

Let It Begin: Activism In Brief

Coordinated by Luke Hauser

The weeks prior to publication of RQ#100 saw a wave of protest and civil disobedience at several University of California campuses.

The protests addressed huge tuition increases imposed by desperate state officials, faced with billion-dollar deficits in the wake of the economic downturn.

Apparently the UC Regents didn't get the memo telling them that the recession is officially over.

More than a dozen students were arrested at the UCLA campus to protesting the Regents' decision to impose a 32% tuition hike.

Protesters shut down the Regents' meeting at one point, with some throwing food and vinegar-soaked bandanas. Riot police were required for the meeting to proceed, and at least 14 people were arrested.

With the new increase, UC tuition — virtually free when many of the Regents themselves were students — is now over \$10,000 per year.

Average annual parental income at leading campuses long ago exceeded \$100,000, and the latest tuition increases are another step toward making the "public university system" accessible only to the financial elite.

Meanwhile, at the UC flagship campus in Berkeley, police arrested about 40 protesters occupying Wheeler Hall on the third day of protests and strikes over labor disputes and the tuition hikes.

As the word of the arrests spread through an estimated crowd of 2000 people, some heeded orders to sit down and others clashed with police at barricades.

RNC 8 NEED SUPPORT

Eight protest organizers from the 2008 Republican National Convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul are being singled out for post-action prosecution.

The RNC 8 have been targeted for their political beliefs and for organizing

direct action at the Convention in what appears to be the first use of Minnesota's version of the Patriot Act.

The eight are currently charged with Conspiracy to Commit Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism, a felony that carries the possibility of several years in prison.

A little background: the RNC Welcoming Committee was formed in late 2006 to serve as an anarchist/anti-authoritarian organizing body, creating an informational and logistical framework for radical resistance to the RNC.

The group spent more than a year and a half doing outreach, facilitating meetings throughout the country, and networking folks of all political persuasions who shared a common interest in voicing dissent in the streets of St. Paul while the GOP's machine chugged away inside the convention.

The RNC 8's arrests in late August were preemptive, targeting known organizers in an attempt to derail anti-RNC protests before the convention had even begun.

For more information on the case and how to support or donate, visit www.RNC8.org

BRITISH POLICE FIGHT DIRTY

Borrowing a page from the CIA torture handbook, British police facing protesters at a Climate Camp in August outside the Kingsnorth Power Station barraged activists with sleep-depriving music.

Even more sinister was one of the songs the police chose: "I Fought the Law (and the Law Won)" by the Clash, which counts either as a great sense of humor or a horrid abuse of all that is good and decent in our culture.

More predictably, the playlist also included Richard Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" and sit-com themes.

In another gesture of respect for civil liberties, police flew helicopters over a family picnic at the camp with loudspeakers blaring, "Disperse now, or



dogs, horses, and long-handed batons will be deployed."

Camp participants were subjected to repeated searches. Confiscated items included a clown outfit, cycle helmets, tent pegs, and board games.

Finally, police seized the camp's supply of soap "because protesters might use it to make themselves slippery and evade the grip of police."

Wow, what a great idea! Wish we'd thought of it.

SACRED WALK FOR PEACE 2010

Nevada Desert Experience is sponsoring a Sacred Peace Walk from March 29 to April 5, 2010.

Organizers note that the dates include Hanuman Jayanti (Hindu), Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter (Christian), Passover (Jewish), and Theravadin New Year (Buddhist).

(Not to mention All Fools' Day, RQ's favorite holiday.)

The Peace Walk is a walking meditation and prayer-action against the development and testing of weapons of mass destruction at the Nevada Test Site and Creech Air Force Base.

For more information, visit www.nevadadesertexperience.org

LET IT BEGIN WITH YOU!

RQ welcomes news tips and short articles for our Let It Begin pages, as well as photos and full-length feature articles on grassroots activism. Send items to quarterly@reclaiming.org

Thanks to Paul Lewis, the UK Guardian, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Jim Haber.

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