

tized, are not seen as an opportunity to make profit, but seen as a basic human birth right.”

Eric Olsen, an American environmentalist, echoed Starhawk’s sentiments. “We’re here to say that we need to shut down the WTO and at the same time we need to build the new world,” he said. “We need to build the alternatives to corporate dominance, which we can do every day.”

THE PEOPLE’S REVOLT

Americans weren’t the only ones voicing their concerns. Indigenous people and peasants from Mexico were perhaps the most numerous and vocal opposition group present in Cancún. Many poor rural people, or *campesinos*, traveled across the country by bus to take part in the protests.

The Campesino March on Sept. 10 was one of two large protests that occurred during the WTO ministerial. About 7,000 farmers, indigenous people, social justice and envi-

ronmental activists, and international supporters marched through downtown Cancún to confront police at a fence which separated protesters from the opulent Hotel Zone, where the WTO convened for the first day of its ministerial.

‘WE WANT A WORLD WHERE THE THINGS WE BASICALLY NEED FOR OUR LIVES, LIKE WATER, ARE NOT PRIVATIZED, ARE NOT SEEN AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE PROFIT, BUT SEEN AS A BASIC HUMAN BIRTH RIGHT.’ — STARHAWK

“We are here to support the indigenous movement,” said Florentina Santiago Ruiz. “We belong to the indigenous movement.

We’re coming from Mexico City but we are from the state of Oaxaca. Every day we suffer from poverty and what we want is for this to end.”

Ruiz came to Cancún as a member of Via Campesina, a grassroots organization dedi-

of Via Campesina exhorted demonstrators to tear down the fence that had been erected to keep them away from the ministerial.

“This fence has to fall!” he shrieked over a megaphone in Spanish. “All of the fences in the world have to fall!”

After a few minutes of massive heaving and hoing, the fence did fall, but nobody passed through it to confront the wall of police on the other side. Instead, the crowd slowly dissolved to the tunes of a traditional Mexican band.

On Saturday, Sept. 13, the protesters in Cancún were more resolute. They surged back to the police barricade, which was now bigger and badder — welded into rigid boxes, topped with barbed wire and reinforced with concrete blocks.

A WALL OF WOMEN

Women took the front line. They formed a solid wall against the fence and spent the next

FOOD NOT BOMBS HOSTS CANCÚN DINNER.

CANCÚN, MEXICO — The police weren’t sure what to make of the scruffy, smiling people eating beans and rice on the lawn of the Ritz-Carlton in Cancún. Some officers accepted the plates of food offered by the Food Not Bombs (FNB) volunteers. Others hung back, glancing at their watches and fingering their weapons.

FNB describes itself as a revolutionary movement that serves free vegetarian meals to hungry people and to protestors. And the 20-plus diners in front of the Ritz appreciated the charity: Many of them had been stretching their resources to gather in this expensive resort town to oppose to the World Trade Organization.

“Food Not Bombs is the idea that food is for everyone, not just the rich,” says a volunteer with FNB who identified himself simply as Tim. “It just fits in with the WTO here at the moment, with the centralization of wealth, and the loss of power of the common people, and the loss of land, and the loss of dignity.”

Although the police repeatedly asked the congregation to disperse, staff members laughed and engaged the officers in playful conversation. Then three men began to beat on drums and sing.

“Por el camino de la verdad, puede salvarse la humanidad,” they sang. “Por el camino de la justicia, el hombre nuevo puede triunfar.” In English, this means “In the path of truth, humanity can save itself. In the path of justice, the new man can triumph.”

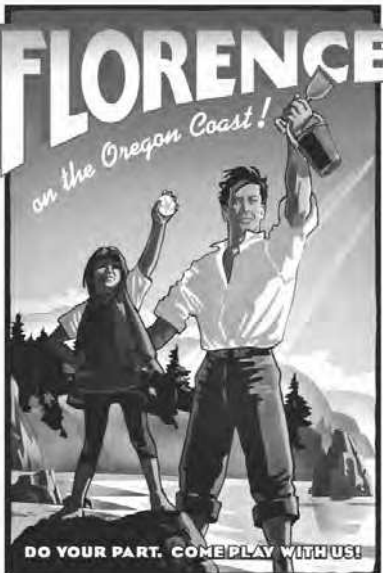
The police tolerated the singing and drumming for about 10 minutes.

After FNB packed up their gear and left, the remaining diners filed into a bus to return to downtown Cancún. Shortly thereafter, police stopped the bus and unloaded all the tourists to isolate the protesters.

Rich Macgurn, who was present at the FNB dinner, says the officers were able to identify the activists because “we’re a pretty crusty crew.”

The police took a photo of the congregation and escorted them to a park in downtown Cancún, where opposition activities were continuing. — Kera Abraham





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