

# Perspectives

## A few BAD SEEDS

■ The real message in the WTO protests may have been lost, thanks to the actions of the irresponsible few

Chaos really never accomplishes anything, Martin Luther King Jr. knew that.

And so did the peaceful protesters at this week's World Trade Organization convention in Seattle. Angry with the WTO's stance on a variety of issues, the protesters put actions to words in a fury of protest that hearkened back to the 1960s.

Forming a human chain

on Tuesday to keep out WTO delegates, delaying the start of the conference for at least six hours and garnering the support of President Clinton, these protesters made a mark on the convention that might actually have significance. The WTO might sense that people aren't happy. Clinton might try to involve protesters in talks. Changes might be made, all from the efforts of a couple thousand vocal people.

Overall, a positive experience.

If we can overlook the violent protesters. The anarchists. The vandals. Even though distinctions between the two groups of protesters

were often unclear in media coverage, they couldn't be further apart.

The peaceful protesters — several hundred from Eugene — took their stance against the WTO and made an argument through words, sheer physical presence and actions. Although they blocked entry into the convention for many delegates, the intent was to stall the meetings, not to harm the participants.

The gist of their message was concern over the WTO's impact on the environment, human rights and workers' rights. The WTO resolves conflicts in world trade, seeking to make such trade more free between nations. If a human-rights law of one country limited its trade with another that didn't share the same values, the WTO might rule that free trade was more important than the human-rights law, for example. This type of free trade at all costs is what angers many protesters.

But while the non-violent groups waged a war of words and civil disobedience with police, a few black-clad anarchists — again, some from Eugene — took the anger a step farther.

Their acts of breaking

windows, spraypainting buildings and overturning dumpsters created a message of violence, not of protest. Instead of focusing attention on the WTO delegates or the convention itself, these groups vandalized big-name merchants in downtown Seattle, such as Starbucks and Nike Town. While they attracted the attention they wanted from media and police, their message was cheap and degrading to the real protesters. In effect, they helped turn Seattle into a police-state: Their actions forced the mayor to impose a curfew and the governor to declare a state of emergency.

Both groups had their moments, but it's funny how the two aren't even really related. Real protesters with a message decried the damage and violence of the anarchists. The anarchists distanced themselves from the peaceful protesters, with one saying in Thursday's Oregonian, "They're just accomplices to the system." Yet the two groups will be linked to-

gether in our minds when we think about this week.

Photos of tear-gassed protesters alongside images of broken corporate windows. One bad apple sure can spoil the bunch.

And the message. With so much media, police and government attention focused on what went wrong, it's easy to overlook what went right.

When things settle down in the next week or so, it is hoped that the intelligent protest won't be lost or forgotten. One of the participants expressed the idea best:

"A lot of the message we were trying to get across is lost because of [the violence]," Portland teenager Grace Callahan said in The Oregonian Thursday. "On the other hand, we've raised awareness about what's going on. I feel like the whole world is watching Seattle now. Whether they know anything about the WTO or not, now, this may motivate them to learn."

Exactly.

*This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.*

### THUMBS



#### To finally popping the question:

Jonas Allen, former Emerald columnist and current board member, became engaged to his long-time girlfriend, Sara Mottau, this month. Best wishes.

#### To keeping watch on criminals:

The Oregon State Penitentiary will be Y2K ready, according to the Department of Corrections, alleviating fears that the year 2000 bug will be a boon to inmates freed from cells by computer error. Good.



#### To not dropping the chalupa:

Kansas football player Dion Rayford made news last week when he went to Taco Bell but did not get the chalupa he ordered. Like that darn Chihuahua, Rayford must have really wanted it, and he got stuck in the drive-thru window when he tried to force his way in. Hello, they aren't that good.

#### To mistakes that kill:

A new report by the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine says that medical error kills between 44,000 and 98,000 people a year, more than deaths from highway accidents, breast cancer and AIDS. The report concludes a major overhaul of America's health care system is required to curb error.



Giovanni Sallmena Emerald

### Letters to the editor

#### Notes off web acceptable

At the close of Wednesday's editorial the author states, "The problem is that it can take the work out of education. And lets face it, that's kind of the point." (ODE, Dec. 1)

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't the point of education to educate? So why the big deal of class notes being made available on the Web? As long as students are held accountable for the course material in exams and the like, there should be no problem.

Some might say using notes off of the Web can hinder the level of learning one might do. I say let people be responsible for their actions and assume any possible consequences they bring. As for buying essays and papers, I believe that to be plagiarism and unacceptable.

Justin Collins  
pre-business

#### WTO helps poor countries

The World Trade Organization is an intergovernmental organization whose purpose is to organize trade negotiations, settle trade disputes and help the free flow of trade around the globe. WTO is not against environmental standards. WTO requires the

member countries a) to prove scientifically that a foreign good is harmful, and b) apply the same environmental standard requirements to all countries and domestic producers.

WTO, by promoting free trade, helps poor countries become richer. It's a fact that countries with low barriers to trade are the most prosperous while those with high barriers to trade are the poorest. So why all this noise? Why has the liberal media given such a wide coverage to a bunch of hippies demonstrating? It only helps to obscure an issue of common concern. Also to hide the truth. Namely that free trade is good, more free trade is better.

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