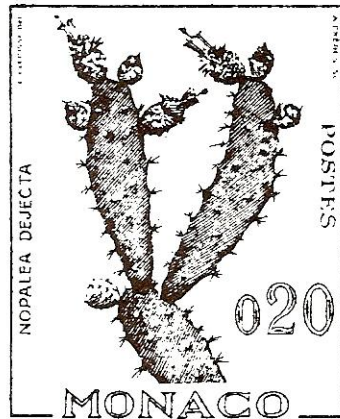
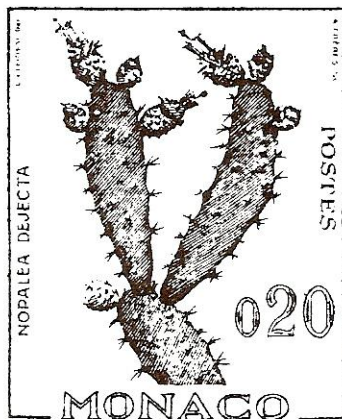
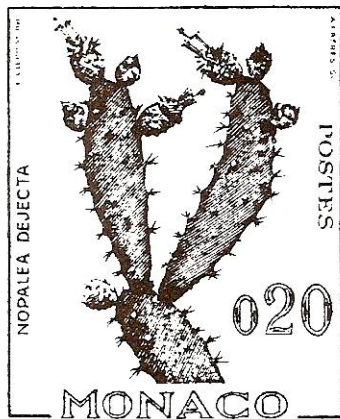
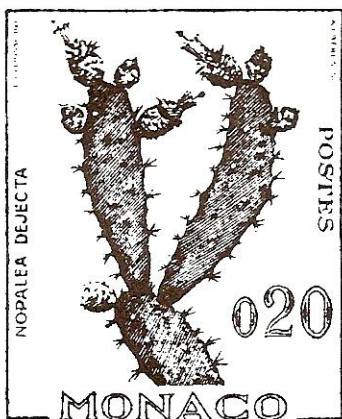


OPUNTIA

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Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

ART CREDIT: *Nopalea dejecta* was shown on this 1960 postage stamp from Monaco. Cacti are not native to Europe, of course, but Monaco has one of the finest botanical gardens in the world, with a first-class cactus garden.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Milt Stevens, Terry Jeeves, Chester Cuthbert, Guy Miller, Scott Crow, John Held Jr

THE WORLD PETROLEUM CONGRESS, OR,

-2-

WHAT IF THEY GAVE A RIOT AND NOBODY CAME?

by Dale Speirs

When the World Trade Organization meeting turned into The Battle In Seattle, Calgarians read with complacency the newspaper stories about anarchists trashing Seattle. When the process was repeated in Washington, D.C., a while later at the International Monetary Fund meeting, it was just one of those American things. Then the anarchists announced they were targeting the World Petroleum Congress in Calgary the week of June 11 to 15, 2000, as Seattle Three. Cowtown instantly went into collective fantods. Complacency suddenly disappears when it may be your BMW that gets its paint scratched by a rock-throwing tree hugger. How can one drink designer coffee and read the financial section of the newspaper when the Second Cup is filled with tear gas?

This sort of thing never happens here. The local protestors are the same dozen or so people complaining about some Central American dictatorship or demanding increased medicare and more public housing along with simultaneous reductions in taxes and bureaucracy. They parade in front of City Hall or the American consulate (kitty-corner from City Hall), and know how to bunch up in front of the television cameras to make it look like a huge

crowd. But the American anarchists who are coming here don't live in the community after the television cameras are turned off. They don't care how many windows they smash because they will be on their way someplace else afterwards.

Not On My Shift, You Don't.

As the Parks Dept. Weekend Trouble Call Foreman, I cover the entire city during the winter months from October to April. Once maintenance season arrives in spring, two seasonal Weekend Foremen start up as well, and I only have to cover the north third of the city. The events of the WPC were scheduled for the downtown core and the adjacent Stampede grounds, located in another Foreman's territory. This pleased me since someone else would have to worry about the mess the protestors would make.

Marchers may or may not be peaceful, but they are messy. In the Parks Dept., we can predict how much cleanup is required after a booking in a park. Church picnics pick up the litter and leave the place spotless. Children's events have a bit of litter but usually the organizers get the children to clean up most of it, and we give them a bit of slack because kids will be kids. Left-wing protestors are always messy, leaving behind a trail of paper cups and flyers. I suspect that this is partly because most of them are university students still not used to the idea that Mom isn't there anymore to clean up after them, and partly because they are so poorly

organized. For all of their talk of solidarity with the working classes, they never think of the labourer or janitor who has to clean up after them.

Right-wing protestors do not march in Calgary. Alberta has been Tory blue since 1971, and was Social Credit green before that from 1935 to 1971. Calgary is a complacent mixture of redneck construction workers and petro-executives. They have nothing to complain about. They own the province and city, and have since 1935, so why worry?

Worry.

2000-06-02

Parks workers are all atwitter about the WPC. Internet downloads of anarchist sites have been circulating through depot lunchrooms. I thought North Area would escape it, but it turns out that there will be a march from downtown to the Jubilee Auditorium. If they go up 14 Street NW, all will be well, but if they take 10 Street NW, they will be going past Riley Park. Worse yet, it will be on my shift.

Gary, the Riley Park foreman, came in on his day off this morning to brief me on the contingency plans. Anything movable, like picnic tables, will be taken out. The Calgary Police Service had suggested that the wire mesh used to support perennial flowers be

removed as well, but we can't see how any damage could be done with mesh. It would be like being hit with a paper cup. We're more concerned about trampling and litter.

The other monkey wrench in the works is that Riley Park has the only cricket grounds in the city, which are very heavily used on the weekend. Cricket is played here only by immigrants, who tend to be fanatical about it, and are not making way for any protest march. As opposed to that, however, the cricket players will be armed with bats and heavy padding, and are better organized and disciplined, so they should be able to fend for themselves.

Y2K All Over Again.

Compared to the WPC, Y2K was nothing in Calgary. Local newspapers and broadcasters have adopted saturation coverage of what happened in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and, the week before WPC, the Organization of American States meeting in Windsor, Ontario. The latter would actually make Calgary as Seattle Four. The news media are openly hysterical in their coverage.

The Calgary Police Service sent constables to Windsor as a warm-up exercise and to gather information about troublemakers who might come west. Calgary police and the R.C.M.P. have been busy monitoring the Internet sites, and infiltrating protest groups.

The CPS also consulted with Seattle police on what not to do.

Meanwhile, the City is welding down grates that cover tree wells on downtown sidewalks. Normally the rainy season in Calgary is Victoria Day through the middle of July, but this year we have had an unusually dry spring. The forecasts keep predicting evening showers, but what Parks workers are praying for is an all-day drizzle the length of the WPC. Doesn't look like we'll get it.

Waiting For The Wurms.

2000-06-08

I walked from my house to the University this morning to do some library research. This was a distance of about 10 kilometres under cloudy skies. Leaving the library about 14h00 to go downtown to pick up my mail from Box 6830, it was drizzling heavily so I took the LRT train. The downtown post office is on 9th Avenue SW, in the heart of the city core, and, may it not come to pass, the heart of the rioting. 9th Avenue is the main parade route through the downtown, four lanes wide, and is used for the Stampede parade in July.

After picking up my mail, I walked across the downtown core via the network of +15 pedways that interconnect most of the skyscrapers at the second floor level. On a rainy day like today, they were packed with people such as myself avoiding the

weather. Almost every building had a plethora of hastily photocopied signs announcing the closure of their section of the +15 during WPC week, or, if management were less hysterical, "Private property. No trespassing.". The +15 network is public property over the streets, but where they cut through buildings, as most of them do, is private property.

The No-Trespassing notices suddenly blossoming are obviously on the advice of legal counsel. In Canada, no one can be charged with trespassing unless there is a sign clearly visible stating "No Trespassing" at each entrance to a building. If no signs exist, which would be the normal case for most skyscrapers, then the building owner or tenant or agent thereof (i.e., security guard) must first verbally advise the trespasser and escort them off the premises. A trespasser can only be charged under verbal warning if he returns a second time. This is for civil trespass; criminals would not be entitled to warning if obviously in commission of an offence.

The Countdown Begins.

2000-06-09

Today is Friday, the first day of my weekend shift as we count down to Der Tag. I arrived as usual at 06h30, and immediately checked my e-mail. In addition to the usual memos and trivia, there is an Order of the Week from the mandarins down at City Hall, with the cheerful subject line "Street and Service

Disruptions". Almost all are downtown, which is no big deal to me, but one strikes close to home. 10 Street NW past Riley Park is definitely closed by order of police on Sunday. We would still be able to get into the park via 14 Street NW on the west side.

However, with a capital 'H', Edmonton Trail, 14th, 10th, and Centre Streets are the main entrances to the downtown core from the north. Centre Street is closed for bridge repairs, and with 10th Street out of action, traffic jams are therefore to be expected.

Another memo advises that the Calgary Police Service have retained Superintendent Bob Mackie, of New Scotland Yard. Yes, they flew him all the way in from London, England. We are informed that: "*Chief Superintendent Mackie has planned and commanded dozens of similar police operations in the U.K. ...*". He was, we are told, in charge of security arrangements at the London Y2K celebrations. This is perhaps not in the same class as soccer hooligans or a tour of duty in Ulster, but certainly must have been useful experience. I wonder if the protestors flew in Horace Rumpole? Yes, I know he is fictional, but so is life.

I then checked the Environment Canada weather forecast on the Web. Scattered showers over the next few days. Clearing on Sunday. Not what I wanted to read. I'd like about 10 cm on Sunday starting at 06h00 and drying off at 19h15, which is when I go off shift.

And so down to Riley Park. En route, I pass the Jubilee Auditorium, which is at the top of the escarpment overlooking Riley Park. Normally the landscaping surrounding it is wide open, since the opera lovers and folk-song buffs who patronize it are not a rowdy bunch. Today it is lined with 3 metre-high temporary chain link fence. The Auditorium is provincial property, so it is the worry of the Ministry of Culture, not us.

I pulled into Riley Park. The park attendants are bringing in hoses, benches, and other loose items. The cricket club, with impeccable timing, has decided to renovate their clubhouse, which is on the 10th Street side of Riley Park. Old appliances and construction debris are stacked outside the clubhouse. We get on the phone to the club President, who promises a clean-up of the site before Sunday.

Tomorrow, The Wurms.

On my way home from work, I stop off at the post office to get my mail. In the box number is a letter from the Postmaster:

"IMPORTANT NOTICE TO POSTAL CUSTOMERS. The World Petroleum Congress is meeting in Calgary, from June 11 to June 15, 2000 (inclusive), at the Calgary Convention Centre. This important event will bring close to 3,500 delegates to our city."

"While we are hopeful that postal delivery and pick-up service will proceed as usual during this period, we are also aware that demonstrations are being planned against the Congress participants."

"Should such demonstrations occur, mail service to your area may be affected, and we may be unable to provide "business as usual" service during all or part of this period. We do anticipate that normal delivery and pick-up service will resume on June 16, 2000."

"Additionally, street letter boxes will be temporarily removed from the downtown core near the Convention Centre. Customers who normally use this equipment can deposit their mail at any Post Office. Large volume mailers who normally deposit mail at our Calgary Central facility at 207 - 9 Avenue S.W. are asked to use either of the following corporate facilities during this period:

- 1100 - 49 Avenue NE (Calgary Mail Processing Plant)*
- 6100 Macleod Trail SW (Calgary South Post Office)"*

"If access to our Calgary Central Post Office at 207 - 9 Avenue S.W. is obstructed during this period, retail service is also available through our franchise network, at locations that are listed under "CANADA POST" in the white pages of your telephone book."

“Canada Post apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause. Your co-operation and understanding is appreciated. If you have any questions please call our Customer Service Line at 1-800-267-1177.”

My next stop is at the Co-op supermarket around the corner, where I pick up a few items to eat. On the front doors of the store are hastily photocopied signs advising that all loose objects in the parking lot will be removed during the Congress. This would mean newspaper street boxes, recycle bins, and shopping carts.

Der Tag. 2000-06-11

The early morning shift at Riley Park starts at 06h00. The attendant told me all was quiet save for the 3-metre fences that sprang up overnight along 10 Street NW on the east side of the park, and along the back alley on the south side. According to Calgary Inc., which is the aptly-named tourist bureau, the WPC is expected to circulate \$15 million into Calgary. It appears that about half of this will be going to the rental companies supplying temporary fences and barricades.

I told the mower operators to avoid the area around Riley Park and instead cut in other communities on their mowing routes. On the west side of Riley Park are the Hillhurst Community Association and St. Barnabas United Church. The Association, as

it does every Sunday, has a flea market in its hall and parking lot. St. Barnabas, as it does every Sunday, has morning, afternoon, and evening worship services. And let's not forget the cricketers.

I was busy with a few other things in the morning, so not until 09h15 did I drive down to Riley Park. It was the calm before the storm. The park was deserted, with not even the usual dog walkers. The flea market and church were in full swing though, apparently heedless of the impending doom. They must not believe the news media.

I stepped out of my truck. Everything was silent, save for the roar of vehicle traffic from the cricket players, flea market and church, the police helicopter thundering directly overhead, and the half dozen constables rumbling up and down 10 Street NW on their motorcycles. Other than that it was ominously still, save for the constables on foot patrol on the slope above the park, the constables on bicycle patrol in the park, and the constables on squad car patrol on the streets. Everything glistened various shades of green from the overnight rain showers, excepting only the cricket players in their flannel whites, the constables in their lime-green safety vests, the constables in the fluorescent-red safety vests, and me in denim.

The police concern is not necessarily for the safety of the busloads of ordinary delegates,

but for the limousines interspersed between them. The limos are carrying Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, as well as the really important people such as Dr. Rilwanu Lukman (Secretary General, OPEC) and HRH Prince Faisal Bin Turki Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud (Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Saudi Arabia). The barricades are to keep protestors off the street as the convoy goes by with the 3,500 delegates.

No sign of any protestors though. No one in sight save the cricket players, still trundling through their game. What I do see in the distance is one constable on foot pushing the motorcycle of another, who seems to be having mechanical trouble and needs a push-start. The heavy bike is being pushed uphill towards the Jubilee escarpment. One has to admire the physical strength of our constabulary and their willingness to kick-start a vehicle by pushing it rapidly uphill, instead of letting it coast downhill and putting in the clutch when enough speed is gained.

The Day Of Direct Inaction.

2000-06-12

Today is Monday, the first day of my regular four-day weekend (I like to tell people that I'm semi-retired, since I only work three days a week). The forecast is the inevitable "mix of sun and cloud", so I decide to walk downtown, pick up my mail, and then take the LRT train up to the University of Calgary to do some library research. It is a pleasant stroll down into the Elbow River

valley park, along the riverbank pathway, and across the central part of the city into the downtown core. I stopped off along the way for a bagel, and glanced through newspapers someone left on the table.

I munched my cheddar herb, as is, no fillings, and learned from the newspapers that the Jubilee Auditorium had either 200 or 1000 protestors last night. This number depends on whether you believe, respectively, the CALGARY SUN (tabloid for working classes, far right editorial content) or the CALGARY HERALD (broadsheet for petro-executives, right of centre). One protestor was discovered to have a shopping cart in the back of his placarded pickup truck, and was ordered to return it to the Co-op parking lot.

Finished with my bagel, I walked onwards down 4 Street SW into the city core. The street goes under the Canadian Pacific railroad, then 9 Avenue. The two overpasses are separated by about 50 metres. On the CPR overpass, two railroad police idled about in obvious boredom. In Canada, the two national railroads, Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, have the right to their own private police force. These are not just security guards, but actual constables with the right of arrest. This is a leftover from more than a century ago when they upheld the law in construction camps as the two trans-continental railroads were being built. Normally one never sees them in Calgary, as they usually patrol

the remote lines in the mountains or shortgrass prairies where there is no other law.

I crossed underneath 9 Avenue, then took the stairs up to the road level, and walked past the CPR national headquarters. They have an antique locomotive on display in the front garden of the skyscraper. It is now wrapped in plastic as protection against graffiti-minded protestors. A shrink-wrapped locomotive is not something you see every day. The artist Christo, who liked to wrap coastlines and buildings, would have been proud.

The post office is next door, and was open and operating normally. Just past it, 9 Avenue SW was fenced off with the ubiquitous 3-metre chain link. Four CPS constables checked cars passing through the barricades to the hotels and convention centre on the other side. Above, a police helicopter fluttered about. No sign of noisy mobs, but the traffic was at a near standstill, and I was glad to be walking.

Today was billed by protestors as the Day of Action, but the best they could do was about 200 placarders this morning, which worked out to a ratio of 10 constables per protestor. Even the police were embarrassed by this overkill, and Chief Constable Christine Silverberg said she would have the force downtown reduced somewhat tomorrow. When I saw the announcement yesterday that the parade would form up at 06h00 at the east end

of downtown, I knew right away that they were the victim of bad planning. From past experience with groups booking events in public parks, I know that the only people who will turn out that early are marathon runners. Public events are ill-advised to start any earlier than 11h00, since people will just not come out that early. The idea for the early start was to disrupt the morning commute of downtown workers, almost all of whom start work at 07h00 or 08h00. Instead, the protest march couldn't round up enough people until the peak hour commute was well underway.

There were three arrests: a protestor for giving a false name to a constable, another one for breach of undertaking (restraining order) from an unrelated incident elsewhere in Canada in March, and a WPC delegate for having an opened container of alcoholic beverage on the sidewalk (it is illegal to drink in a public place such as a park or roadside).

Law And Order Will Be Maintained.

"The protest is the essence of democracy. Everyone has a right to free speech, and citizens of this city and this province also have a right to move freely and not be impeded." (Ralph Klein, Alberta Premier and former Calgary Mayor, June 11).

I walked into the downtown, where traffic was impeded by police roadblocks.

Us pedestrians were unable to move freely because of police barricades.

Calgary Transit buses were being detoured due to the barricades. Since the downtown core is a maze of one-way streets, this meant that some of the buses have to loop a half dozen blocks to line up back on their route as they leave the core.

After getting my mail, I went down the Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall, formerly 8 Avenue South. Business as usual for the buskers and pushcart vendors. Every skyscraper had at least one private security guard standing by the doors or street corner.

It was then that I saw my first genuine protestors, four of them. They were dressed up as various species of dinosaurs and riding bicycles plastered with anti-oil slogans. They turned off the street and onto the mall. A commissionaire immediately stopped them and made them walk their bicycles. This had nothing to do with WPC security. It has always been illegal to bicycle, skateboard, or rollerblade on the mall. The protestors dismounted and waddled awkwardly down the mall, their tails wagging behind them.

Before taking the LRT up to the University, I decided to go over to the Calgary Public Library and check a few current periodicals. I had to walk several blocks out of the way due to all the police

roadblocks. Each intersection had four constables lounging about, and each block had two squad cars and one van. I estimated twenty constables total per city block. I resisted the temptation to jaywalk and waited at the traffic lights, like the honest, hard-working citizen that I am.

I did see one constable snag a couple of kids trying to ride across the pedestrian crossing instead of dismounting and walking their bicycles. As he was talking to them, a taxi driver came up behind them and made an illegal lefthand turn, across a double solid line yet. The constable abandoned them in favour of this more lucrative prey. I heard him tell the kids that next time they would get a summons. As he walked over to the errant hack, it occurred to me that today would be a perfect day for speeding out in the suburbs, since no radar traps would be operating.

Leaving the Library, I stood waiting on the LRT station across from the Olympic Plaza. The Plaza was open, but did have a 3-metre fence on its west side, across from the Convention Centre. Three bedsheet banners hung on the fence. I couldn't read them backwards from the train platform but did make out one as "Global Human Rights".

What This Country Needs Is A Good Cigar. 2000-06-13

Tuesday: Again I walk downtown to get my mail. The two railway police are on the overpass, looking as bored as ever, but 9 Avenue is now open, albeit now blocked by delivery couriers.

Police still have the Convention Centre cordoned, but elsewhere the barricades are rapidly disappearing as it becomes evident that the mobs will not materialize. The security guard hired by Canada Post to protect its parking lot is reading a Tom Clancy paperback.

This just in: local tobacconists report they are selling out of Cuban cigars. Apparently the American delegates to the WPC are stocking up, since they can't get them Stateside.

As I walk past the Convention Centre barricades, I see the banners from yesterday are gone. In their place, the fences are plastered with blue-and-white "Stop Arctic Drilling" stickers. At a gate, someone dressed in a polar bear suit and carrying a placard with the same message is chatting with a constable.

Later in the day though, things got ugly. A janitor from a skyscraper was hosing down the sidewalk where a protestor was stickering. Words were said, the hose was turned on the protestor, and, for good measure, the janitor kned him in the groin.

Unfortunately for him, a news photographer was nearby and caught the moment of impact, which then made the front page of next morning's CALGARY SUN. The news media had been reduced to actually reporting on the content of the WPC delegate speeches since there were no good riots, so this was a godsend.

All Quiet On The Downtown Front. 2000-06-14

The weather was threatening rain, plus I had various errands to run, so today instead of walking I drove downtown to pick up my mail. 9 Avenue was clear all the way through, and more barricades had been removed. The Convention Centre was still barricaded, but police presence was noticeably diminished. After picking up my mail, I stopped off at the Co-op for groceries. The warning signs were gone.

Just as Alberta dominates the petroleum industry in Canada, so it is that the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan is synonymous with agriculture. From June 14 to 16, as the WPC winds down in Calgary, the International Grains Council is convening in Regina, the capital city of Saskatchewan. The IGC is the agricultural equivalent of the WPC, OAS, IMF, or WTO. All the big names in multinationals will be there, such as Cargill and Monsanto.

I did a quick search at Yahoo.ca and Usenet, but found nothing on any protests. It can't be for lack of important topical debates. Genetically-modified crops immediately spring to mind, and there are other controversies such as patenting genes or building huge feedlots that pollute rivers. I guess no one wants to go to Regina, the Canadian equivalent of Cleveland, Ohio. Regina's original name was Pile of Bones (I am not making that up), but the name change did not disguise its terminal boringness.

Winning The Battle But Losing The War.

The organizational skills of the protestors at Seattle caught police by surprise. By the time the WPC came to Calgary, police had learned from their mistakes. The WTO fiasco was a wake-up call internationally, and police forces everywhere sat up and took note of the Internet as a monitoring tool. A new method of inter-jurisdictional assistance quickly developed. Calgary police visited Seattle, and were at Windsor for the OAS mobs. Windsor RCMP were in Calgary for the WPC. One reason why downtown Calgary was so saturated with police was that half of them were from other municipal and RCMP forces. They shared ideas and learned from each others' experiences.

The protestors won the battle by forcing police to spend time and money protecting the WPC delegates and disrupting downtown businesses with street closures. They lost the war because police

now seriously and routinely monitor Websites, decrypt private e-mails, and established an informal trans-national riot squad to help each other out.

Was it over-reaction? On Thursday, June 15, as the WPC was ending in Calgary, Toronto police 3,000 kilometres east battled rioters at the Ontario legislature. It was a protest against the Tory government there by people demanding more help for the homeless. A peaceful march turned ugly when the protestors were denied entry into the Queen's Park legislative buildings, and began hurling bricks and Molotov cocktails.

If it were just a matter of pulling up the cobblestones and hurling them, I would be prepared to believe that the culprits were acting in the heat of the moment, possibly even, as they claimed, after provocation by the police. What bothers me is the report about Molotov cocktails. These are weapons which must be prepared ahead of time and carried for premeditated use. You don't just quickly scrounge some pop bottles from a nearby garbage can, then run over to a car and siphon out gas with a garden hose the landscape gardener carelessly left lying in the flower beds. This was what the Calgary police had to decide on the chances of. Seattle police guessed wrong, while the Calgary Police Service decided better safe than sorry.

Where Were All The Protestors?

At best, the WPC protestors only ever mustered 2,000 people, for a protest parade downtown on the Sunday. The day before, the Gay Pride parade had about 2,500, a remarkable accomplishment considering that Calgary is a rather homophobic city.

Why were the WPC protestors so few? It wasn't because Canada Customs intercepted all the Americans at the border. The barricades and superfluous constables downtown were there to control protestors, not eliminate them. In retrospect, I think it was because there was a fundamental difference between Calgary on the one hand and Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Windsor on the other. The latter three cities had out-of-town organizations holding conventions in cities that had no emotional attachment to them. The WTO, IMF, and OAS have no natural constituency among average Americans and Canadians. Indeed, locals could be easily sympathetic to labour unions and environmental groups protesting against the three-letter groups, if not necessarily agreeable to window-smashing and dumpster fires.

Calgary is the petroleum capital of Canada. All the Seven Sisters (the big multinational oil companies such as Esso and Shell) have their Canadian headquarters here. There are dozens of junior petes (independent, locally-owned oil companies) here. The local news media quote the benchmark West Texas Intermediate oil

price next to the weather forecast. The majority of Calgarians work directly or indirectly in the petroleum business. Those who don't, have friends or relatives who do. At best, the protestors could only expect amused tolerance from Calgarians. It would be like protesting against the military in a garrison town where the base was the only major employer. The WPC was not a group of outlanders; it was family. And you protect your family members.

DINOSAURS, POLAR BEARS, AND SIR JOHN BROWNE IN THE STREETS OF CALGARY

by Tooker Gomborg

1 Havelock Street, #2

Toronto, Ontario M6H 3B3

"You're under arrest. Come with us.", the police officer tells me. "Two options: you can ride your bike down to arrest processing, or the second option is to get a car to drive you down there." It seemed the message of our group was getting through! Why use oil when there are sustainable alternatives?

We were in Calgary at the World Petroleum Congress, where 3,000 delegates from the world's largest oil and gas companies gathered to

compare notes and plot the extraction of the planet's hydrocarbons.

Images of Seattle danced in activists' heads, and the End of Oil Action Coalition was born. The goal? To put forward the proposition that more oil meant more trouble, and to urge a quick transition towards renewable, clean energy from the sun and the wind.

The petroleum pirates have much to answer for: an environment degraded by oil spills and poisonous fumes, a climate cooking from burning evermore gasoline, and human rights atrocities from slavery in the Sudan to Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others hanged in Nigeria, all for oil. With so much criminal activity unleashed on our fragile planet by this industry, the authorities chose to arrest me.

After parking our bikes inside the police station (at last! indoor bike parking), I emptied my pockets, belt, and shoes into a small locker, and called a lawyer. My 'crime'? Breaking the conditions of a previous release.

The CALGARY SUN's Associate Editor Paul Jackson maintained that The End of Oil Action Coalition was funded, along with the Seattle and D.C. protestors, by donations from Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, and Moammar Gadhafi. Another newspaper

piece told how protestors liked

to use laser pointers to blind police.

Then there was the article that fumed about protestors 'prowling' around the malls like pimps, preying on impressionable teenagers and inviting them to join the counter-petroleum teach-in and the rallies. Words like 'riot', 'disruption', 'tear gassing', 'fires', and 'burnings' figured prominently in newspaper reports.

Given the massive police presence, there was but one thing to do; take back the streets! The Radical Cheerleaders burst onto the scene sporting fashionable black skirts and red tops, coincidentally the same colour scheme as the bicycle cops. Who would have guessed that the cops would drape themselves in a socialist/anarchist colour combo!

Smiling and confident, Sir John Browne, CEO of BP/Amoco, waltzed into Calgary and was embraced like a hero. Compare that to the greeting accorded to two articulate critics of the industry who tried to enter from the USA. They were put in shackles, strip searched, detained overnight for questioning, and finally refused entry. If they were kept out, I figured I would try to get into the Congress. It took some chutzpah, but I snuck right into a media scrum and challenged Sir John on his integrity.

Yet even with the clampdown, 2,000 protestors were heard on the streets of Calgary, along with a quartet of dinosaurs. The bicycle-riding Dinosaurs Against Fossil Fuels travelled to Calgary from Vancouver, and put on a captivating performance in their colourful long-tailed dinosaur costumes festooned with cowboy hats. They sung modified old favourites like “You Can’t Get To Heaven” (“ ... in a limousine, ‘cause the Lord don’t sell no gasoline”), and chanted “Cars suck, bikes rule, and extinction stinks!”. “Using oil is for fossil fools”, they shouted.

Others played a modified sort of hockey game in the shadow of the Shell tower. It was Earth against (S)hell, and by treachery and greed the (S)hell team was leading. At one point the referees, who represented the government, threatened to penalize the (S)hell team for an oil spill, but (S)hell argued their way out by maintaining that the spill was actually caused by Greenpeace having rammed their oil tanker. The game proceeded apace with accelerated species extinctions. There was plenty of foul play, especially as the (S)hell team tried to asphyxiate the Earth team with car exhaust and gas well flaring. The Earth team almost succumbed until a sudden infusion of people power turned the tide and brought (S)hell to its knees.

We made the front pages. We confronted Sir John Browne. We sung our concern and illustrated alternatives with puppets and dinosaurs. And we had a blast.

Are there lessons? Sure: we’re learning and evolving. The cops work top down. We’re thriving with lateral thinking and co-operative organizing that keeps them guessing. We’re tapping into tremendous, powerful, subsurface energy, especially youthful energy. And it’s ready to roll.

When the petrol-heads gather, we’ll be there. They can no longer plot and gloat without a challenge. We’ll roll out the dinosaurs and the puppets, the songs and the signs. We’ll create our own media. We’ll organize with e-mail. We’ll build the links between labour, social justice, and ecology.

Maybe we don’t have the power and wealth of 160 nations, but we do have a passion to speak out and articulate a better way. The corporations are in the game for money; we’re playing for our lives, for the air we breathe, and for the world bequeathed to the future. It’s time for the alternatives to oil and gas to grow legs and start walking. Just like we did for six days in the streets of Calgary.

AS WE GO TO PRESS ...

The Calgary Police Service said in a September 2000 report to City Council that it was still on the hook for the \$1.5 million in costs associated with the WPC. The good news is that traffic fines from all those polluting vehicles zipping down Calgary streets at the traditional 20 clicks over posted speed will bring the net debt down to \$350,000.

However, Deputy Police Chief Rick Hanson was hopeful the Ministry of Justice will fund the WPC costs. The request was sent in to the province in July. As is also traditional, the Tories adopted an attitude of "We'll see". Premier Ralph Klein has suggested he may call an election in March 2001, by which time all of Alberta's debt will be paid off at current oil royalties. Klein, being a former Calgary mayor, will no doubt slop a few million down Cowtown way, just for nice. A Ministry spokesman said September 20: *"I can say that we did receive a funding request and it is under consideration by the government."*

To help Albertans handle the higher natural gas costs this winter, the Tories are giving everyone \$300, in two \$150 spaced over the winter. This will help the poor folk survive the heating bills (all Alberta buildings are centrally heated by natural gas) and will be another friendly reminder to the voters about who to vote for. Not that there ever was any doubt since 1971.

Meanwhile, I estimate from a rough visual observation that about half of private vehicles on Calgary streets are SUVs, 4WDs, and dude pickups, none of which ever leave pavement.

Calgary has so many road-building projects going on that Council had to limit them to one new interchange or bridge per quarter of the city. Otherwise the result would be gridlock.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM: Lloyd Penney
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2000-07-26

Riots seem to be the only way the [Ontario Tory] regime is made to hear the public's opinions. Just a couple of days ago, some tourists from Vancouver walked into Queen's Park and before they could ask for directions, they were waylaid by the legislature police and forcibly ejected. Ontario residents cannot now walk into the Ontario legislature and see their representatives. The protestors at the homeless riot brought it on themselves, I will happily admit, but the police grossly over-reacted. There were no good guys in that confrontation.