguided attempts at songwriting. I even tap my foot to Singing Goddess's fortieth Sweet Honey in the Rock song of the night - it goes "our souls in a state of emergency," but in true folk-soul fashion, it comes out sounding uncannily like "assholes in a state of emergency" - I stifle my giggles as best I can.

Finally, my heart racing, I stretch my hand toward the guitar - it's time for me to SING. I have barely sung in public for two years, and I relish the opportunity to show these guys what a REAL song sounds like. As I strap

'er on, I have to come clean and admit it: fuck tolerance and cultural empathy, I just want people to listen to ME. Of course, it's only appropriate to play them the song I wrote (more or less) about Seattle, even though it's not quite finished. It goes like this:

YOU ARE JUST A LOUSER

Can you tell me where to go
Where the hot air doesn't blow
Get in get out give back nothing at all
Three piece thugs are on parade
Cows on drugs to buy or trade
Line up lock down no one enters the hall

Hey Mayor McCheese
Hi there Sergeant Sleaze
It's a long way to come
To be greeted by this rubber gun

CHORUS

They go me oh me oh my
Bombs are falling from the sky
(No sir no sir everywhere you go sir)
Me oh me oh my
Everybody's gonna die
(No sir no sir you are just a louser)

Can you tell me what to do
Stop this steamroll screaming through
Uptown downtown they're just having a ball
If some pests get in their way
They'll prescribe a stronger spray
Payback head crack line us up on the wall

Turtles crawl like hell
ACME cracks that shell
It's a law and order void
They wake the neighbors up and they're so annoyed

CHORUS

Pick us off the ground
Bus us out of town
Grind our glasses down
Kick our ass around
But we won't make a sound
No no no

Can you tell me where it ends
Maybe you should ask your friends
Massed up gassed up next step forcing the fall
Everyone gets out the zone
But we take that battle home
Round up wound up wait to answer the call

CHORUS

I hit the last ringing chord of the song, and silence descends on the room - except for some quiet chatting among the Song Goddess's buddies. Out of the dozens of songs performed in this room tonight, mine is the only one that nobody applauds. If I were a *real* punk, I would take this as a compliment...

Thursday April 13 midnight The squat

Earlier on, I had been musing to Pat about accommodations, since Kole's place was only good for the first night, I had to search on, and the crash registry at the info desk had not much. Pat told me about his crash spot of the night before - a squat house only a couple of blocks from convergence. And it's there that I now find myself, heading for the basement door as instructed, maneuvering through a packed and smoky room of teenaged stoners, up a rickety flight of stairs, and through several darkened rooms, always looking for an adequate patch of floor, always in vain.

In the top hallway, I run into someone who was awake, and ask him if any of the permanent tenants are available. The response is inevitable: "Are you a cop?" This is the price I pay for my shaved head and advancing years. Fuck, I just want a place to sleep. We backtrack downstairs, and he contritely offers me a corner of what would be the dining room - I would be about the tenth person to inhabit this approximately 10' x 12' thoroughfare, and I wouldn't be the last either. I blow up my bourgeois mattress, lay out my sleeping bag, and sleep.

FRIDAY

CHURCH

11 Days Ago

11 Days Ago

11 Days Ago

11 Days Ago

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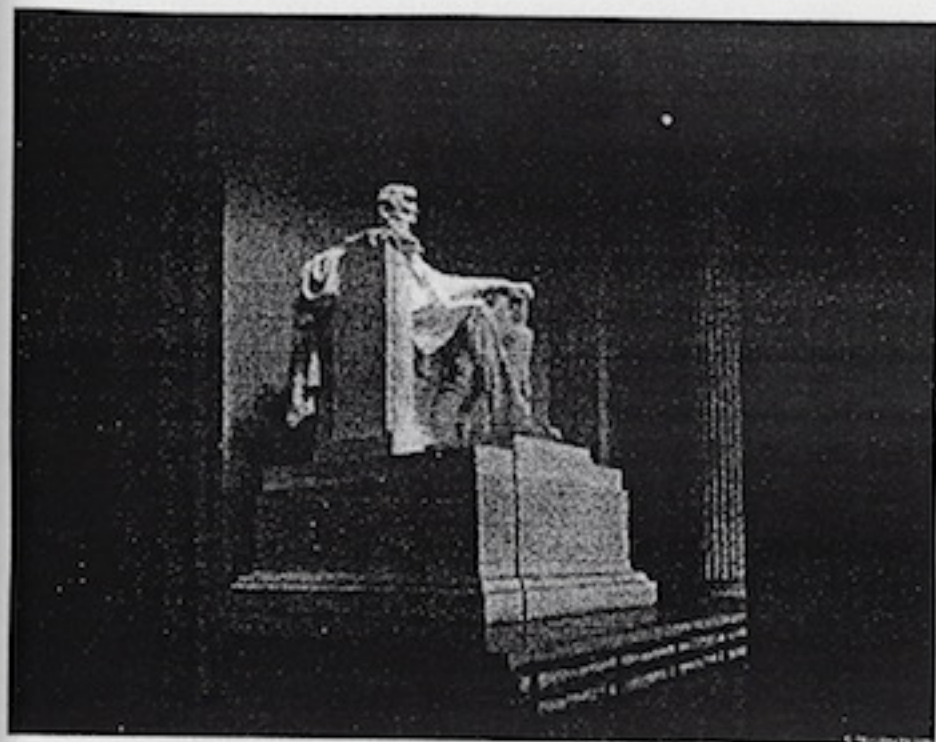
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11 Days Ago

Friday, April 14

11 Days Ago

11 Days Ago



FRIDAY



FRIDAY

Friday April 14

7 am

The squat

I wake up to half a dozen black dogs scurrying across my legs as the sun hits the window. Once again, I didn't sleep too good - how long can this go on. Looking around, I can't believe the tangle of bodies that have crammed into the room. The room itself is pretty wild - only in the daylight did I realize the extent to which this is a *squat*. There are no walls, only exposed slats; there's no ceiling either, or fixtures, or plumbing. There are water marks where the rain comes in. This is truly roughing it in the urban bush, and I have an intense admiration for the folks who are making this place work.

I let a good chunk of the room stir and rise before I follow suit, clinging to my exhaustion. Some people get up, pack their stuff, and go. Others have no stuff and, having slept in their day clothes, just get up and walk out. I find this pretty impressive too. Finally, I drag myself up and follow them, out the back door and onto the street, where I hear distant sirens and helicopter blades.

Friday April 14

10:30 am

Convergence center

After checking my bag and picking at the dog-eared bagels and orange slices outside, I haul my ass upstairs to the "community organizing" meeting. I hope that this will give me some insights into effectively sustaining our movements, broadening them and making them more responsive to community needs.

I do get some good, minor points of procedure from the workshop: the idea of appointing a 'vibes-watcher' and timer in addition to the usual secretary and chair, the organizer's 'rule of halves' (if you want 100 people out, get commitments from 200, and canvas at least 400), and the canny idea of avoiding phrases like "So what do we want to do about this" in favor of "If there are no objections, let's do this."

However, as this last notion reveals, the organizers hold a somewhat perfunctory and utilitarian view of what community organizing is supposed to do. For instance, a discussion on 'diversity' is framed almost exclusively in propagandistic terms - it makes initiatives more credible to have a varied membership; it helps to get your message out to new communities. I bring up what I think is an elementary point - that if 'minority' groups are represented in your membership then they will, out of self-interest, alert you and steer you away from oppressive measures, thus helping to form the group's positions - but it doesn't even get written down on the big piece of paper.

Likewise, the belated discussion on 'WHY do community organizing?' centers around its general usefulness in getting a message out to people. But what's so radical about that? Shouldn't the goal be to listen to THEIR messages - to reverse the flow of power, as they say? I find this whole thing very disappointing, and I think it stems from stale notions within the environmental movement (both facilitators were enviros) that popular opinion needs to be manipulated, rather than empowered. This is not the road to utopia, people - work on it.

Friday April 14

noon

Convergence center

Outside for lunch, Maria directs me to a remote end of the alley, beyond the puppets, where our affinity group, "1919," is having a meeting - including many new arrivals from Toronto.

For those of you who have been living in Dubuque these past months, maybe now is the time to explain the organizing principles of the Direct Action Network. The whole thing centers around three levels of organization - *clusters, affinity groups, and spokes councils*.

- A **cluster** is a group of people who are friends, basically, and their job is to stay together throughout the action, and watch out for each other. So our carload of Torontonians comprised an impromptu cluster.

- An **affinity group** is a collection of clusters, once again with some common social or ideological base - 1919 being basically Canadians - and a shared role in the action.

- **Spokes council** meetings were held nightly, and were used to determine objectives and tactics. Each affinity group sent a representative to spokes council, and their job was to represent the opinions and ideas of their group faithfully, and to make proposals and resolve differences among the groups. (This method is also used, during direct action, to make quick decisions within an affinity group, using spokespeople from each cluster.)

Of course, within the action there were people in positions of relative power, who acted as general facilitators or spiritual leaders, like Starhawk; and decisions had to be made within the parameters of non-violence that I ranted about earlier. But still, this form is basically the most impressive democratic decision-making tool I can remember stumbling into. It allows for consensus decision-making among thousands of people, and it really is effective and efficient. And yes, it 'reverses the flow of power.' Really.

The meeting itself is confusing and inconclusive, but it gives some insight into the weekend's plans. A map shows the area where the IMF/WB would be meeting; beyond that is a long line indicating the barricades. Affinity groups are planning to each claim an intersection, block it off bodily, and prevent any delegates from entering. 1919 is proposing to block intersection 'B' - which sits directly South of the meeting halls, at 18th and F Street.

Having been so disillusioned thus far, I am loathe to commit to this plan of action; I want my freedom of movement, and I don't feel committed to joining a blockade. So I shut up and listen, as the meeting drifts away in a wait-and see haze. We will meet again at four pm tomorrow.

Friday April 14

12:30 pm

The street

There are all kinds of meetings and plans happening this afternoon; but I am tired and grumpy. I decide that if I am going to be any use to anyone, I need some time off. So I start walking toward the IMC, to give it another shot.

Around the corner from convergence, I find myself striking up chance conversations with two locals. One, a woman sitting outside a boarded-up business, lures me into the classic diatribe on big business and exploited sweatshop workers, and she is responsive and supportive of my 'education' effort. Another guy walks up alongside me, and he also figures out I'm a protester. He voices his support, and adds, "Government's gotta get out of the way of business!" To which I reply, "Business gotta get out of the way of government!" To which he replies, "That too!" See, achieving consensus is easy!

Friday April 14

1 pm

Independent Media Centre

This time, on entering the room, I see that my buddy Jay is here. Once he recognizes me, which takes a minute, we have a lovely little bonding session. He takes me to the back room for a tour of the computers - and to my shock, I run smack into another one, my friend Lori from St. John's, a cohort from my arty-farty Symptom Hall days, who got down here on a grant from some local community org. We chat it up and shake our heads in disbelief.

By now I'm thinking that maybe a media role would be OK after all - at least I'm sure of my ground. I figure maybe I'll volunteer to edit some stuff, maybe audio, for the web site on the shared computers. So I approach one of the tech people and volunteer myself. Well, in between editing clips of yet another folkie, he tells me that this is not a shared computer, it's his own, but once he finishes his project he'd be happy to let me use his. In the meantime, maybe I should check with the guys in the audio room. I dutifully head over there, but the two guys in there say it's *their* computer, and anyway they're packing it up and leaving in an hour. I go back to the other guy, and he does give me a quick crash course in Final Cut Pro, while continuing to finesse his folkie with snail-like artistry.

Hmm - so where the hell are the shared computers? Don't tell me there are none. Don't tell me that the IMC is just a repository for solitary and mysterious individualists who've got theirs and to hell with the rest. Don't tell me that this place isn't revolutionary either, Jesus!

Meanwhile something else is afoot - all the equipment from the large common space is being packed up and rerouted for the side rooms. Apparently the owner of the art gallery planned an opening for tonight, and the IMC is obliged to accommodate him by tearing the whole thing down.

So now I figure it's time to go gawk at the goddamned White House.

Friday April 14

4 pm

Lincoln Monument

So I leave the IMC, and directly south there stands a statue of Samuel Gompers, a big-ass lefty from a hundred years ago. A century later, maybe they build you a statue, and ship it to the boonies - festooning it with one of your less confrontational quotations, no less.

And yes, I see the White House, for the first time since the hellish Christmas Vacation of 1984. It's not as big as I thought it would be, but it is very nice, and there's some guy in the corner of the lawn giving a press conference, and across the street some cops looked bored while a solitary religious fanatic hangs out and waves his placard. Am I one of them? Say it ain't so.

Then I walk block after block of towering old buildings, some of them not even that gripping architecturally, let alone ideologically. The effect of touring these enormous, remote slabs of power all by myself is not particularly empowering. But this is nothing compared to the main event: the Lincoln Monument.

The swarms of people climbing the ridiculous flight of stairs heighten this thing's aura of Yankee Mecca; people seem to be rubbing themselves on the marble slabs for good luck. And, up at the top, sits this big - but not *impossibly* big - Lincoln thing, a goofily suited guard at his knee, his torso bound by reconstructive scaffolding that creates an aura not of decrepitude but of care and reverence. He is flanked by big honking pillars, beyond which are two of his more familiar speeches, one of which has something vaguely to do with slavery maybe, but both seemingly of no intrinsic ideological worth... except, of course, as transmitters of patriotism, as an available excuse for long lines of foot-high stone letters.

None of which is to trivialize the power of the thing; not even the little souvenir booth in the corner could accomplish that. In fact, I realize that I, too, am rubbing myself against the walls - feeling the sharp edges of the sandblasted text, trying to get inside this thing, to comprehend it. Because at this moment I know that this, right here, is the embodiment of all we are up against. This is the temple of all power in America, a stone Rorschach, an

empty vessel that could inspire people to charge like lemmings over the cliff, only because it is so HUGE.

It is a long, long walk down the stairs, staring across this Algonquin-size park at the big war phallus on the other side, looking at the transients consummating their pilgrimage at one of several impossibly chintzy weenie huts. Five minutes' descent later, as I finally touch back down on solid ground, I stop and look ahead. Directly in front of me is a large brass band. The players are all high school students, the conductor an old guy with a beard. They are all white. They all wear football jerseys with the number "00" on them. They play their instruments with surgical, vacant precision.

The song they play is "Ain't Misbehavin'."

Friday April 14

7:30 pm

Convergence centre

Finally, after some more knocking around, I arrive back at convergence for another yummy, stewy concoction. There are only a few people left here now; they sit around and talk among themselves. On the wall inside is an announcement of an anarchists' meeting tomorrow afternoon. It's good to see that the anarchists are active and organizing alternative tactics to the main action; I think about going. But even now I doubt that I'll make it, for the simple reason that I don't know anyone else who's going that route; in the main action I may have ideological concerns, but I also have social ties, and here and now that's somehow more important to me. Still, I keep the info handy, just in case.

As I sit by the wall outside and eat, a guy emerges from our building. Addressing himself to the remaining protesters, he asks that if people don't have business here will they please leave or come inside, that the neighbours have complained. He suggests that we should go up the street to the spokes council meeting at another nearby church.

This whole thing sounds very bad. I know what 'the neighbours have complained' might lead to. So I duck inside and withdraw my backpack from the lockup, and then I head for the spokes.

Friday April 14

8:30 pm

This other church

I arrive at the church. I'm getting paranoid; walking up by myself, I was hyperconscious of my bulging backpack, and afraid of being picked off by the cops. The escalation was beginning.

As I arrive, the spokes meeting is concluding with a boisterous circle dance. I run downstairs to take a leak, and when I return new meetings have begun - some 1919 members are discussing strategy on the lawn, and a Flying Squad meeting is going on inside. I float around between these two meetings, more a spectator than a participant, but I learn interesting things about the Flying Squads, in which mobile protesters lend reinforcement to hot intersections. 1919, meanwhile, has planned a big meeting for the next afternoon.

Eventually the meetings end for the night, and the mingling begins. But I still have questions - I feel like I've missed something during the day. I want someone to update me on the current battle plan, so I approach a woman who I had seen co-facilitating the flying squad meeting. She can't help, but she suggests I talk to that woman over there - Starhawk.

When I was a lad, I met one of my sister's friends, who was a practicing witch, in the nouveau-spiritual sense - albeit with a few gothic trappings. I was fascinated, and I asked her if Wicca had any sort of a text, a Bible. She handed me a book by Starhawk and said this was the closest thing she had. And that was all I knew about Starhawk until this past December, when my email, already bulging with Seattle posts, received a missive from her, praising the protesters and documenting the repression.

So she's a bit legendary to me. I'm not a starstruck guy, and I have no time for any kind of mysticism or New Age religiosity, but I know she is Important, a figurehead for some section of this particular direct action movement, and an important organizer. And now she's standing over there, she's kind of short and heavy but with the carriage of a goddess-in-training, and I am obliged to ask her some banal questions.

But first, I see as I cross the floor, I have to get in the queue behind an earnest older fellow who has led off by praising her works and speaking his admiration, words I'm sure she's heard many times and can do without. Then, to my surprise, he continues: "I just had to speak to you, because I heard what you were saying about violence in the protests, and I think it's a mistake to create divisions in the movement like this."

So here it is, and I am walking right into it. Starhawk gives her reply: she had assured all her community and everyone she spoke to that the protests would be nonviolent. If another group of protesters want to use violent tactics, somewhere else, another time, that's fine with her. But if she were to condone violence here... "I would feel dishonest."

Buddy reiterates his concern about this, and I just have to speak up. "I agree. How can you classify swearing and property damage alongside physical violence?" Starhawk follows her line of argument, which actually makes some sense to me, that she has reached many people who might never have been awake to these issues, and they were coming and participating; but that violence would alienate them, and drive *them* from the movement.

I guess this is starting to look like a tussle, because the conversation is suddenly impinged upon by a cohort of Starhawk's. I had seen them consorting earlier, a fiftysomething blonde woman with pursed lips and the longest frowniest eyebrows I have ever seen, and I don't think they're fake. She forcefully offers her own take on the issue: she is "two generations from starvation and dirt shacks," and she feels that "I have to use my privilege for all that I can." This line of argument is not convincing to me. "People are starving right now," I tell her in reply, but I know - in spite of the life experience implicit in the tactic of going limp at the sight of a cop - it's not just a class issue. It's a *command* issue, and that is the real barrier to class solidarity. I don't quite get it out that articulately, but trust me that's what I meant. Nonetheless, the parable is lost on Frowny, who seems intent on ending the conversation as quickly as possible.

Starhawk is tired, and I didn't want to have this conversation in the first place, and the other guy just will not shut up. So I let Frowny break up the party and accompany Starhawk to the door. Being a spiritual leader is tiring, as I can imagine, seriously. And I didn't even find anything out about the weekend's plans. Sigh.

Friday April 14

10:30 pm

Outside convergence center

There's a cop car on the street. Some guys are standing around it, talking to the police, telling them to stop intimidating the protesters. Against my judgment, I get drawn into the conversation once again. The cops, who are actually not acting like jerks, tell the guys that they shouldn't think they are anything special, that there are protests in DC every week, that they aren't singling us out for special attention. And they complain about the overtime, about not being able to spend time with their families. One of the guys insists that the issues we are fighting for are worth the bother. One of the cops says he agrees. He's got family in Puerto Rico, he knows about poverty, he's seen what the IMF has done there. But he's got a job to do, etc. etc. Still, it's a bit of a breakthrough.

I don't know how much can be achieved by talking to cops. They're on one side, we're on the other; whether we change their particular minds or not is not an immediate consideration, because their minds aren't part of their job. But I feel like I have to add something. So I tell them, do what you do, but don't go apeshit with the tear gas and rubber bullets please, we don't deserve it. They all shake their heads in horror and insist that no such thing will happen.

This conversation actually goes on for the better part of half an hour. Let the record show that I did shake their hands at the end - the ones that would take it, that is.

Friday April 14

11:30 pm

Independent Media Centre

The IMC has recovered somewhat from its total dislocation earlier in the day. Monitors are back up, people are working, the room is still lively. Unfortunately, the art exhibit they had worked so hard to accommodate consists of large, full-color photographs of dead birds, mice and squirrels, laid out in brilliant settings and captured in full 'ironic' disgust. This shit is punishingly awful, and it does not help the vibe.

Meanwhile, Mr. Editor is STILL hammering away at his folkie video. Clearly, this machine would not be available for a while, and any notion I have of pitching in is dying a sad death. Nothing to do but sit and talk to Jay, which I do at satisfying length.

With the hours ticking away, and having received clearance to sleep in the rear, I lay out my rig, curl up with a couple chapters of "Final Cut" (the author attends a script reading for "Heaven's Gate"), and sleep, wonderful sleep.

SATURDAY



and beyond speaking to the issue. Of course, circumstances are a reality for other forms of resistance as well, but since they are not as immediately symbolic as this, we need to let the message be heard.

SATURDAY



Saturday April 15
Independent Media Center
9 am

I'm lying awake, but I still feel dreamy and blissed out - best sleep I had all week. And outside the door is the soothing bustle and chatter of the IMC, back in full swing for another day. It's not until I get up and emerge into the main room, though, that I am jerked to attention by the subject of the chatter: the Convergence Center has been shut down.

At the centre of the room is a pile of eight television sets, most of which are displaying coverage of the shutdown. The story: police showed up with a search warrant, and found a fire-hazard propane stove and the makings of molotov cocktails. In the face of this outrage, they evicted the protesters. And confiscated all their puppets, naturally. Although it later turns out that the propane stove was only used outside and was merely in storage, and that the 'molotov cocktail' was in fact a dish rag and a bottle of vinegar, somehow the sleuths at the local news desk swallow the police story whole.

Forgive me, but I'm going to poke some more holes in nonviolent civil disobedience, because this reminds me of another tactical problem. The idea that acts of 'passive resistance' (to borrow a phrase that Gandhi rejected) would inspire the outrage of populations rests in part on the premise that these acts will be heard about, accurately and fully, by said populations. The basic vehicle for this communication has got to be the mass media. But if the media are in fact massively devoted to rote parroting of the authoritarian line, the strategy breaks down. Not to imply absolute uniformity, but any newspaper worth its incorporation papers has a vested interest in portraying the enemies of capital as the enemies of logic and history - and capital is now the social justice movement's bottom line. And while Independent Media Centres are a partial response to this crisis of information, they haven't yet moved beyond preaching to the choir. Of course, communication is a problem for other forms of resistance as well; but since they are not as obsessively symbolic as CD tends to be, the damage is less fundamental.

I decide to call Kole's mom and give the gang the poop on convergence, plus let them know that I'm still alive. The former point they had already seen on TV; we decide to converge ourselves, and prepare for the next move. I give the IMC my regards and lug my backpack out the door.

Saturday April 15

10:30 am

The apartment

Walking into Kole's mom's place, I am warmly greeted and practically force-fed a nice big breakfast before mom runs off on an errand. At the door, she says that I am welcome to stay here for the duration of the protests. This is great - no more vagrancy!

Kole, Anthony, Maria and I spend some time shaking our heads at the cops' audacity - this morning is when people are really scheduled to start pouring into town. A makeshift meeting spot has been set up at another hall not far from convergence - we decide to get a cab and head down together. As we step out into the hall and the door closes, I realize that I'm still stupidly wearing my enormous backpack, with all my ID and many kilograms of other stuff. The next door down is the laundry room - Kole instructs me to slide my pack under the sink and grab it when we get back. I do so and we leave.

Saturday April 15

11:30 am

Convergence center # 2

When the chatty and indulgent cabbie drops us off at the hall, the streets are crawling with people, hundreds of protesters milling around in the increasingly heavy rain, spilling out into the street and blocking the intersection. A woman with a megaphone stands on the stairs and asks people to either come in or disperse, lest this convergence get shut down too; we are already on our way in the doors. Inside, a steadily growing crowd is sitting on the floor, waiting for an update. What follows is more of an orientation for newcomers, a list of workshops with directions, plus a general statement of resilience in the face of oppression; they also warn that this hall would not be at our disposal beyond this afternoon.

We take stock. Maria wants to attend the legal workshop down the street; later on, I want to check out the nonviolence workshop to nail that issue down once and for all. We wander back out into the rain.

Saturday April 15

12:30 pm

Yet another church - exterior

Earlier, at the OTHER church where legal training was going on, a wedding was in progress, and scores of us had to wait on the sidewalk for the procession to get out the door and into the cars. Everyone was civil, but I wonder what the wedding party thought when they wandered into the midst of all these soggy, hairy freaks.

Legal wasn't what Maria was hoping for - it was exactly the same as Thursday's - so we headed down to this church early, hanging out and waiting for the workshop to start. The rain is letting up now, and across the street three women with big red flags are performing excerpts from Karl Marx and prancing around. Is this some kind of satire? It's pretty entertaining, either way.

We are working on our pseudonyms - I'm Oc (that was my nickname in Grimsby). Maria is Braveheart, Anthony is Antone, Kole is still Kole because that's a nickname anyway - when Maria realizes she has all our names, addresses, and telephone numbers written on a piece of paper in her pocket. Not good. So we tear it up into a few pieces, place it in the middle of the sidewalk in front of the church, and burn it. The flame goes out before the job is done, and as we are trying to re-ignite it, I look up and see Starhawk once again - charging toward us and asking what we're doing. I explain that we're just destroying the evidence, and Starhawk says to please be on our best behaviour, because the progressives in this church had to fight hard to secure it as a meeting space.

I wonder what exactly she thinks we're doing - making a bomb? I guess you have to keep an eagle eye on such men as I - hormonally imbalanced advocates of swearing at police.

Saturday April 15

1 pm

Yet another church - interior

The nonviolence workshop is split into three large groups, we are routed to the basement. I go in hoping for wise and persuasive argument for the efficacy of nonviolence as a tactic. But the arguments tend toward the usual inclusivity and don't-replicate-the-enemy, which aren't enough for me, and a printed quote from MLK that again speaks of symbolism rather than likelihood of effective impact, and doesn't sway me from my skepticism.

After some more innocuous discussion, we get into some role-playing. Pairing off, we first simulate a blockader and a person wishing to pass, then a journalist and an activist. The goal, of course, is to project ourselves into confrontational situations and work out appropriate responses. This exercise might be useful in theory, but the leaders' directions are weak, and their timing signals are so impossible to hear over the din that the thing degenerates into laughably hopeless chaos. Another problem is that activists are not actors, and my partners have a hard time projecting themselves into the mind set of a journalist and/or scab.

The deficiencies really flare up in the next section, where some of us play a human chain, and some of us play cops. What good is it going to do any of us to act like cops? Furthermore, we are obliged to use extensive force to take apart the chain - not being trained in this stuff, I was seriously concerned about hurting them as I wrenched their arms and dragged them away. This is really stupid, especially compared to the compact and effective role-playing of the legal workshop, and by the end of this I am equating nonviolent theorists with organizational morons. This is not the convincer I wanted!

Saturday April 15

4 pm

Convergence center # 2

In a small fenced-in alcove outside the hall, I stand among hundreds of people - mostly Canadians, many familiar from Toronto - as the Section B meeting begins. The plan is put forward: we are to arrive at our position early tomorrow morning, before the beginning of the WB/IMF meetings; we are to stay in this position, and bodily prevent any vehicles from approaching the meetings. In order to assess this plan, we need to figure out how many 'arrestables' we have - people who are willing to take part in the blockades that will obstruct the vehicles. Within their clusters, everybody marks their members as 'yes' or 'no.'

Our cluster gathers, and it's time for me to decide - yes or no? For days I have been questioning this form of protest, and my concerns still haven't been answered. But now here I am, in the middle of a lively and friendly meeting, peppered with familiar faces, with a clear commitment to the action plan and a strong sense of momentum.

So there it is: this is what is happening, it is the way it is; I must choose either to join in or to stand aside. And no matter what reservations I have, I did not come all this way and go through all this shit to turn myself into a spectator. Yes, I am an arrestable.

Saturday April 15

6 pm

The streets

When the meeting let out, I walked out to the sidewalk, and under a tree I saw a blue marble bowling ball; as a memento of this occasion and this moment of commitment, I picked it up and took it with me.

Me, Kole, and Anthony started walking toward home, or so we thought; but pretty soon we realized that we were totally lost. Now, on an obscure, curving residential street, we run into a small group of folks idling on the corner. I don't know how, but somehow each group automatically intuitively that the other group are protesters. Maybe it's the same instinct that I've heard lesbians talk about in spotting their own: we know that they are with us, and they know we are with them.

Still, none of us can figure out what direction we are going, so we stand there and chat a while. As we do, I can hear the helicopters flitting overhead again, gathering whatever intelligence they are supposed to gather. Then, soon enough, a cop car buzzes by. It idles briefly up the street, clearly sizing us up, then moves on. If they mean to intimidate us, it works: we disperse.

As we hail a cab, I am forced to face a hidden issue in all this deliberating about breaking the law: I am ultra-terrified of cops. I don't know where this shit comes from, other than general childhood trauma, and/or my sheltered middle-class existence. The former leaves me trembling in impotence in the face of illegitimate authority; the latter facilitates a sense that the police are friendly and far out of sight: lost in the works of our protective machine, emerging occasionally to impress us with their theatrical feats of cunning. They are a distant dividing wall separating us good people from those bad.

Maybe, like Frowny said, my privilege should be a source of power, but if so it's not the kind of power she means. What I'm looking for is the power to scale that big blue wall, to cross over to the other side, to deny the supremacy of that division - and in the process, to disarm these rapists that would hold us down and have their way. Privilege is only converted to power when you give it up; and maybe I am beginning to understand how civil disobedience might - I said might - be a substantial stride along that upward path.

Saturday April 15

7 pm

The apartment

My backpack is gone.

Someone took my backpack.

Saturday April 15

8 pm

Indian restaurant

After finally finding a restaurant that is open and willing to serve us (lots of private parties tonight, for some reason), Kole, Anthony and I sit down for dinner. The disappearance of my backpack has fucked me right up and thrown me off, but I feel prepared to accept it - it's another step in my descent into chaos, my abandonment of comfort. Since the bag contained my wallet, my journal, my sleeping bag and all my clothes, the discomfort is certainly extensive. But maybe it will turn up - maybe the superintendent took it away. But he won't be back on duty until Monday.

As we eat our curries and discuss the action, I have to share my misgivings about the action tactics - and I find that Kole feels the same way. Kole, whose family is from Croatia, tells us how European activists are much less timid about violence: when the war in Bosnia broke out, he says, his grandmother called him with directions on how to make and throw a molotov cocktail (throw it underhand - it slides and spreads better). I emphasize my old hangups of class and solidarity. Anthony is new to these arguments, but he's attentive and receptive. All talked out, we lose ourselves in our food and the seductive Bollywood fantasies beaming from behind the counter.

SUNDAY

Saturday April 15

10 pm

The apartment

Dave has shown up with a bunch of folks from Montreal. On the tube, along with the police chief's heartwarming return of the protesters' puppets, is some very scary news - a preliminary march this evening has been busted, and 500-odd people have been indiscriminately arrested. In Central America, they call this kind of thing 'destabilization' - clearly the idea is to reduce our effective numbers, with the law as their weapon. But there's still lots of us left, and the outrage we feel about this random repression only pumps us up for our mission tomorrow - which starts in six hours.

Sunday April 16

10 am

The apartment



SUNDAY

Sunday April 15

10 am

The apartment

They have stayed in with a bunch of friends from Montreal. On the table, along



SUNDAY

Sunday April 16

4 am

The apartment

The four of us in the bedroom - two of us on the rock-hard box spring, two on the mattress - stir to Dave's murmured reveille. In the dark, almost silently, burnt out but all wide awake and alert, we dress, wash, and proceed ten-strong out the door toward the van, which is to take us to the park where Group B will meet.

Sunday April 16

7 am

18th & F

This is a wide open, bright intersection - with tall grey buildings on either north corner, a parkette south-west, and a garden and concrete concourse to the south-east. And at the North crosswalk is a long, thin barricade, standing between us and a long line of helmeted riot police. And beyond them, if you are looking for it, you can see the World Bank building sitting up a block. Someone has even arranged for an outhouse.

There are enough people here to fill the intersection fairly thoroughly; and enough arrestables to form a solid, thick line along just one crosswalk. This raises a tactical issue: which walk do we block? Calls of "SPOKES!" fill the air for the first time today as a spokes council convenes to formulate a plan. Rather than organize our line immediately in front of the barricades, we decide that it is best to move from walk to walk depending on what is coming at us. And again, our mission is that *no vehicles must cross our line*.

I report back to my cluster. Braveheart is still frightened from the arrests, and is thinking about splitting. Kole is looking the militant in his black bandanna, and Antone and I are bracing ourselves for oncoming drama as the two arrestables. The sun is getting high, and it's already so warm that I take off my flannel outer shirt and tie it around my waist.

To our east, we see Section A forming an even larger blockade at the next intersection, which makes us nervous about our own numbers. And to our west is an empty intersection - technically ours, but we simply don't have the numbers to cover it, actually the subject never comes up among the group. In the distance, we see cop cars circulating, watching, sizing us up.

We wait.

Sunday April 16

8:30 am

18th & F

We are hypersensitive to movement - every time a police or civilian vehicle drives by on the next block, the crowd turns and braces themselves until it passes out of sight. At one point a cop car approaches our line from the south, and we all scramble over and make our show of force, but it stops and turns around before it got halfway up the block. Another reconnaissance man.

Flying squads are circulating around our area of the blockade; this is good, because we were becoming even more self-conscious about our numbers as the reality of confrontation comes clearer. There are also messengers, travelling between intersections to fill us in on the broader scene - which, so far, is holding steady.

The flying squad has passed and is heading for A. We are milling, and the scattered drummers in our group are passively doing their thing. Then from the west crosswalk comes the call:

"BUS!"

Everyone turns. On the next block, flanked by cop cars and officers on foot, a charter bus is slowly turning the corner to face our direction. It is going to try to breach our barricade.

I feel like everyone around me is on fast-forward with me on slow motion, as the crowd rushes to the west and a thick line of bodies forms. I am simulating cardiac arrest as I scan the line; there are a lot of people here, and behind me the flying squad is turning around to join us. Maybe they don't need me in the front line...but no, this is why I'm here, I have to do it, and in two seconds I am locking arms and sitting crosslegged on the pavement.

The bus seems to hesitate before it lurches inexorably toward us, looking like a motherfucking Star Destroyer as it leads its convoy of enforcers toward us. It is now that I realize that I am seated on almost the Northernmost edge of the line - not only am I locked into my first act of civil disobedience, I am in the absolute bulls-eye.

I see them coming. It takes them forever. But when they are upon us, it is as if they had descended from space, as if the actors have walked off the screen. The entire line seems stunned and unsure as the lead cop, wading into the crowd, grabs the guy to my left and starts dragging him away. "Help me, people!" the guy yells as he is lifted off the ground. "I'm being arrested - pile on! Pile on!" Snapping to attention, everyone turns and puppy-piles, and soon enough he is liberated from the cop's grip.

Suddenly, I find myself lost in a sea of commotion, frantic wriggling flailing bodies trying desperately to hold their defiant torsos to the ground. Everyone is screaming, and the cops are multiplying as the bus looms a couple of feet in front of us.

Suddenly my observation is interrupted, as I am grabbed under the shoulders and dragged back by gloved hands. I am set down and the hands grab at another, and without thinking I scramble right back into position. Am I going to be arrested? Beat up? Will my glasses be smashed? It doesn't matter - now I'm in.

The bus inches forward, and I scuttle to my right, sitting myself directly in front of the grill. The bus stops inches from my face, and I sit there staring at it, looking up at the bus driver looking distraught. I spend fifteen seconds here that feel like an hour, and then I turn to look at the melee which is continuing to my left. *To my left* - I realize that I'm sitting here alone, away from any protective arms, completely vulnerable. In one frantic motion I extend my arms, rear back and fall on to the puppy pile, my legs dangling behind me.

I spend a long time clinging to this heap of bodies, immersed in the lukewarm sweat and din, one eye on the inert front wheel of this hamstrung bus. Then, to my shock and amazement, I see the wheel turn counterclockwise, and the bus move back. The chaotic shouts of the crowd turn into an immense, unified shriek as the police silently step back and the bus executes a full retreat. Rising from the ground, jumping around, hugging and slapping in unrestrained euphoria. We won.

Out of danger and composed again, I can see that the bus is completely empty. I wonder why they tried to drive it through. Was it a mindless excuse for confrontation, a simple exercise to test our resilience? It didn't matter. I

see Antone and give him a shaky, deep embrace. Maria comes over with Kole - she seems completely transformed, at ease and secure again. Our numbers seem to have doubled over the course of this maneuver. The flying info girl gives us the fist and the crowd cheers. I stagger off the street, sit down in the garden, and sob.

Sunday April 16

9:15 am

18th & F

The anarchist Black Bloc is on the move - a unified mass of black pullovers and bandannas and banners - and when they come through our intersection, fists raised in solidarity, they get an immense round of applause. Everyone seems glad to see them, and I for one am reassured by the strength that they represent. Folks may bitch about them endlessly, they may make up rules that specifically exclude them, but they sure are glad to see them coming. How ironic.

Then, just as everyone has caught their breath from the last confrontation, we are approached from the other side - a cop car moves to cross the barricades and breach our line from behind. This happens so fast that we don't have time to form a line. A few people manage to get in front of it, but this is a very different scenario from the last - the car jerks ahead threateningly, blares its siren for good measure, and the barricade cops do not waste any finesse as they rush out, whip out the pepper spray and, after a few seconds of struggle, fumigate a path for their buddies. Once the car is gone, one cop sprays a guy with a camera, just for laughs.

Spokes! What the hell was that? We need to nail this down: are we blocking people in as well as out? People are confused. The verdict: no one is going to cross our line - from ANY direction - without a fight.

And it looks like a fight is coming, when the barricades are suddenly rushed by a huge convoy of cops in full riot gear. Everyone takes a deep breath as these freaks move into formation, in a long line three deep - but all they end up doing is just stand there, waiting like us, staring us down.

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Sunday April 16

9:45 am

18th & F

In between confrontations, the mood turns festive. The drums start pounding 'er out, people start dancing and chanting, with a solid line of dancers replacing the blockade. The intersection comes alive under the dour glare of the helmetheads.

Still shaken from all the action - and feeling the bruises from my manhandling around the armpits - I take a few steps away from the crowd, and lie down in the middle of the street, grinning as the sun warms me up and absorbing the joyous noise of the crowd. I lie here for a while, dimly aware of the photographers scurrying and crouching, when a woman walks up to me and bellows, "Excuse me, but do you wanna look like a SCUMBAG?"

I open one eye and glare at this person, awaiting an explanation. Soon I clue in that she is referring to the photographers, who as it turns out are taking pictures of ME, the layabout malcontent running down this great country. "I did PR for Greenpeace," she puffs up, "So I know how the media work." I don't bother telling her about my degree in Radio and TV, or that I'm not here to project appropriate imagery, or that I generally don't give a shit. In fact, I'm still so dazzled at her audacity in labeling *moi* a scumbag, that I can only get up and limp meekly into the crowd.

Sunday April 16

10 am

18th & F

Every now and then, a car turns north on 18th and gets halfway up to us; then we all have to wave and shout "Go!" to the befuddled tourist at the wheel until he gets the point and beats it. All of these cars respect our blockade, and we applaud them appropriately for it.

The messenger comes back around to tell us that, so far, we have stopped the meetings from proceeding. Everybody cheers.

The mood is somewhat muted, though, when we see the bus rounding the parkette and stopping at 17th. The doors open, and still more riot cops trot out, spreading across the street and facing us in tight formation. Time to take our positions again.

Still not recovered from the bus confrontation, this time I just have to stand back from the front line. But there is still a good crowd, although, with the flying squad absent, not enough to occupy eighty riot cops for long. We stay in this position for many minutes, without movement. Amid the tense anticipation, one of the front-line protesters calls out: "Okay, so the cops are getting ready to move on us - but, everybody, don't be discouraged. We've done a great job today, and we're gonna win!"

This inspires a wave of cheering, but even before he has finished talking, the entire line of cops inexplicably decides to turn around, get back on the bus, and leave. Everyone is totally surprised by this - but, needless to say, very happy.

I see Pat in the parkette - his guitar hanging useless, the D and G strings busted from too much serenading. He tells a tale from the North side, where protesters stole iron rods from a construction site and constructed a gnarled barricade in the road with some newspaper boxes. Apparently the police did not like this at all.

Sunday April 16

10:20 am

18th & F

Spokes! The issue of the moment is: do we let ambulances through the line? We have been informed that we will be in big trouble if we try to block them, and there is of course the ethical question. But there are concerns about delegates sneaking through by ambulance. Ultimately, the group decides not to let them through.

When I report this to my cluster, they are a little bit bemused. What kind of tactic is that? Kole is pissed, and brings up a new issue: disinformation. Was someone trying to plant stupid ideas in our head to undermine us? Why, exactly, would they be smuggling people through in ambulances rather than, for instance, driving them in via the deserted street one block over?

Kole takes this opportunity to introduce me to our first mole of the day: some pudgy balding 30-year-old guy, hanging out in the middle of the crowd, talking to the authorities on his cel phone. He isn't even trying to look like a protester, unless the jeans are attempted camouflage. We all go over and hang around as conspicuously close to him as possible, listening in. I don't think he cares, but it's fun.

Sunday April 16

10:40 am

17th & F

Things are relatively calm, and I need a change of scenery, so I jog down the road to check out Section A. The vibe here is quite a bit different - the group is large enough that it seems less unified, especially since everyone is split up into cluster meetings. Other than this, not much is going on.

Then, turning south, I see the first 'march' of the day - a procession of labour and justice groups emerging from the enormous permitted demonstration happening in the Ellipse park. At the head of this procession are the 'illegal' puppets - celebrating their photo-op liberation in the by now sweltering sunshine. I admire the banners for a couple minutes, then hurry back.

Sunday April 16

11 am

18th & F

Now, suddenly, a car is approaching us from the east - there's no way he could have got through section A, so he must have been parked on the street, maybe working a night shift. This takes everybody by surprise; he barrels right through the diffuse crowd on that end, and noses right into the middle of the intersection. I'm standing on the west crosswalk now, as he is about to pass the rest of the way through, and I'm mad - civilian or no civilian, this is fucking rude.

So I maneuver to my left and stand in front of his bumper - all by myself, as it turns out, a lovely Tiananmen Square moment. This gives me a fine vantage point on his expression of dull contempt, and to my amazement he actually makes overtures to running me over, nudging me sharply with his front fender. It doesn't take long for people to rally around to heap scorn on this guy, and soon the cops - who you will recall have been keeping an eye on us from behind the barricades - decide to come out and play macho.

One of us tries to talk to the driver through the window, and gets nowhere; meanwhile, another kneels to take the air out of his tire. At this, a cop decides to bounce his nightstick off the guy's head with a horrifying *ping!*

The guy staggers in shock, and now the cop is the focus of attention. We allow the driver's friend - who has run out of a nearby building to his rescue - to negotiate his release, citing his union credentials, as if that validated his crossing our picket line and acting like such a prick. But we've got bigger fish to fry. There is a push to the barricades as the cop retreats, and there is much yelling. The guy just stands there and looks smug.

"You can't do shit like that!" I demand of the jerk. "He was totally unarmed, and you come up behind him and crack his head! There was no reason to do that!"

"Oh yeah?" the cop retorts. "Well, I was stopping him in the act of assaulting that man!" At which point he snorts, "What do you have to say to that, smart guy?"

What I SHOULD have said is that if it's a choice between a tire and this guy's head, I damn well know which side I'm on. But I was dumbstruck at the guy's audacity, not to mention that he lowered himself to engage with me verbally at all - even a moronic exchange like that. Soon enough this guy got in a cruiser and zipped away, no doubt re-stationed at some other corner where he wasn't indelibly tagged as asshole number one.

For the first time I get a good look at the cops behind the line - long since returned to their original, non-riot density. The majority are black, and there are a couple women, but all are well-trained to show no emotion as they stand. I look in vain for any betrayal of sympathy in their faces as I speak.

"When you go back to the station," I say to the remaining officers, "You tell him what you think about what he did. You know that what he did was wrong."

I hesitate

"I hope."

Sunday April 16

noon

18th & F

As our blockade continues, we are engaged by a messenger I haven't seen before, who runs into the crowd and loudly announces that the other intersections are dispersing, so we might consider letting ours go too and join the main rally. Spokes! No one buys it, and we are staying.

Word is also circulating that the conflict is escalating in other quarters - over in A, apparently, the cops started busting things up, and in the process bumped a guy to the ground head first, causing his head to split right open and bleed all over the place. I'm sure this was an accident on the part of the cops - the pictures would have been awful public relations if anyone had chanced to publish them. In other news, the puppets have apparently been tear gassed. Cops seem to really hate puppets, don't they. I figure this is a PR move too - the last thing they want is for an anticapitalist insurrection to look *cute*.

Meanwhile, the protesters are talking to the cops, in an apparent effort to defuse tensions before they start. "We just want to thank you for doing such a great job today, and for keeping your cool." Everyone applauds. Aw, no, don't do this, don't go there. "We know you've got a job to do. We know you don't want to be here." "We're fighting for you, too." "We love you." *Oh, no.* Kole and I exchange glances.

The next part is kind of interesting, though. "Does anyone have any water for the police?" someone suggests. "It's hot out here, and they've been working a long time." Quickly, half a dozen small water bottles emerge from the crowd and are collected. The bearer of water walks up to the barricade, looks at the nearest cop as though to say, please don't cave my head in for being here; he carefully places the water just on our side of the barricade; one falls over and rolls onto the cops' side. "We aren't here to fight you, we're fighting the World Bank," someone offers, and the gushing attempts at goodwill continue as the cops continue to stare at us stoically. Then one cop steps forward - a big guy with a big forehead, a Bob Hope nose and a fishy meanie mouth, looking uncannily like Toronto's own race-baiting queer-party-crashing asshole chief of police Fantino. As the accolades from the

crowd continue, he abruptly raises his foot and stomps the water bottle, causing it to splash all over the street. The crowd boos as he turns around and goes back to his position.

There, I see someone in a nicer looking hat whispering in his ear, and soon he is gone too, shipped away just like the baton geek. This is not much noticed, but I actually take this as a gesture of peace, a subtle acceptance of our attempt at conciliation. My doubts remain, but at least it's a scrap of humanity from the other side, which is some kind of victory, I guess.

Sunday April 16

1 pm

18th & F

At last the parade, having gone all the way around the barricaded section, is rounding the bend and coming to us. They cheer us, we cheer them - it is absolutely euphoric. Along with a fine assortment of banners, we are treated to a beautiful piece of non-tear-gassed puppetry, with a ravenous machine marked 'structural adjustment pulverizer' eating various resources and workers' rights, only to be jammed by a giant 'liberation' wrench. Hot on its heels comes another great performance - a transcendently prissy vocal group singing some sort of Renaissance ballad called "Dump the Bosses Off Your Back," which couches its propoganda in (I assume) intentionally hilarious poetics like "Wild plants of nature are left for to burn."

As the parade passes, our cluster discusses our impulse to follow it and check out the rest of the event. Yes, there is still a position to hold. But with the meetings already underway, with the rhetoric getting uncomfortably fruity and us feeling the first flush of encroaching sunstroke, we consense that moving on is a good thing. So we latch on to the parade and head for the labour rally.

Sunday April 16

1:30 pm

The Ellipse

To my astonishment and delight, our arrival in this huge, jammed-solid park coincides with the very beginning of the only thing I was interested in seeing - Michael Moore has taken the mic to issue an introduction for Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader. I have been following Nader with interest, in the hopes that he could point the way to some kind of real transformation of American electoral politics - or at least a destabilization of the two-party fiefdom that could open a window to some of the debates that actually matter. So I am on the edge of my seat when Moore's stumpage wraps up and Nader takes the podium.

And, of course, I am disappointed. After a thunderous greeting from the crowd, the guy manages to say precisely nothing that gets them so worked up again; when they do start to whoop and holler it is as though they are responding to a perceived obligation, an invisible cue card. He is simply not a charismatic speaker - these things matter, it's politics - and his ideology, which was so dead-on in the interviews I had read to that point, went vague in person, with his ultimate vision a depressingly slippery 'yes to kindness.' And his strategic use of ten dollar words like 'morbidity' and 'oligarchs' made me suspicious.

We beat it posthaste after this, crossing the park to stumble over free chili from some local activists, and expensive ice cream from the local park consignment. We found a tree to lie under and were there for half an hour, teetering on the brink of sleep. We might not have ever made it back to our comrades in section B, had it not provided such a convenient means of missing the Indigo Girls. I hate folk music.

Sunday April 6

3:15 pm

18th & F

When we return, all attention is focused toward the barricades - where a line of a dozen protesters is lying on the ground in a human chain - the head of one nestled between the legs of the next. They have announced their refusal to leave until the cops agree to do the same.

The sun is beating down, and they are all sweating and dehydrated, so there is a steady stream of hands passing spray bottles full of water, and holding cardboard for shade. They are leading a singalong of resistance songs among the crowd, which is at least as large as it was before we left.

As I peer over the shoulders in front of me at this scene, a burly guy on a bicycle sidles up behind me.

"Hey, can I spray the chicks down?"

Oh, brother. I will waste no tact on this guy. "Fuck off."

He remains belligerent. "Aww, that's not very nice."

"Yeah, well neither was that."

"You said the first mean word."

A woman next to me turns, too. "Get lost."

I decide the best strategy is to pretend the guy doesn't exist, so I turn away.

Seeing this, he tries to get my attention with a diabolical "Heh-heh-heh" - exactly like that, I swear, a mad scientist laugh.

And then he does it again. "Heh-heh-heh-heh." I refuse to indulge him.

Finally, he pumps his bike away, with a final parting shot:

"By the way, I'm a faggot too."

I have come face to face with the enemy and he is pathetic.

Having seen all we need to see of our friends lying on the ground, we walk away from the center of the action, and lounge in the garden for a while. As I sit, I see that a couple of older people have moved to the front to address the crowd. Curious, I move in. Turns out it's Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, two of Canada's upper-echelon lefties, singing their praises of our determined protests. This kicks off a bizarre and lengthy teach-in, featuring a moderate religious nut, a dodgy tunesmith with a banjo, a couple of adorable kids, and a Californian gay guy in a grass skirt who proposes that the world would be a better place if everyone took up sailing.

Throughout this, the "Thank you, Mr. Police Officer" routine remains a persistent sub-theme. At one point, one guy says, "That's bullshit - the cops are assholes!" and is roundly shushed by the crowd. Hate to admit it, but at this point I see what they mean - after a day of working out this detente, now is not the time to escalate. Needless to say, though, I see what *he* means, too.

Sunday April 16

6 pm

18th & F

By now, our intersection is packed to overflowing with people - curious onlookers drawn to the now-defunct teach-in, and wanderers from the many groups that have packed their own blockades in. In fact, a messenger arrives to inform us that we are the last blockade of the day to be holding their positions - very cool!

But the day is dragging on, and the messenger suggests that we should pack in in, feel good about the job we have done, and save some energy for more protests tomorrow. The human chain has a brief discussion and agrees. We cheer ourselves once more, and the crowd begins to diffuse. This incredible moment has passed.

My cluster gathers. Having been on the south side all day, we decide to walk around and check out what's going on to the north. I take one last long look at our battlefield, and we're off.

Sunday April 16
6:30 pm
21st & Pennsylvania

We make our way around the barricades, through the still-milling crowds of demonstrators - and also through some frat-boy looking contrarians, staging a fake sit-in with bogus slogans. Some folks are trying to engage them - not us. The cute kids from the teach-in - a black girl of about eight and her toddler brother - are hanging out on the curb with signs that say "Fuck McDonalds" and "Who wants to be a millionaire - not me, I just don't want to be BROKE."

Around the corner, at 21st & Penn, the protester presence is just as scattered, but the barricades across the wide street feature a much more intense police presence. Meredith is here, working furiously with the med unit, supernally stressed out. Not far away, select protesters are attempting to engage the police in debate. To my surprise, they actually seem to be responding, though not in any kind of favourable way. After an entire afternoon of stonewalling silence, we can't resist joining in.

The most talkative of the officers is a black woman - a sergeant actually - who is wearing her helmet on an angle. She is openly sneering at us. "You don't know what you're talking about," she says through her nose. "You're just a bunch of rich kids who don't know anything about life. Tomorrow you'll go home, and nothing will change."

"That's not true," says one guy. "We're all committed to doing this, because we believe in it."

"Well, what are you even fighting about?" she shoots back. "You don't even know what the issues are."

This makes me angry. "Well, do you want to hear it, or are you just gonna make fun of us?"

"We're fighting against multinational corporations," the guy continues. "We're fighting against these huge powerful institutions that are helping businesses to override the government."

Another guy adds, "We're fighting against sweatshops. The World Bank are helping corporations set up sweatshops in third world countries, they're making billions of dollars and the workers get nothing."

Kole steps in. "Yeah, and have you heard of structural adjustment? The IMF and the World Bank are telling African countries that if they want the money to develop, they have to cut their social spending and allow American companies to come in and do whatever they want."

She has an angry little smile on her face. "What do you know about Africa?" she says. "You've never been to Africa. All you people are just giving me the same line. You don't know what you're talking about."

I decide to give it a try. "Okay, well listen. I grew up on a farm, all right? What these guys are doing is, they're going in where people have been farming a certain way all their life, for generations, and they're patenting the seeds that they use. And they're saying, you can't use these seeds unless you buy them from us. So now these people's whole way of life is totally screwed up."

"There, you see, that I understand," she says. "That's the kind of thing that makes sense to me. You guys need to talk about stuff like that."

"But it's all the same thing," Kole responds. "It's all about money and power."

"Yeah," I say, "All these things come down to the same thing. These companies go into these places, and all they do is take their money and their resources, and people don't get anything from them."

The cop thinks for a second. "You mean like Nike?"

"Yeah! Nike is a perfect example."

"Well, I agree with that. I don't buy Nike stuff. Cause they take all that money, from our community, and they ain't giving nothing to us." She looks as though she is thinking

"That's what we're against. And I know we're privileged, a lot of this is stuff that I've never had to deal with in my life. But I'm here to say, I don't care if I've got these privileges because of where I was born or whatever, I'm going to fight for the rights of these other people. And that's important too."

"Yeah, but why do you gotta do all this? They're telling us you got molotov cocktails. What are we supposed to think if you're throwing molotov cocktails at us? And we gotta work, I've been out here sixteen hours a day all week." Her tone has changed - she's less distant now, she seems to have lost a bit of control.

I tell her this is definitely a nonviolent protest, that everyone has been going crazy over nonviolence all week. Then Kole starts telling her about how IMF policies affect Croatia, but she has retreated - she's stopped herself from engaging with the issues and focused on the 'violence' stuff. But, still, there was a gleam there - I think we got through to her, and I think it was worth doing. And I learned something about police propaganda - it's not just for us, it's for them, a reassuring excuse for their own bullshit. She was a victim of this, and I was grateful for her engagement - it was almost like she was teaching us, telling us how to make sense of these issues for the outsiders.

Meanwhile, Antone has been hanging out at the south barricade. There, he tells us, a few white male officers were openly making fun of the woman we were talking to - mocking her accent, sneering at the way she wears her hat. He actually confronted them about it - "How can you talk like that about someone you work with?" To which they responded, "Because it's true!"

And this woman was their superior. I think long and hard about how this woman got here, about why she decided to become a cop, about the barriers she had to surmount, the good intentions she must have had and the determination she would have needed. And I am saddened that, as these racist losers only helped to emphasize, she was wrong every step of the way.

Sunday April 16
7:30 pm
umpfeenth church - basement

We arrive to a spectacularly impressive scene - an enormous concrete basement room, with a raised narrow section overlooking a wider main floor, packed to overflowing with hundreds and hundreds of excited, exhausted activists. The walls are sweating like crazy, everyone is listening to the facilitator as she works her way toward the mammoth task of achieving consensus about the next day's action.

My compatriots soon realize that they are too exhausted to bear with the meeting, so they head home, leaving me to take notes and report back. I slide through the crowd on the platform, scale a railing, and lower myself into the mainspace.

It is clear that the numbers for the next day will be somewhat diminished, as people are becoming exhausted, and the labour march contingent is gone. Having got the restless crowd's fleeting attention with the effective device of "If you can hear me, clap once... if you can hear me now, clap twice...", the facilitator begins a long session of call-and-response, in order to determine the number of arrestables remaining in each affinity group. After all the tallying is done, there are still 2000 people planning to participate, and 800 arrestables.

The next issue is the nature of the action to be taken. We know that we don't have enough people to hold comprehensive blockades as we did today; this is even more clear when it is announced that the police have now expanded the barricades to enclose an additional two dozen blocks. We know the four hotels the delegates are staying at: the possibility is raised of concentrating on blocking them from leaving, but there is concern that this will be legally construed as 'kidnapping'. Another tactic discussed is focusing on the highway, creating a comprehensive traffic snarl that will entrap the delegates. There is no consensus, though.

This is fantastically hard. Everyone has been at this for fourteen hours, they have spent a day of direct action and confrontation with police, running around in the hot sun. People are paranoid - at one point someone starts a rumour that the cops are coming down the stairs. It is incredible that the

meeting is held together at all, and I have to admire the facilitator for her heroic efforts in keeping things moving. To break the stalemate, we decide to break into groups, narrow down the range of possibilities, and choose the best. The group I latch on to is low on ideas. The most compelling notion comes from a guy who suggests we simply jump the barricades and run. He says he learned this technique at the Contra-training School Of the Americas, and I don't know if he means he was a protester or a student.

The discussion that follows is long and chaotic, and tempers are short. There is considerable momentum down several dead ends, and soon the very concept of direct action is being questioned, with the feeling that we are just playing 'war games.' (This doesn't stop one fellow from yelling out his suggestion - "Throw shit at the cops! Just kidding.") The plan that is finally articulated goes like this: meet at 7 am in the park south of Constitution, and create a huge art installation expressing resistance to the IMF/WB; break at noon for lunch; then, at 1 pm, head to the prison en masse for jail solidarity.

But even once this is decided, a significant group is opposed to such a nonconfrontational approach. The facilitator can only suggest that they go into a separate room and formulate a separate action; at this point many people leave to do this. This seems to me a good time to leave, since there is at least a plan, however lame, that I can submit to my coterie; so I start making my way to the door as well.

When I am almost to the door, someone finally snaps: a bearded, burly process nerd stands up and starts screaming about how his ideas are being ignored and he's being oppressed. Then something amazing happens - in a matter of seconds, everyone else in this huge room of stressed-out people are pointing at him and going "ommmmm." He mellows out and sits down, and the discussion continues from where it left off. What a great tactic.

Outside, people are milling about, and some folks from this poor neighborhood are sitting on their steps, watching them. "They don't give a damn about us," one of them says. "Tomorrow they'll go home, and everything will be the same." And while this is harsh, I know what he means and allow him his point: they have more immediate concerns.

And as another police helicopter whirrs overhead, it occurs to me for the first time that it may be them, not us, that the cops are really watching.

Sunday April 16

10 pm

The apartment

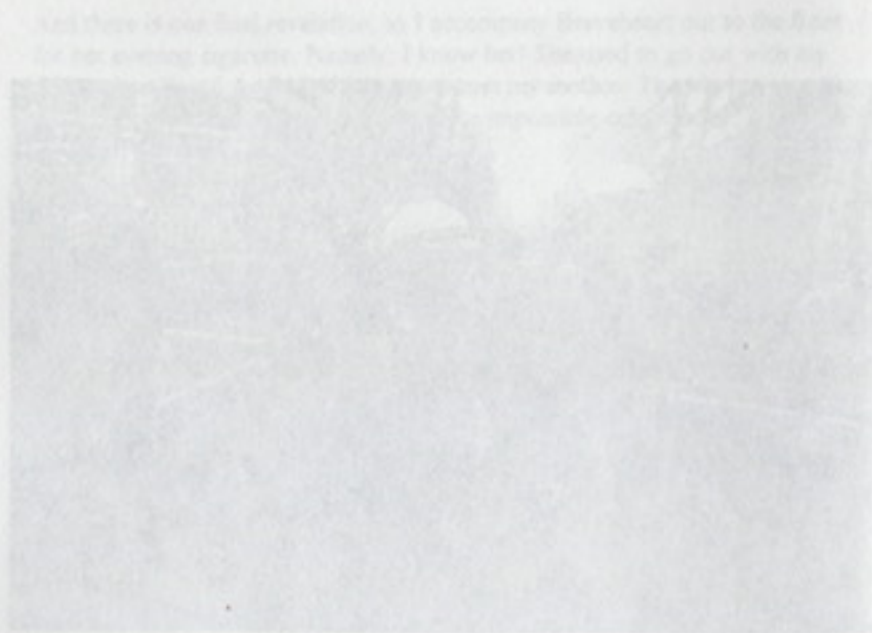
I give the room the update - there's this stuff going on, but it seems shaky, who knows. As a group, we decide not to try to get out first thing, but sleep in, then walk out and just see what's happening.

The news is on. A reporter on the scene describes it as "like something out of a third world country...intimidating, to say the least." He also notes the presence of "A group who call themselves 'The Anarchists,'" dressed in "somewhat intimidating garb." However, "The delegates on the inside of the World Bank are oblivious to all the protests."

On another channel, we see an expert commentator slamming the protesters relentlessly, and because we know better we can afford to find his pigheaded ignorance hilarious: "They were completely disorganized...all they did was stand around in a circle and talk to each other!" Kole's mom finds all this as ridiculous as we do.

Kole mentions the moles that we had run into during our day, and Jessie tells us about his encounter. He was sitting in a restaurant with one of the Black Bloc who was complaining that "The protests were a failure...they didn't go far enough." At this, a guy sitting at the next table bounded over and started in "Yeah, fuck that! The only way to protest is two or three people making all the decisions themselves!" He was about thirty-five years old, wearing a black bandanna and a tie-dyed T-shirt. Incredible how, with all their billions of dollars and counterinsurgency strategies, the cops still can not figure out how a protester dresses, acts, or thinks.

Kole's mom, meanwhile, is trying to call the superintendent, to see if he has my backpack. I had practically forgotten all about it during the day, but I am still very calm about the loss. When I thought about it my guts would churn, but I could reconcile myself to it and see past the loss. But I was not looking forward to crossing the border with no ID, so if it were to turn up after all, that was fine with me. We wouldn't know until the super got back into the office - tomorrow afternoon.



MONDAY

Monday April 17

8 am

The Apartment

I wake up and emerge to see the rest of the group watching television again: the Black Bloc has been savagely busted en route to an early morning action, about 50 of them have been arrested. We aren't out of the woods yet.

Kole's mom has made us a great breakfast of bacon and eggs and cheese and toast, and as we eat we discuss our plans. Since we are all have different plans and priorities, we decide to split up, and rendezvous back here at 4 pm. This is a dicey plan, since in the current vacuum anything could happen, but it is the best we've got.

My cluster today is down to Kole, Antone and myself. We take the elevator down to the street, and step out into the pissing rain.

Monday April 17
9:30 pm
New Hampshire & M

Having no idea what is really happening or where, we just decide to walk. By now the barricades are damn near at our front door, so we just followed the edge of it north. It takes us about three minutes to find the action.

Coincidentally, we run headlong into the boisterous march-in-progress at the very corner for which they were destined. Here there are not only a huge number of police, but also some big armoured tanks, with beefy National Guard lackeys dripping off the sides. The protest pours into this odd-angled intersection, and continues to chant and yell.

We are, coincidentally, at the very same corner where the Gap demo took place on Thursday - someone has hung a sign in the store window which reads, "Clothes made by children, for children." This is funny.

What follows is a classic 'demonstration' - an extended session of autonomous chaos. There are at least a thousand of us, and arbitrary pockets of energy and inspiration are everywhere. Someone hands me a sign, someone else hands me a puppet. The rain continues to come down. There are worries that the police will circle around and enclose us, like they did to the Saturday march; but this never happens.

After a while, a drum circle breaks out towards the back, and having no other focus, we join the large crowd dancing in its midst. While we boogie, Kole whispers to me, "That guy is *definitely* not a protester," and I look over to see this huge soccer-player-looking guy with cauliflower ears, dressed in neon orange shorts, doing the frug to the bongo beat. All three of us have a hard time not openly laughing at him.

Monday April 17
11:30 am
New Hampshire & M

The party drags on, and there is still no clear sense of direction. With people still sunburnt from yesterday, the rain is promising rampant hypothermia. Several spokes¹ ensue, in an effort to determine a strategy. Around this time, a big guy in a bandanna collars me: "Jonathan!" He pulls off his mask, and I see that it's John Johnson - one of my chip-mill fighting friends from Tennessee, and one of the stars of the video that I was scoring at the start of this whole shebang. We embrace and exalt.

Around this time, a new wrinkle is added and repeatedly utilized in the collective communication process: the use of massive "repeat after me's" to transmit info without a megaphone. Through this process, the protest finds a focus: if we will not be allowed to approach the World Bank buildings legally, then protesters will cross the barricades en masse and give themselves up for arrest.

This idea is so instantly popular that there is a rush for the barricades, resulting in major beating down and pepper spraying that I watch from halfway back in the crowd. This slows things down: hundreds of us sit down on the ground in front of the barricades, and begin to chant and sing, waiting to be arrested. Among this crowd is Antone, who hands me his backpack and says he'll find his own way home, that he wants to go to jail.

As those at the front attempt to negotiate, a woman with a bicycle and a megaphone starts blaring the Darth Vader theme into the crowd, which nobody finds more hilarious than me.

The negotiations take so long - well over an hour - that Antone has time to find the whole thing pointless and change his mind. Finally, the negotiators announce an agreement - the protesters will be allowed to cross the line, and will be arrested.

Monday April 17

1 pm

New Hampshire & M

The protesters are instructed to line up, lock arms, and proceed toward the barricades ten at a time. This is made somewhat difficult by the swarm of media that gather around, snapping and shooting all over them. After extended chaos, I help to organize a human barrier, locking arms in two long lines on either side of the hundreds of people who have chosen to cross. One photographer tries to muscle past me. I tell her that we have been asked to not let her through, and she acts all indignant and busts through the next available set of arms. Oh well, I tried.

The rain continues to come down as the first group crosses the line. Whatever misgivings I might have about this tactic - I never even consider crossing myself - I am carried away with the emotion of the moment, as wave after endless wave of people cross through the line and are led away to jail. It takes at least two hours for everyone to pass through. A journo asks me how many people are crossing, and while I have no idea, someone nearby suggests that the number is over five hundred.

Throughout it all, a guy who I think is the chief of police is at the barricades, cracking jokes and motioning people forward like he's directing traffic. He is definitely playing to the cameras, yet again, and I have little doubt who will get the sympathetic edge in the coverage - my only question is whether this act would get any mainstream coverage at all.

I see John crossing the line, yelling slogans and howling triumphantly as he goes. And not far behind him is my IMC buddy Lori - my first encounter with her in days. Just as her line is moving forward, she rushes over to me and gives me her mother's phone number. I am to tell her that she is in prison, but she is safe and happy. I hug her goodbye and she, too, tumbles into the police state's maw.

Finally, the last of the arrestees have gone. I find Antone and Kole, and as it's now past 3, we decide to head back and prepare to go.

Monday April 17

4 pm

The apartment

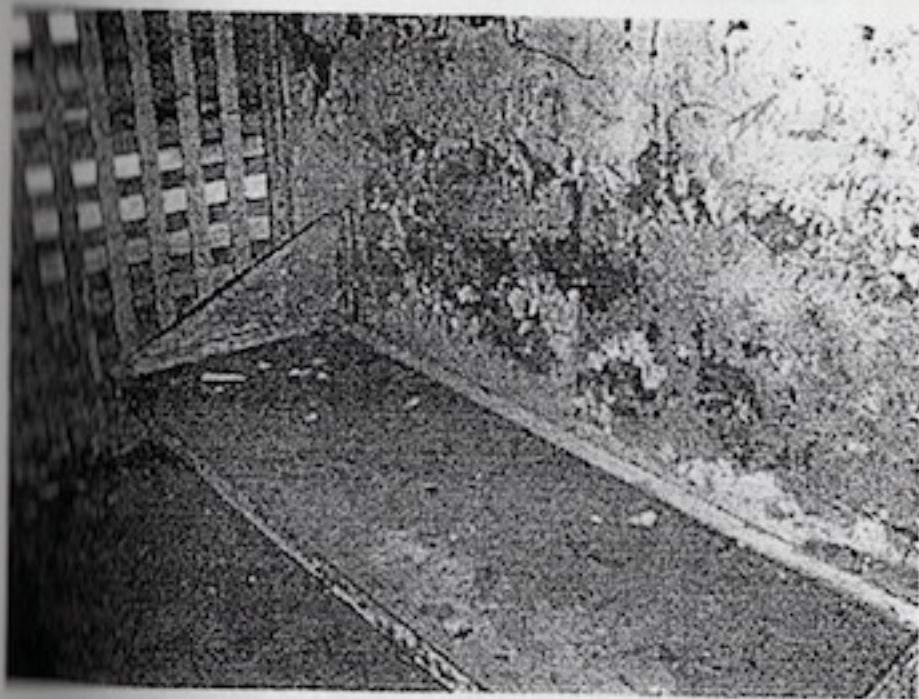
I call Lori's mother and give her the message. She seems concerned, but resigned, like she has been through this before.

I hang up, and Kole's mom struggles through the front door...and she has got my backpack! Oh, my God! She says some tenant thought it was a bomb, and made him take it down to his office. I am in heaven.

When the rest of our party arrives, I fish out my souvenir bowling ball and get everyone to sign it. One of the Montreal guys comes up with the perfect double-edged inscription - "STRIKE!"

We all hug Kole's mom goodbye, wander down to the street, and we're off - into the rainy afternoon, toward long hours on the highway, atrocious small-town pizza, an easy border crossing, and some of the most harrowingly bad driving I have ever witnessed. So long, DC.

LORI



LORI

LORI

PRISON

(At the same time as I was leaving DC, my friend Lori was en route to jail. Several weeks later, while she was visiting me in Toronto, I asked her to describe her experience.)

It was pouring down rain, people were dancing and singing in the streets... but there were a large number of people who, deciding that they would cross the police line, had sat down, linked arm in arm. And I looked down and I suddenly felt totally inspired to join them.

And so the people in the front were going first, and over time, line by line we all went forward, crossed the line and were peacefully arrested, and were handcuffed and taken to the buses. A few people were dragged, they went limp... for the most part we went along peacefully. As we went onto the bus they took our photograph, and many of us distorted our faces when we were having our picture taken so that they would have a difficult time recognizing us.

Once we got on to the bus, I remembered that I had a piece of paper from the jail solidarity course in my bag, and I was trying to remember the various demands that we were supposed to make, and the tactics for achieving them. And so like a bad movie I reached over and with my teeth unlatched my bag and started taking things out of my bag to find this piece of paper. And of course everything in my bag was soaking wet, as was everything that I was wearing, so this piece of paper was folded in four and just sort of sandwiched together. So I grabbed it with my teeth and shook my head to get it to open, and placed it by my side and started memorizing the demands and the tactics.

We were taken to the gymnasium of a police academy, where we were processed. We were lined up into 3 long rows. We were sat down with our hands still cuffed behind our backs. And we were trying to conduct some kind of consensus meeting, we were trying to determine first if we should fight to see our lawyers right then and there or wait until we got to jail. But they were using a technique that I found very fascinating... at the actual demonstration, where in order to communicate to huge numbers of people, they would scream out "Repeat after me!" and then large groups of people

would repeat whatever information that person was trying to convey, and that would ripple down toward the back of the demo. So they were doing that in the gymnasium.

As this was going on, there was suddenly a commotion from the back of the gymnasium, and someone started screaming, "they're taking her away! They're taking someone away! Don't let them take her!" - so that being one of the most important demands, that no one be separated from the group, we began screaming "Bring her back! Bring her back!" And a few of us actually got up and started jumping up and down as we were screaming. So one of the guards came up behind me and grabbed me by the arms and kicked my feet out from beneath me and slammed me down to the ground, started to walk away, and I jumped up again and started jumping up and down, he came back again, knocked me down onto the ground, and a third time I jumped up, and this time three people came up and grabbed me and picked me right up off the ground and whisked me away into a separate adjoining room, whereupon they threw me down and left me there alone. I felt like I was in detention in school or something, they had a guard outside the door... It turned out afterward that that woman was only being brought to the bathroom and someone really overreacted. So that was really unnecessary, but it was kind of funny.

I was in there for a long time, I didn't know how long, must have been at least an hour, an hour and a half... they then brought me out and into the room where they were taking our belongings, taking down our information and fingerprinting us... in the jail solidarity course they had taught us one technique for blotting out your fingerprints, and one of those techniques was to actually put vaseline in your belly button or on the side of your neck, so if at one point you are able to coat your fingers in vaseline, then it will blot the fingerprints without them noticing it. So when we were in the gymnasium, I asked to be brought to the bathroom, they had port-a-potties outside, I went out there, and I had placed vaseline in my belly button, but it was raining so hard when we were outside that there was none left. As we were being brought into the room for processing, I reached into my pockets and found some crackers, and so I started eating crackers and then picking the crackers out of my teeth, and as I was doing that trying to put a lot of saliva on my fingers! But then when he took my hand to take my fingerprints he was going, "Girl, what's all over your fingers!" Oops - busted! He wiped my fingers clean and got some good fingerprints.

One of the women behind me, I noticed she was pretty upset, she was crying, and I asked her what was wrong. One of the cops had made some comment... about the 'niggers' he had to work with, which was just pretty mind-boggling, and really upset her.

We were processed and brought into the gymnasium again, and our wrists were cuffed to our ankles. One wrist, one ankle, and set on these mats. But when we got back into the gymnasium, I looked around, and our numbers were much less than they were before. And that really freaked me out because in the jail solidarity course we had taken, the jail solidarity was based on the assumption that we were all in the same room. And suddenly I realized that we were gonna have to adapt this to a situation where we may be separated from each other in different cells. And I started to really get scared, I was a bit freaked out by that. Cause I really didn't know how we would be able to do jail solidarity if we weren't able to talk to each other. We were allowed however to make one phone call... I called the woman I was staying with in Washington to get her to call my parents and let them know that I was okay.

Then we were being taken out of the gym and taken onto buses, so we were in there with a lot of the same guys that we had been on the bus with earlier. By this point it was dark, and the guards were being kind of intimidating, at one point I remember one of the guards saying, "okay girls, there's no video cameras now to videotape us beating the crap out of you." That's a bit scary.

They took us to one jail, apparently it was full... the impression I got was that it was full of protesters. So they took us to another location, and the guards again were being very intimidating, they were warning us about the place we were being brought to: "Okay, you're going to the DC lockup now, good luck, that's no picnic," you know that sort of thing. We were a bit scared, and we just started singing, in the bus we were singing some songs they taught us in the jail solidarity course, and some others like Solidarity Forever... and "If Mahatma Gandhi can go to jail I can go to jail too," you know, and then each time we would repeat the song, everyone would pipe in someone else's name, MLK, and Emma Goldman. That was pretty fun, it felt like being in a Girl Guide camp for activists, on the bus, being taken away to God knows where...

They didn't even bring us in through the main doors, they brought us in through the parking garage, so the first thing we saw was this big open pit leading down into the jail. And you could just sense among the group, this sort of sinking feeling as we were being brought down single-file into the pits of hell. And but then someone in the lineup started singing again, and we started singing softly hoping that the guards wouldn't tell us to shut up. But the whole way we were just singing these songs, and it was a really good tactic that we used throughout the time that we were in jail, to lighten the mood, to make us feel together as a group...and the acoustics in the basement were really fantastic, we sounded really great.

So then they started bringing us in small groups of 3 to process us, and you know they frisked us again up against the wall, they took down our information, and they then took us into the cell area, and before they did that there was sort of a fridge at the end of the hall, and they offered us a baloney sandwich and some orange flavored drink which contained 0% real juice... And so they brought us in in dribs and drabs and brought us in two at a time, two people per cell.

The cells had two bunk beds, metal bunk beds with no mattress, no blankets, no pillows. There was also of course the toilet, the open toilet there in the cell, and it was really really dingy, it looked like it had been built in the thirties and hadn't been painted since. There were splatters of dark something against the ceiling, and you know it really makes your imagination go wild about what that could be.

And we were still soaking wet from the protests. And some of us were able to get these white paper kind of coveralls to put on, but even when we were able to put these on it was kind of cold. But they didn't have enough of these to go around, so some of us had to spend the night in our wet clothes.

More and more women were being brought in, there were two women who were there before us who had been brought in earlier in the day, and one of them told us of a horrible experience that she had had where these male guards were saying things like, "Oh you don't look like a real woman, are you a real woman? We'll show you what a real woman is like, we're gonna strip search you in front of 20 male police officers." And things like that. So I think that really scared her, and that didn't make us feel too secure either.

Once the cell area was full of women, we decided to conduct a consensus meeting. While we were in jail we were all using code names, aliases - many of us hadn't even seen each other's faces, all we could do was hear their voices - so we called our names out into the hallway

"My name is Mad Dog."

"I'm Red Emma."

"I'm Layla."

"I'm Hashi." Hashi means chopstick, she was my cell mate.

"I'm Peanuts."

We found a facilitator and we conducted a consensus meeting until six in the morning, and that was one thing that I was really amazed to see while I was down there, was how people would use the consensus decision making model for every stage of the process, from spokes council meetings to determining strategy for the demonstrations, to actually in the demonstrations at the various clusters at the intersections there were consensus meetings going on, to when we were in jail.

We were trying to determine whether we should kick up a fuss to get the lawyers while we were still there in the lockup. We were still pretty scared that we hadn't seen a lawyer, that was one thing that really put us on edge. So we began to chant all together, very loudly, and we picked up our footwear, we were banging them on the footwear yelling "We need our lawyers now! We need our lawyers now!" And we kept that up for an hour and a half at least, screaming at the top of our lungs and banging on the walls, and we got really funky.

We need our lawyers now - OH YEAH!

We need our lawyers now - UH HUH!

We need our lawyers now - BRING EM TO ME!

We need our lawyers now - SOCK IT TO ME!

And at one point we stopped, but the men were in the cell block downstairs, and we could hear them banging on the walls, in the same rhythm.

It didn't do any good, unfortunately, they didn't bring us our lawyer. But around 5:30 in the morning, one of the women who had been brought to the

lockup before us, her lawyer came in to see her separately, because she had different charges from the rest of us. And so she informed us that we were going to be brought to the courthouse for arraignment at 6 in the morning, and that was about all she was able to tell us. So after she left we decided, okay, well most of us likely were going to see our lawyer in 1/2 hour anyway, so we'll stick it out and try to see them then.

It's just amazing what they feed people in jail! For breakfast they gave us these really old and sugar-coated donuts and then more of this orange flavored drink which contains 0% juice. And then they started to take us away to the courthouse. But in doing so they were leaving 3 women behind, and many of us were very concerned about that. So some of us, 3 or 4 of us went limp in the hallway, and I was the first one to be dragged out. Someone was mopping the floor in the hallway, and so my clothes had just gotten dry, and this woman dragged me right through the middle of this huge puddle of water and just threw me down into the middle of it. She then picked up the mop and went after the other women, splashing them with the mop and saying, 'get up off the floor! Get up off the floor!' and then they started dragging them down the hallway. When we got to the stairs, I managed to turn myself around so that I kind of slid down the stairs on my butt, but the other two women were still clung, wrapped around each other as they were being dragged down the stairs, I was sticking my hands under their backs so they wouldn't hurt each other. We got to the bottom on the floor, one woman was really upset, she was crying, and she was really concerned about her friends. But at that point we were just outside of the hallway where the men were being detained, and they told us that they would make sure that the women were being brought out before them or with them. So we felt a little better about that - and also the women upstairs, if something really bad was happening, they could scream out and the men would hear them.

The paddy wagon was pretty scary, it wasn't like I expected, with a big sheet of polished metal down the middle, so that we were sat on benches on either side but staring straight into this sheet metal, we couldn't even see the women on the other side of the wagon. And of course there were bars on either side, and it was really dark in there.

And we were brought into the courthouse - again, through the basement - and we were brought in through the elevator. It was just a series of cages, there was a cage in the elevator, when we got out of it there was another big

cage, a man was trying to suss out whether there were any minors among us, he was really convinced that half of us were minors, but there were no minors among us.

Then we were brought into another room in smaller groups. And this woman appeared wearing plastic gloves - she came into the room, very gruffly started frisking us again, and then ordered us to line up against the wall, pull down our pants, squat and cough, and we looked at each other in terror - of course, thinking we were about to be cavity searched. And she again screamed out her orders, so we just complied, and pulled down our pants, squat and coughed. Nothing happened, so we just pulled up our pants and stood up and that was it, and we just started laughing, it was so ridiculous.

We were then taken to another detention area, and this time we were all put into the same cell, so we were able to conduct a consensus meeting a little more easily. But there were other cells around us where we could see other protesters as well, so we were trying to include them into the meeting. So again the main issue of the meeting was how to proceed without having seen our lawyers. We had a long meeting, we were being held down there for a long time, and tension was starting to rise, but we kept defusing that by stopping the meeting at various points and singing a song or omming briefly before we went on with the meeting.

At one point the women who were left behind were brought in and put into the cell opposite us, and then glove woman appeared out of nowhere again and ordered them to pull down their pants, squat and cough, and we could see the terror on their faces the poor things, and so I screamed out, "we'll do it with you in solidarity! it's not what you think!" So we all pull our pants down, squat and cough and pull them up again. And so they felt a little more at ease. That was funny.

After a long time we were brought into another holding area, another hallway with small rooms with barred doors, and we could see some of the men in the other rooms, we could see them raising their fists and shouting "solidarity sisters!" so that felt really good to see them and to see that they were okay. But when they were putting us into our room, the men in the cell next to us were screaming out, "They're going to try to scare us! They're going to really really freak you out! Don't listen to them! Don't listen to

them!" And you could hear the panic in their voices, and that of course really scared us. We were terrified!

We were kept there for a while. Some people were citing themselves out, this was a guilt free solidarity we were doing, so anyone that needed to leave for any reason were encouraged to do that without any feelings of guilt or remorse. The woman, for example, who had been intimidated by the guards earlier went, and we surely understood that, and other people for other reasons had to leave. But we were also informed that other people were being no-papered, for some reason the paperwork for their bus had been damaged or lost or something and so they were being released. So those of us that were left were starting to get concerned about the numbers of us that were still in solidarity, we had no idea how many people were still in solidarity.

At this point we were dealing with the US marshals, and they were real pricks, they were warning us that we were being brought into the DC central jail, "which is nothing like the DC lockup, people don't call you honey and sweetie like they do with the DC lockup, it's dirty and it's old, and you're going to be mixed in with the general population." They also said that because we had decided not to give our names, they had no idea when we would be released, that we would be held in jail until our court date, which could be months away.

Someone then appeared from the lawyers' guild, who we were told were in partnership with the Midnight Special Law Collective. Well, we could never be 100% sure if the people who were coming in were actually lawyers... sometimes they misrepresent themselves and give you advice, but they're really undercover cops. But she came in and made an announcement through the hallway, saying that we were being brought to the DC central jail, and that we were being mixed in with the general population, and that it could be dangerous.

We didn't know what to believe, and I for one was really starting to become terrified, and was in my mind starting to tell myself, my god, this is not some game, what the hell are you doing, this is crazy. But there was a woman with me who had done this several times before, and she really calmed me down, she told me that we were being brought to a jail, which was not like a prison, that the offenders there would not be as hardcore as they would be in a

prison, and that we would most likely be all together in a large cell. And she told me not to worry, and it really really helped me get through the next couple of hours, and to go ahead with it.

We were informed that we were being given a court-appointed lawyer, which also freaked me out a bit... we were also told that someone who had gone in before us had screamed out into the courtroom, "is there someone here from the Midnight Special Law Collective?" and that no one responded. So again, we felt really alone at that point and really scared, and not sure how to proceed.

We were brought out in smaller groups of 4 or 5 to meet our court-appointed lawyer in the hallway outside of the courtroom. We informed him that we were going to remain silent, that we weren't going to give our names. So we were brought into the courtroom, and we could see a few people in the audience giving us the fist up in the air, or the thumbs up or winking at us or that sort of thing, and that really made us feel good and secure that there were people outside who were there for us.

So that was that, we were then brought to the jail, and there was one woman left behind with two other women who were going to cite out, so we were worried about her at that time. But she informed us that she was okay, that she felt secure, so off we went. And in retrospect I really, really wish that we had stuck with her, because later on when she came, she was really upset because she had been put on a bus with a bunch of male inmates who really harassed her the whole way, making really lewd sexual remarks to her, and that really shook her up. That was really unfortunate, I wish we had stuck with her.

Anyway we were brought to the jail in a minivan, and we went to the main wicket, and I was still feeling pretty scared, it just looked like this really old, dingy building. But then we went inside, and there was a little hallway with rooms there with bars on the doors, but the doors were actually open, and we were able to mingle with the other rooms. And they had beds and cots and we were actually able to lie down and sleep if we wanted rest, but we were able to talk to each other and that was good, to not be separated.

There were other people there, who were being processed in or out of the jail who weren't a part of our group, but they were really cool, there was one woman there who was saying, girls it's really cool what you're doing, I was a real radical back in college, she was an environmentalist, and she was really encouraging, it was nice to talk to her. And inside one of the cells, someone had gone through there before us and written on the wall, "Yay sisters! We're all in here together, over 600 in solidarity! Be strong!"

And also the woman who was processing us was very nice to us. At one point I looked down the hallway - there was a television, and there was a news item about a protest at a Coca-Cola plant against racism. And three of us, myself and my friend, and the woman who was processing us, a black woman, all three of us were saying right on, that's great. Which then led to a wonderful conversation, the woman was telling us about this program she had seen a couple of nights earlier about sweatshops and how horrified she was that this type of thing was allowed to go on, and we were able to talk a little bit about sweatshops, and that that was a large reason why a lot of us were there at that protest.

They gave us some clean clothes, the traditional prison garb, and the mechanics' coveralls in fashionable blue and orange, and they gave us some food. And one of the women who was there to give us our clothes and stuff, she was really nice as well. She was telling us that the meat that they were giving us was actually not really meat but soy, so I gobbled it up whether it was or not. Mashed potatoes, and these meat patties and creamed corn or whatever, but you know we hadn't eaten in a long time so it tasted really good to me. A lot of people wouldn't eat it though.

We were brought through another area, we had our photos taken. We were given an interview with the psychiatrist, who asked us if we had any thoughts of depression or suicide, I guess they don't want people hanging themselves while they're in their jail. But while we were in the medical area, we were sitting in the hallway, and some of the workers there were informing us that there was a huge crowd of people outside the jail who were protesting, who were in solidarity with us. So again that felt really wonderful to know that there were people outside for us...

We were brought into the cell block, and we were put into jail cells with other women, and we were given a pillow and a blanket and a sheet, and we actually had mattresses and clean clothes, we were fed, and I felt like I was in the Hilton, because I think I had maybe 2 hours sleep in the previous couple of days...it felt wonderful to be able to crash finally.

We ended up spending five days in jail. There were about 80-100 of us in the cell block I guess, and a lot of our time was actually spent in the cells, but when we were allowed out of the cells we were allowed to have meetings together in this sort of central meeting area where they had picnic tables. Basically we conducted meetings to determine the priority of our demands and the tactics for meeting those demands.

One of the most important demands was that everyone receive the same treatment and that everyone receive the very same charge. There are three levels of charges, there's infractions, there's misdemeanors and then there's felonies. Most of us had been charged with either incommuting, which is parading without a permit, or crossing a police line, and both of those are misdemeanors, they're not terribly serious charges. But for internationals, misdemeanors can be very serious: two misdemeanors can equal a felony and then you would not be allowed back into the United States. So we needed to make sure that everyone was treated the same, that internationals not be singled out, another of our demands was that we maintain anonymity, and that we never had to come back for another court date, that there were no fines, no restitution, and no probation.

We were dealing with two levels of authority, some of us were arrested on state property while others of us were arrested on federal property. So there were a handful of us who had to deal with the federal authorities, and they were being stickier about our demands, they didn't want to concede on the anonymity issue, and they didn't want to reduce the charges to infractions either. However, our lawyers assured us that they felt that their charges could be easily defensible in court because most of them were bogus charges. In Washington going limp or resisting arrest can be construed as assaulting a police officer, but there were a lot of videotapes of what had been going on, so they thought they could defend those people.

While we were in jail, we were usually woken up at 4am with a woman screaming, "Chow time, ladies! Chow time!" so we'd go down and get our trays and breakfast, some sloppy oatmeal or cream of wheat and a piece of fruit, and more of this 0% real juice. A lot of the women weren't eating at all while we were in there. I did, I'm a vegetarian but I ate meat the whole time I was there.

I guess it was our 2nd or 3rd day while we were in there, some of us were called down to meet our lawyers, which confused us, because we had been meeting our lawyers while we were in jail. So we were informed that it was our court-appointed lawyers that we would be seeing - which again confused us because we hadn't seen them since the arraignment process. We couldn't understand why we had to do anything with the court-appointed lawyers, since we were working with the Midnight Special Law Collective. So we went along, down past this room like you see on TV with the people talking to their mothers on the telephone on the other side of this thick glass. And then we were brought into this other office area where we met our court-appointed lawyer. He told us that the judge had ordered him to proceed with a bond review on the next day. So he needed to get our information that night... A bond review is a process where they reconsider the bond, an amount that a person is supposed to pay to assure that you come back later for another court date.

So, first of all we informed him that we weren't coming back, ever, for any court date, and then that we weren't going to give him any information, that we weren't going to give him our names or addresses or any of that information. Which confused him and baffled him, he didn't know how to proceed then, he was sort of "Oh, okay, hmm." But then I raised the issue that he was continuing to represent us on any level. I asked him, have you communicated with our other lawyers, and why are there still these two legal processes going on independent of each other?

The next morning one of our spokespeople had been talking to the lawyer, and they informed us that yes, they were trying to put us through a bond review hearing, and that we should resist going to the hearing and just to practice noncompliance techniques in the court hearing itself, ie remaining silent, and also telling the court-appointed lawyer that he did not represent us, and that if he continued to represent us then we would sue him for misrepresentation.

Later on in the day some of the guards came to get us again, and told us that they were being brought to the medic, because some of us were lactose-intolerant. That was what they told us. So I ran down the hall and two of the women had already been taken outside of the cell block, they were behind the door, outside. There was this glass window that I was able to knock on and ask them what was happening, and they called up that they were being brought to court. So I screamed down the hallway, "They're being taken to court!" Some of the women hadn't been taken yet... and this one woman in particular whose code name is Defender, she was standing there in the hallway, and they were preparing to take her. So she just stood there, thought about it for a minute, and then said, "Okay - STRIP!" - they can't take you out of the jail when you're naked! So she stripped off her coveralls, lay down on the ground and grabbed onto the leg of the table. And this freaked out the guards entirely, they didn't know how to deal with this at all. They managed to get her out and forcibly dress her. Two other women down the hallway had also taken off their clothes... but once they got to court they did what the lawyers had said, they fired their court-appointed lawyer, they brought them back to the jail later on and we were still in solidarity.

We were kept in there longer than we expected. On the Friday night it was good Friday, some of the women in there with us were Jewish and they wanted to have a seder ceremony. And we had this wonderful seder ceremony in jail with someone from the Jewish community and the text of the ceremony had been really adapted to include themes of social justice and activism and it was so wonderful and so inspiring, I'll never forget that, it was really nice.

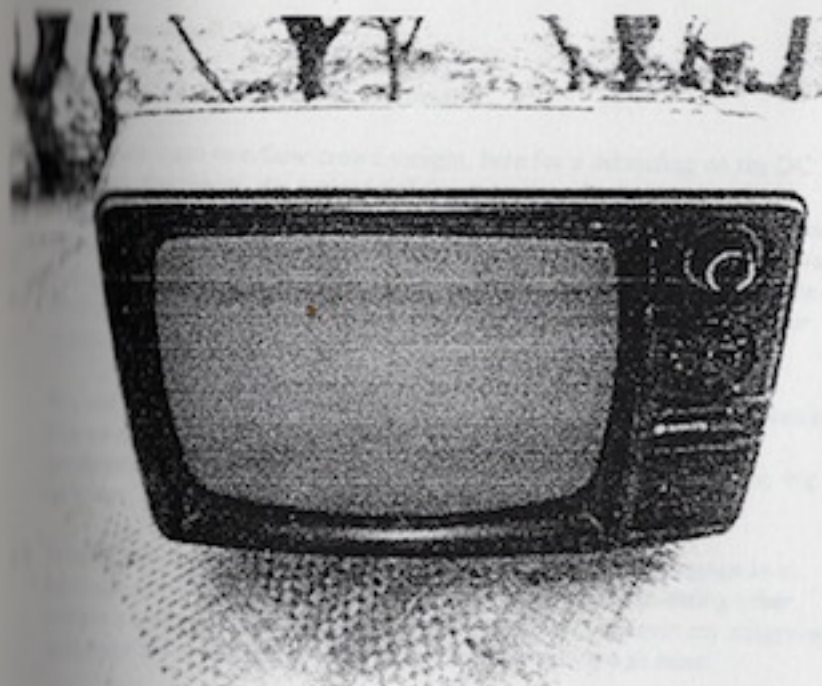
The negotiations were going really really well but they weren't conceding on the anonymity thing. On the Thursday we weren't allowed to see our lawyers because of the previous day's strip-down, and that combined with the fact that there were protests outside the jail freaked the guards out, and apparently the whole jail were being denied privileges, they locked down the whole jail. What they did then was to sort of intimidate us they brought two of the inmates from another cell up to serve us our breakfast one day. And they were really angry at us for having caused them to lose their privileges. And I guess this was a tactic to calm us down, you know. But we were able to talk to those women and engage in a discussion with them.

Thursday was my birthday, I spent my 33rd birthday in jail. But of course we were all anonymous, so some of the women who I'd been arrested with knew it was my birthday, so they made this announcement when we were out in the meeting area that it was Jane Doe's birthday. The whole group sang Happy Birthday to Jane Doe.

On Friday we met with our lawyers again, they came in and finally told us that we were going to be released that night. They weren't conceding on the anonymity thing, but they didn't require us to give our identification when we were being released, so many of us gave fake names. But most of our other demands had been adhered to. We had all been charged with an infraction, which is of the same severity as a parking ticket, it was a jaywalking charge with a \$5 fine, but the lawyers had agreed to pay that charge for us.

It was great, we got our clothes, got our belongings back, although four of us didn't get our money back that they had taken away from us... we were waiting a long long time in the hallway downstairs while we were being released, and they weren't adhering to the order of release, so that scared us because many of the vulnerable people weren't being released until the very end. But in the end we did all get out, except for one person - my cellmate when we were in the lockup. Apparently they had lost her paperwork somehow. So one of us had to stay back for that night, but the lawyers managed to meet with us and informed us that she was feeling safe and that it wasn't a severe thing, so she was released the next day.

When we came out of jail, there was a huge encampment outside the jail, and people were there with guitars and video cameras, and they had welcome signs chalked out on the ground and things like that. And they had hot food, really good food, and blankets, and they had forms for us to fill out, in case of any police brutality. It was just a really warm feeling to come out and meet up with those people. So we spent most of the night there, we were there until well after dawn, and then many of us then met up with our friends and went on home.



EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE.

Thursday April 20

• **para**

Student Centre, University of Toronto

There is a huge overflow crowd tonight, here for a debriefing on the DC protests, the issues, the actions and the outcomes. In the middle of this event, my friend David James Fernandes arrives with a videotape from the protests - I didn't even realize he was there. The lights go out, and we watch a single sequence of confrontation from the Sunday protests - a blockade is challenged by a bus, and the protesters defy the police and maintain their position until it turns around.

It's not until the tape is almost over that I figure out that what I am watching is a scene from my intersection, and that I am in the middle of the confrontation on the screen - this is the bus that I helped to block, my big moment.

When I left for Washington, I was determined that I would engage as a participant and not an observer. Now, after years of documenting other people's action, the camera was pointed at me, and whatever my misgivings, whatever the action did or did not achieve, the action was mine.

Mission accomplished