

## Publisher's Foreword

On Friday, April 20, my family—me, my partner Beverley and our children Jesse, age 11, and Myah, age 7—arrived in Québec City by car. We had left Halifax a day earlier and drove unimpeded into the city via Boulevard Laurier. There was only light traffic. We waited for a few traffic lights. Nothing suggested that we were driving into a city blockaded by a three-metre-high steel link fence, but we knew it was there because it had been talked about in every newspaper and on every airwave broadcast. We proceeded north along Laurier to Chemin St-Louis and Grande Allée, where we saw a police blockade. We made a U-turn on Grande Allée, a right turn onto Avenue Cartier, proceeded west on Cartier for a city block, then pulled into an empty parking space and got out of our car. On checking the meter we found that there was a two-hour parking limit. Expecting to have to walk a number of blocks before we came even close to where something might be happening, we decided not to feed the meter and pay the fine if we got a ticket.

We walked a half block west on Cartier towards Boulevard René-Lévesque. Suddenly we found ourselves surrounded by a large number of young people, many with teary eyes, some washing out their eyes with water. They had been tear gassed a block or so down René-Lévesque where the chain link fence blocked the street. I was not surprised that people had been tear gassed; I had heard that the police were using gas. I was surprised that we could drive unimpeded to within two blocks of the fence, park our car in a vacant parking space and step right into the fray. It was surreal. For me that experience was a foreshadowing of much of what I saw and participated in over the next two days.

On Saturday we were able to drive our car to a parking lot across the street from where people were assembling for a mass demonstration march—no need to take a bus or walk for blocks. Except for the lingering odour of tear gas, it seemed like a normal day in the city—no visible police presence, no squad cars, no police on foot or on horseback, marshalling the crowd. All of the police were up behind the fence, protecting the free trade negotiators. It seemed like the rest of the city had been given over to the people.

The starting time for the march had been announced for noon but it didn't get started until after 1pm. My family and I waited with friends as thousands upon thousands of people massed, preparing to march south on Charest. The march began. We were close to the head of the crowd, and as we walked towards the intersection of Charest and Couronne we encountered two groups of people. One group urged the marchers to turn right on Couronne; the other urged us to turn left. I heard one voice yell out, "People left, trade unions right." "What is this all about?" I thought. We turned left, in the direction that the pompom-waving cheerleaders were pointing. As it turned out, right took people away from the barricade to a large park five or six kilometres to the west. Left took us towards the hill where the chain link fence was mounted and where a number of people had gone to confront the barricade.

As we approached, the smell of tear gas became increasingly uncomfortable. I hesitated about going closer because of the children, but my son Jesse wanted to go further up the hill. Expecting to be able to stop before the gas got too bad, we continued on. People coming down the hill warned us that the tear gas was bad, and I could see smoke trails as the police launched canister after canister of tear gas into the crowd. Suddenly the gas hit. I could not see. I did not know where I was. I held on to the leash that attached me to Jesse as if it were a lifeline. I did not want him to disappear. As I fumbled to get a water bottle out of my backpack, a medic told me to kneel down and she washed my eyes out with water. Soon I could see again and Jesse was okay. We walked back down the hill, and for the rest of the afternoon we mingled with people on the street and watched from a café as people marched by. I saw many who had followed the crowd to the right, coming back and going up towards the barricade. Some I knew. Some told me that they felt they had been led astray. Later that evening some friends who had been up at the fence told me about what went on, how the fence had been toppled, how people had been targeted and hit with tear-gas canisters, how teddy bears had been catapulted over the fence. Later in the evening, I was told, people who were in a park—some singing, some talking and some dancing—were attacked by police with tear gas. Over two hundred were arrested. One group told of being tear gassed in the back of a locked police van. The police chose the cover of darkness, where they were hidden from the eye of the camera, to launch a terrorist attack.

When talking about the police we need to be reminded that they were acting under the tacit approval, if not the order, of Jean Chrétien and the Liberal government. The prime minister and the government authorities responsible for summit security went out of their way to create the impression that there were “peaceful” and “violent” protesters. This jibed with the concept of democracy that they wanted to portray. They wanted people to believe that only “peaceful” protest is okay in a “democratic” society. They also wanted to popularize the notion that the police were restrained in the face of “violence.” They were intent on convincing everyone possible that protesters who challenged the police and the fence, which fortified the hemispheric leaders, were irresponsible and violent. As long as protesters marched away from the barricades, they were lauded. After all, you must be able to expect free speech in a democracy. What is important for the FTAA architects, the prime minister and the hemispheric leaders is that “free” speech does not interfere with the proceedings or the outcome of the negotiations. We should not forget that it was the prime minister, the heads of government and their corporate masters who perpetrated the violence through the actions of the police.

When we first arrived a white police van pulled up and seven or eight black-clothed police officers, some with gas masks, jumped out only feet away from my seven-year-old daughter Myah, who asked, “Who are those men, daddy?” When I told her they were police, she said, “But the police are supposed to help people.” It is painful to destroy the illusions of a young child, and it is hard to explain to her that, at least in this case, the police were there

to help the people who were negotiating the FTAA agreement on behalf of corporate interests.

It was also painful to see other political and trade union leaders join with Chrétien to perpetuate the idea of “peaceful” and “violent” protesters. Alexa McDonough, the leader of the New Democratic Party, called the people who turned to the left towards the barricade “hoodlums.”

The number of marchers was estimated at forty to sixty thousand. Had there been a million, they still would have had little impact on the hemispheric negotiators if they had been led many kilometres away from where the negotiations were taking place. I am not suggesting that all of those people should have gone into the tear-gas zone, but had they all massed on the hill in close proximity to the barricade, their impact would have been far greater. Marching in the opposite direction, as they did, helped Chrétien sell his idea of democracy while negotiating away our freedom.

Finally I want to laud the actions of the young people that I saw. I have been at many such protests in the past forty years, yet I have never before witnessed the discipline and order that prevailed among the people who marched towards the barricades. People were talking to people, helping people and encouraging people. There was a large contingent of medics helping those who were in trouble, suffering from the burning of tear gas, the impact of thrown tear-gas canisters and the injuries caused by rubber and plastic bullets. In the pages of this book you will read their stories. You will see the pictures of their actions, and you will become aware that today’s youth are not standing by while their so-called “democratic” political leaders attempt to negotiate away their future in the service of global capitalism. I came away from Québec with renewed vigour, renewed energy and a renewed determination to do all I can to ensure that these young people have a chance to live in a free society with the right to participate in determining their future. I am honoured that Fernwood Publishing has been asked to publish this book.

Errol Sharpe  
Publisher

# Introduction

## Background

In April 20–22, 2001, the Summit of the Americas was held in Québec City, the picturesque capital of the province of Québec and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was the third such summit. At the first summit, which was held in Miami in 1994 and organized by the Organization of American States (OAS), negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreement were initiated. At that meeting, thirty-four heads of state from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean committed to creating the FTAA agreement and completing it by 2005. At the second summit in Santiago in April 1998, a Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) was set up. It created nine negotiating groups, which have since been meeting frequently.

This year thirty-four heads of state attended the summit in Québec, where one of the main foci was the eventual implementation of the FTAA agreement, the largest trade agreement in the world. The FTAA promises to extend the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to the entire Western hemisphere, further widening inequality between and within countries.

In response to the clandestine negotiating process of the FTAA and its potential harmful effects on the environment, human rights, health, education and labour, thousands of people, so-called “protesters,” converged on the city to voice their opposition to “free market” logic, corporate-driven globalization and capitalism.

In preparation for the gathering, Canadian authorities organized the largest police deployment in Canadian history—a force that included four levels of police and the Canadian Armed Forces. Nearly ten thousand officers and personnel were deployed throughout the summit and a three-metre-high, 3.8-kilometre-long concrete and chain link fence was built around the downtown core of the city to “protect” the delegates. The cost of security operations alone exceeded Cdn\$100 million.

Quite predictably, the security measures resulted in many clashes between police and protesters at or near the fence. From Friday, April 20, to Sunday, April 22, the various police forces unleashed 5192 tear gas canisters on people in the streets, residents of the city and, to some extent, delegates themselves. Along with that, they fired 903 rubber or plastic bullets into crowds or directly at individuals, often at close range.

## The Project

This project began as a discussion between friends about the FTAA and the importance of documenting events in Québec and throughout the hemisphere—minus the corporate media lens. Since the protests in Québec, however, the project has changed from a purely documentary effort to include more reflection and analysis of the so-called “anti-globalization” movement and its true revolutionary potential. Through it all, we believe more than ever

before that we must keep working, mobilizing, raising awareness and resisting in our local communities if there is to be any hope of sustaining and developing movements against the globalizers' neo-liberal agenda.

Despite our efforts, this is by no means an all-inclusive contribution to the struggle. Many barriers to participation existed throughout the production process. Most notably, since much of the work was done in a very short time frame through e-mail and the internet (as most of the "anti-globalization" movement's efforts seem to have been), our contact with those who don't have access to such media of communication has been drastically limited. Another barrier to participation was geography. Since we all lived in Ontario at the onset of the project, most of our outreaching efforts were directed to individuals, communities and organizations in this area, making many of our contributors Ontarians.

Aside from these and other barriers, we believe this book provides a space for discussion and reflection that will move communities of resistance forward. In it, various opinions are expressed and stories are shared, representing a myriad of experiences and viewpoints. We hope you enjoy what follows.