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UNCONVENTIONAL

AS COPS SWAT PROTESTERS AT REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

As we predicted (in SchNEWS 644), last weeks protests in Denver outside the Democrat convention were nothing compared to the scenes out on the streets of St Pauls, Minnesota, during this week's Republican National Convention (RNC). It seems that the thought of another Republican president is just too much to bear, and the Midwest city saw one of the biggest mass demonstrations in the States since the height of anti-war fervour in 2003.

While the world's media have been fixated on the suitability of Sarah Palin for McCain's running mate, battles have been raging outside the RNC. The party of war criminals have had to hold their convention protected by unprecedented levels of security.

Our eyewitness claims that what was different about this policing was the sheer scale of the repression, surveillance and infiltration in the weeks leading up to and during the convention. The \$50 million campaign saw 35,000 law enforcement officers out on the streets - and this doesn't include the National Guard or FBI agents. Independent media and journalists were also targeted.

Last Friday, before the convention started (Sept 1st-4th), armed riot police raided targets including the Convergence Center of the RNC Welcoming Committee in central St Paul, the meeting place and hub of the protests. Occupants were ordered to lie on the ground while laptops were taken and anything which could be used to demonstrate, including banners and several buckets, was confiscated.

Twelve were arrested and eight, alleged leaders, are under the ominous charge of 'Conspiracy To Riot In Furtherance Of Terrorism' - which carries a maximum seven and a half year sentence. The search warrant for this raid was supported by affidavits from police informants who had infiltrated the RNCWC, and alleged that the group intended to kidnap delegates, use explosives, and sabotage airports in St Pauls. This was all cheap talk in the pub evidently, as there is nothing to corroborate these allegations.

Other places raided over the weekend included Eyewitness Video - a group who film and monitor civil liberties. By Wednesday, after a second raid, their landlord kicked them out.

The FBI also raided a house in Minneapolis housing the free food people, Food Not Bombs, with four arrested on 'probable cause' for conspiracy to riot. The warrant claimed they were looking for improvised incendiary devices, and seized what they took to be a bucket what they call 'weaponised urine' - actually just grey water being saved to use in the toilet.

And all this before the protests had even begun.

The convention - and protests - started

on Monday with a large 'permitted' march. Some 25,000 were out in force, but so were the heavily tooled up SWAT police. Affinity groups organised to take different sectors of the city, but many were stopped from reaching their meeting points, and were detained with ID taken. The intention was to block the road to the RNC's venue, The Xcel Center (DSEi memories anyone?), and apparently the police helped by blocking the road themselves.

Around a thousand-strong 'Anti-Capitalist Bloc' peeled off the march to take direct action - initiating some argybargy and window smashing... and were met with riot police, gas canisters and concussion grenades.

After day one, over 300 protesters were in the county jail. Reports from those who got out tell of extreme abuse within the cells, with many held beyond the time limit before they must be charged or released. A protest and vigil has been maintained since outside the jail, despite a belligerent police and National Guard presence.

In a move that should've generated more media attention than it did, journalist Amy Goodman, anchorwoman of the DemocracyNow.org internet/radio/tv programme, was arrested on Monday along with her producers - who despite carrying press badges were held on riot charges.

The next day, Tuesday, in the teeth of amassed police, was the Poor Peoples' March For Our Lives - of around 15,000 - for the homeless, veterans, immigrants. The police demanded the march end by 7pm, and when it didn't, waded in with batons, horses and motorbikes ramming the crowd, as well as firing tear gas, pepper spray and flash bombs. Snatch squads grabbed individuals, beating and tasing them. A city centre concert was pulled.

On Wednesday, protest continued, and further raids took place. Our reporter claims it was impossible to walk around with any sort of camera, given the tight control over media images of the protests. That night Rage Against The Machine performed an explosive gig - following on from their performance at Democrat convention protests in Denver the week before - with the audience surrounded by riot police. After their show over 100 were arrested.

Inside the Xcel Center, Thursday (4th) was the big day that John McCain gave his acceptance speech. Outside, the ruck continued, featuring a host of themed protests including a school kids 'Walk Out Of Class' rally. As the empty applause rattling around the Xcel Center died down, conservatives all around



We Come in Peace

McCAIN: CHIP OFF OLD BLOCK?

In the big race for White House, the Democrats supports more troops (and more killing) in Afghanistan, and more drilling for Big Oil, with man-of-change Obama choosing the old Bill Clinton team of advisers for foreign policy and economic issues.

But if you really want apocalyptic change, then Republican Senator John McCain is yer man. Now in his 70s, he earned his war hero credentials by bombing Vietnamese villages from 30,000 feet before crashing and spending the next six years as a prisoner of the Vietnamese.

Touting himself as a foreign policy specialist, he rivals Bush for ignorance. Back in July he talked about the hard struggle the US faced on the 'Iraq-Pakistan border'. Um, just one problem John - Iraq and Pakistan don't have a border - there's this country in between called Iran. An honest mistake maybe, or did he let something slip? After all, his advisers are the same psychotic neo-cons that only a few years back were talking of 'redrawing the map' of the Middle East. Solid men like Randy Scheunemann, who has resurfaced as McCain's chief foreign policy advisor. He's a member of the Neo-con cabal 'Project For a New American Century' (SchNEWS 387) as well as the ultra hawkish Committee For The Liberation of Iraq (the group that supplied most of the lies / propaganda in favour of the invasion in the first place).

And if McCain is not enough to win the Bush fanclub vote, he's gone Dubya or nothing with his choice of running mate Sarah Palin, Alaska's environmental Antichrist. Her hobbies include killing bears and other endangered species, and promotes the no holds barred drilling of Alaska for oil. She's loved by the US far-right for her Christian fundamentalist beliefs - hardline anti-abortion even in cases of rape and incest, or her own 17-year-old daughter's pregnancy for that matter. She's up for Vice despite corruption allegations flying about and the U-turn to Washington from her previous role in the Alaskan Independence Party in the early 90s. Maybe Team Obama is looking like the least rotten of two bad apples after all...

the country should have been comforted that the number of non-believers arrested outside during the week numbered over 400.

This year was the 40th anniversary of the 1968 Democrat convention, which shared parallels with the 2008 Republican convention: a mass demonstration against a party convention - riding on a wave of anti-war ferment - which was met with unprecedented repression by a brutal, paranoiac and deeply unpopular US state. Only this year had added kevlar body armour.

See also <http://twincities.indymedia.org>
* www.protestrnc2008.org *



There'll be teargas before bedtime...

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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SOLITAIRE CONFINEMENT

More from the ongoing David vs Goliath battle in Ireland between protesters in Rosport, County Mayo, and would-be gas pipeline layers, Shell.

When we last left the story (SchNEWS 643), locals and activists from the recently re-established solidarity camp, armed with nothing more than canoes and inflatable boats (albeit some of them novelty ones), were trying to block the giant pipe-laying ship Shell have hired, the *Solitaire*, from completing its work in the short window available in the ship's busy schedule. If work could be obstructed or delayed long enough, the *Solitaire* would have to move on to complete other contracts and Shell would be left playing solitaire until next year at the earliest – the onshore pipeline is a bit pointless without the offshore bit to connect it to.

A week of action in Broadhaven Bay (nominally a site of special conservation), saw scenes of mayhem as a ramshackle flotilla of protesting pirates moved in to take on the huge dredging cranes brought in to rip up the sea bed in preparation for the pipe laying.

Despite the life-threatening abandon with which work was attempted, with Gardai and Shell security happy to stand by and watch the cranes attempt to dump tons of rubble on to protesters heads (happy that is until moving in to make

arrests) – the protestors sheer persistence has effectively seen dredging work halted.

This has meant that the *Solitaire* has been unable to dock in the bay yet, over a week after a Marine & Public Information Notice had announced it would, and has had to remain holed up in Donegal Bay, some 5 hours away.

This can't have gone down well with Shell management because the Shell security forces, or rather the Irish national Gardai police, have called in the Navy to assist. This is the first time the Navy has ever been used in an operation against civilian protests. It must leave ordinary people scratching their heads as to why a 39-man gun ship is needed to police a few people in inflatable boats, but the window of opportunity to complete the work is closing rapidly as autumn draws closer. Shell know it and the protesters know it and Shell know the protesters know it, so they're getting desperate.

But Shell faces more than just the Rosport protesters and the project is also being delayed by a combination of the resistance of several fishermen, bad weather and the company's own incompetence.

Fishermen Pat O'Donnell and his sons own over 800 crab pots located where Shell intend the *Solitaire* to lay the Corrib pipe. Shell stated last

FRANKFURTFIVE ACTION

No wonder Heathrow, Europe's busiest airport, is so keen to expand – it doesn't want to lose it's number one status to second place Frankfurt International - which has begun its own epic expansion programme.

Fraport, who run the airport, are busy with plans to add a whole new runway, a third passenger terminal (not to mention doubling the retail space at the other two terminals), a new maintenance hangar and upgrade to high-speed rail facilities.

Before even beginning to calculate emissions damage from use of the new runway, the balance sheet will be in serious loss as the plans require the small matter of chopping down 100,000 trees, clearing a town-sized 300 hectare area of the nearby Kelsterbach Forest.

But, putting Climate Camp actions here in the shade, activists established an occupation camp in the woods at the end of May and have been there ever since - despite an aide of local Mayor Ockel visiting the site and announcing that the occupation would be tolerated no later than June 1st.

While there has been airport infiltrations and banner drops, this week the camp stepped up a gear and metamorphosed into an action camp. Over a thousand people assembled and headed for Frankfurt on Saturday, holding a human rights orientated

rally and a demo outside the Italian embassy against police brutality in the G8 in Genoa.

Others attempted a raid on the terminals but were excluded by a show of force from the cops and a strict ticket inspection regime.

The camp are busy planning new tactics to pull off more successful actions during the remainder of the week, with the focus being on Saturday.

If you fancy going Deutsch for a visit to the camp see www.earthfirst.org.uk/actionreports/node/21343 for directions and details

* Pics of treetop living, and lots of german text at www.waldbesetzung.blogspot.de

** History corner: This isn't the first time Fraport have faced off against tree camp protesters – in the early 1980s thousands of people occupied the Flörsheim Forest to block the building of the Startbahn West runway. A tree city sprang up and lasted over two years before it could finally be cleared. Huge protests of up to 10,000 clashed with police, who hit back using WWII vintage backpack liquid-firing 'Converted Flamethrower 40' weapons, rubber bullets and the usual 'arresting' demo control techniques. The woods finally bit the dust in 1984 and Fraport could start ramping up the aviation use to the point where it is today. But there's no point in pining over it...

NINE LIVES

The remaining nine Austrian Animal Rights prisoners are now out on bail (See SchNEWS 644), after spending three months in jail after being arrested under Austrian anti-terrorism and mafia laws, for "Forming a Criminal Organisation". The London demo planned for September 5th is cancelled. For more on the Austrian crackdown see www.vgt.at or www.austriasolidarity.com

INDECENT DISCLOSURE

A glimmer of justice for Binyam Mohamed, a British resident still in Guantanamo (See SchNEWS 638). Last week a British High Court Judge ruled that the UK Govt must hand over evidence they were with-holding regarding his rendition and torture, which could be decisive as he is being put through a kangaroo court US military tribunal, facing a possible death sentence. See www.reprive.org.uk

YANC THE LEEDS

YANC (Yorkshire Against New Coal) has a launch event at the Portland Gate entrance to Leeds Civic Hall, next Wednesday (10th) from 11am-1.30pm. The launch coincides with the last full Leeds City Council meeting before its decision is due on a new open cast coal mine adjacent to the Fairburn Ings RSPB bird sanctuary. See more see www.yanc.org.uk

PARK(ING) LIFE

In 2005, artists in San Francisco reclaimed an ordinary car parking space and turned it into a miniature park for the day. Since then a growing movement has adopted a Park(ing) Day where cities around the world appropriate parking spaces for public use. This year it's on 19th September. In Leeds meet outside Leeds City Museum, Cookridge Street at 3.30pm. To start park(ing) in your town see www.parkingday.org for inspiration...

week that it would move the gear temporarily to a "safer location" if the O'Donnells and several other fishermen did not move the gear themselves. However, the O'Donnells maintain that their fishing license takes precedence over the rights of Shell contracted sub-sea vessels. Unsurprisingly their right to continue work has not been supported by the state and the men have been forced to maintain a near permanent vigil over their fishing gear to prevent Shell from moving it.

Heavy rain and winds are also slowing work and gales are forecast for the weekend. Plus, word on the street is that Shell recently discovered that they bought the wrong type of heavy-duty cable (necessary to pull the pipe several kilometres through the sea) and work cannot continue until the right cable has been sourced.

Meanwhile, the motley crew of international activists resident at the solidarity camp is growing daily, prompting the local Gardai to enlist the help of Interpol in identifying them. Actions are ongoing: stopping work in Shell's compound, community pickets at the gate to prevent workers entering and kayak visits out to the Navy in attempts to ascertain why they are present in the bay. In a PR disaster for the armed forces, when activists approached the gunship on Wednesday it fired its engines, weighed anchor and sped away. The following days headlines named the Navy vessel the "Shell patrol ship" and a slightly embarrassed navy official was forced to state (despite video evidence) that the gunship 'did not flee protesters'.

It is still uncertain when the *Solitaire* will arrive so people are needed for at least the next few weeks. Get to the camp - spirits are high and you're guaranteed an action-tastic time on land or sea!

* See www.corribsos.com

PARTY & PROTEST

For listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

...and finally...

Times are tough in UK churches. Religion ain't what it used to be, so with dwindling numbers and dwindling interest in anything other than watching them tear themselves apart over admitting women and homosexuals to the clergy, The Church of England has come up with solution. In a decision that must have been made after an all-night bender on the communion wine, Birmingham Cathedral has appointed a director of 'hospitality and welcome' to oversee the opening of a string of city-centre wine bars.

Their (double) vision is to reach the godless where they let their guard down – on the piss - and then bamboozle them with their cunning holy branding.

The God almighty tippie houses will be church-themed with stained glass windows, religious pictures, and decorated in drinker-friendly 'episcopal' purple.

Loyalty cards are also planned to encourage repeat drinking and perhaps at happy hour they'll offer two souls saved for the price of one. Maybe they'll have pews to enable punters to give sanctimonious praise for their pints before, presumably, seeing the light and joining the congregation down the road for a crusade of holy abstinence.

SchNEWS awaits the second coming when Jesus returns to turn the Church's water into wine and make them the next Wetherspoons, and wonders if they'll follow the time honoured Papal tradition of running gambling dens, brothels and government and an army... Jesus would be spinning in his grave (if he hadn't ascended to Heaven).

Disclaimer

SchNEWS asks all readers - been crap arrested lately? At least let our readers get a laugh out of it - Honest!

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