

Protesting the Corporate-Debauched Olympics

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Sunday, February 14, 2010

<http://politicsrespun.org/2010/02/protesting-the-corporate-debauched-olympics/>



I've spent the weekend reflecting on the success of various confrontations to the Olympic brand and the emerging global corporate feudalism.

I'll start off with a recognition that I'm sitting here in my "I am a free speech zone" t-shirt, having celebrated Valentine's Day and Chinese New Year and observed Vancouver's Missing Women Memorial March, which saw eagles circling above.



Friday's Olympics opening day march was a significant success. Elders led the procession. Dancing was prevalent. [Agents provocateurs were noted](#), whispered about, marginalized and videotaped. And our messaging was clear:

1. **"No Olympics on stolen native land"**: the vast majority of British Columbia, unlike the rest of Canada, is on unceded native land and BC has been a part of Canada for almost 140 years now.

2. **"2010 homes, not 2010 games"**: the policy choice to host the Olympics has directly impoverished hundreds of thousands of British Columbians.
3. **"This is what democracy looks like"**: marching through the streets is the active expression of democracy; it is neither illegal nor anti-social.

What is lost in all this is the subtext of class war.

First, watch this clip from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*:

[YouTube Video](#)

Funny, eh, but let's not think we're past this. We have purged the nobility from our social system, even though the queen is plastered all over our money. Nobility by birth, except in monarchist mags, has been supplanted by corporate and celebrity nobility.



We still have a class system. It's not upper, middle and lower class anymore; that's all too impolite. But if we examine income groups in Canada, we have a increasingly wealthy hyper-rich, a rather rich group that is doing quite well, a struggling middle class that is being milked by user fees and needs two incomes to have the same purchasing power as one income did in the 1970s, a growing working poor or subsistence lower-middle class who are a few paycheques away from homelessness, and a growing homeless yet working and pure poverty class. Too many of these lower strata are using food banks.

Through this, our culture endures rampant empathy-free zones.

Gordon Campbell and all the Olympics boosters have chosen to host a global party. The price they have charged society has been in closed schools, reduced mental health services, declining hospital services and cuts to all levels of healthcare, an affordable housing crisis that enriches those who already happen own expensive property in the sexy parts of BC, and an uncounted death toll of people whose lives have been truncated by the service cuts that were the "tough choices" to ensure the tax base of BC funds a global party for the hyper rich: corporations, their serfs, their customers, and those who could afford to bid on Olympics tickets or pay scalpers.

Oh, and we have had the lowest minimum wage in the country and the highest rate of child poverty for

more than half the decade.



Let them eat fucking cake, hey?

Let's go back to Friday night's protest. The few thousand of us who rallied, danced and marched. We did not disrupt the Olympics or the culturally-impaired opening ceremonies. We posited a variety of statements and had good media pickup. We exercised our personal free speech zones and the legal observers were happily mostly bored.

The bottom line was that there is a price paid by hosting the Olympics. The corporate media and other global corporations who only symbolically underwrite the party while the taxpayers of Vancouver, Whistler, BC and Canada actually pay for it, all go on thinking it's a great time, despite the 12 degree temperatures and shipping snow from Manning Park to Cypress Bowl. So much for green games.

There are those who continue to wear their blood red Olympics mittens and cram themselves onto our transit to get to their events, some of whom vehemently resenting having to take transit at all, and still have no idea the kind of suffering the vulnerable of BC have endured and will continue to endure for decades while we pay off this corporate debauchery.

I don't know what to say to them. I want to take their pictures, as they are maybe the deluded masses who don't get the simple connection that voting for Gordon Campbell in 2001 because he said he would cut their taxes meant he'd cut services for the vulnerable and increase user fees for the rest of us. They are also the people who think a party that costs \$6b plus the Canada Line and the Sea-to-Sky Highway will not have a collections agent waiting at our house on Sunday morning while we clean up the half empty wine glasses and stale cheese plates. The empty beer bottles won't pay the debt. My grandchildren will finally burn the mortgage on the excesses we'll enjoy over the next 14 days.

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And the BC government opened the legislature last week with a warning to fear the March 2 budget. For once the government is telling the truth. We are going to be further debauched in that budget because while VANOC is above the law and keeps its books secret, the government knows how much was spent and they'll use it as an excuse to cut more, privatize more and gouge any other public, communal asset left in BC.

And if you think I'm crazy, wait 16 more days. I dare you.



The best we can hope for is for the Olympics to not bankrupt BC financially because our leaders have already sold our soul and bankrupted our morality, and we're all going to feel the lashes for decades to come.