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“Report Back from Quebec” – Wisconsin Activists Share Their Personal Accounts of the Recent FTAA Protests

At 7:00 pm on Wed. April 25 at the UW-Madison campus (Rm. 1111 Humanities Bldg.), Wisconsin activists who participated in the recent FTAA protest in Quebec City will be sharing their stories, video footage, and photos of what transpired at this historic event. A follow-up discussion will address the current state of the anti-globalization movement and the violent corporate/government response to grassroots resistance worldwide.

Tens of thousands of protesters from around the world converged in Quebec City over the Earth Day weekend to challenge the democratic authority of their heads of state to sign the Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA). This latest regime would significantly expand the corporate privileges now existing under NAFTA to the rest of the western hemisphere by incorporating elements of the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), as well as the property rights provisions of the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI). While national leaders, trade technocrats, and business lobbyists met behind closed doors, barricades and riot police, citizens held their own Peoples' Summit to discuss democratic alternatives to global corporatization. Over 30,000 people also participated in Saturday's peaceful Labor Rally against the FTAA.

Unfortunately, protesters who did physically challenge the “Wall of Shame” were met with brutal police violence – tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets. Over 400 people were arrested and hundreds of others injured – including one Wisconsinite, a Milwaukee teacher, who while dressed as the Statue of Liberty got blasted to the ground by a water cannon and was hospitalized for ruptured blood vessel in her eye. So much teargas was deployed by the police that it forced evacuation of nearby residents, contaminated local groceries and restaurants, and even infiltrated the FTAA conference itself, sickening official delegates. In the wake of last spring's mass arrest of anti-sweatshop activists occupying UW-Madison's Bascom Hall and the recent federal grant of \$85,000 to the Madison Police to form a 72 member SWAT team, many activists are now worried that future anti-globalization protests in Madison will be met with similar repression.

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