

MIAMI FTAA ARTICLE  
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## BIG CROWD, DERAILED FTAA, AND LOST DEMOCRACY IN MIAMI

by Steve Watrous, Coordinator, Wisconsin Fair Trade Campaign

Fair trade activists claim that corporate globalization is not just about tariffs but is really a threat to democracy. The Miami Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) confrontation proved them right.

The fair trade movement had a big turn-out and won a partial victory over the FTAA in Miami Nov. 18-21, but also partly lost the right to protest. And without vigorous follow-up, we could end up losing on both trade policy and democracy itself.

About ten Wisconsinites spent part of their visits enduring the rude southern hospitality of the Miami jail, for nothing more than being on the wrong side of the barricades when the paramilitary police made their move. Miami Mayor Manny Diaz calls this a national "model for homeland defense." If he's right, we're sunk.

Wisconsin AFL-CIO President David Newby noted the two faces of the Miami experience. "One of the most impressive aspects of this mobilization is the diversity of the coalition that's evident here. It's union members at the core but there are so many environmentalists, family farm folks, students in the anti-sweatshop movement, and people active in the Wisconsin Fair Trade Campaign."

Newby made these comments after the large march Thursday afternoon through deserted downtown Miami, that the national AFL-CIO estimated at 15,000-20,000 people, but before the tear gas assault. "We've got over a hundred people from Wisconsin who have come down to Miami for this series of demonstrations. I think everybody feels it's really been worthwhile."

Many from Madison dressed up as our state domesticated animal to form the "Mad Cow Bloc." Milwaukee participants included AFT 212 President Mike Rosen, who was featured in a Miami Herald article, Joy Roberts from CWA, Jeanne Mantsch from the Interfaith Conference, and Cathy Rose from the Sierra Club.

But even before the police assault, the 2,500 robocops in military outfits were on everybody's mind. "One of the disturbing things has been the police presence here, which has been absolutely overwhelming and very menacing," Newby said.

"And obviously intended to intimidate people -- discouraging them from participating in events and sending a larger message that whenever you try to have this kind of a mobilization the police are going to be there in riot gear and flak jackets," he added.

Just as the artificial tears were flowing in the streets, the trade ministers' meeting across the police barricades was not going well, either. The aggressive corporate dream of a hemispheric NAFTA had

shattered on the rocks of Brazil and Venezuela -- where governments actually listen to their people about globalization.

The ministers had a final 15-minute meeting Thursday afternoon, agreed to keep talking in the future but in a different framework, didn't decide anything substantial, then went home a day early. The new model is dubbed "FTAA lite," where countries can decide to opt-in or opt-out of whatever provisions might be in the new FTAA.

The Bush administration will try to revive FTAA but will focus more on divide and conquer with bilateral trade agreements. In fact, they're gearing up for the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), with the final negotiation session Dec. 8-12 in Washington, D.C. It's a NAFTA expansion to five countries, slated for a Fast Track Congressional approval soon unless we can stop it.

The fair traders in Miami had dozens of workshops and discussions about CAFTA and the even more ominous General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), a negotiation within the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Global Trade Watch Director Lori Wallach spoke at a panel on Democracy and Sustainability. Everything corporations couldn't get through Congress alone is now thrown into trade agreements, she said, including compensation for regulatory "takings." Businesses suing under NAFTA Chapter 11 have already forced the countries to pay over \$35 million in damages for environmental regulations, and \$3 billion more in claims are in process.

At a forum on Trade in Services, Eric Peterson from the University of Minnesota Labor Studies Center noted that after the US lost three million manufacturing jobs to trade since 1994, now "they're going after public services."

Other workshops featured members of the Nicaraguan National Assembly, the Venezuelan negotiating team from the ministerial meeting, and Oscar Olivera, a hero from the fight against water privatization in Bolivia. The fair trade movement is stronger in Latin America than in the US and together they have whumped both the WTO and FTAA this fall.

When the police decided to justify their existence -- and the \$8.5 million received from the Iraq \$87 billion bill -- by whumping some protester as\*, they swept up three Milwaukee-area participants.

Gerry Gunderson was in Miami with the United Steelworkers Rapid Response Network. Kelly Lundeen, recently out of college and working at Casa Maria, is already a veteran of youth organizing and civil disobedience. John Heckenlively lives in Racine, went to college in Milwaukee, and writes for the labor newspaper in Kenosha.

They were together, trying to get out of downtown through the maze of police roadblocks, well after the tear gas had blown out to sea. Gunderson had already been shot a dozen times with red rubber bullets that had pepper spray inside. The police grabbed them with little legal or moral authority and the charges may be dropped if the AFL-CIO, ACLU, National Lawyers Guild and others win their lawsuits and get a congressional hearing.

Various parties claim violations of Constitutional amendments 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 14. Aggressive police arrested some 282 people. About a hundred protesters were injured and 12 were hospitalized. The police also stopped at least 18 busloads of retirees from getting to the march and kept other people away through shutting down mass transit, roadblocks and a fear campaign.

Global justice advocates seized the moral high ground with an interfaith service on Tuesday before the march, similar although smaller than the one held at the 1999 Seattle WTO protest. "The economic vision of the WTO and FTAA is not the economic vision of scripture," declared a representative from Pax Christi.

Rabbi Michael Lerner called for "globalization of spirit" against harmful trade policies. When the service paused for silent reflection, we were reminded of the many police helicopters continuously swooping overhead.

The Unitarian minister asked, "What good are we as Christians if we don't call into question institutions that do so much harm?"

Christians, unionists, environmentalists and others are calling to defeat Bush's trade policies. They've got momentum now but a lot of work yet to do.

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