



Olympians protest contra aid

October 1 marked a new twist in the ongoing conflict in Central America, with the resumption of U.S. military assistance to the Nicaraguan contras seeking to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Opponents of this action staged rallies around the country to protest the event.

Approximately 60 demonstrators marched in a circle in front of the federal building in Olympia and then congregated in Sylvester Park. They carried large white crosses which bore the names of victims of contra actions.

Evergreen faculty member Stephanie Coontz addressed those in attendance and delivered a stinging denunciation of U.S. Central American policies. She pointed out that the inherent contradiction in Reagan's foreign policy which claims to uphold freedom and democracy in its efforts to depose the Sandinista government in Nicaragua while expressing mild condemnation of the repressive actions by the white minority government of South Africa.



Coontz noted that the majority of Americans, as measured by public opinion polls, do not favor aiding the contras. She challenged the demonstrators to seek out those who support current U.S. policy and those who are indifferent on the issue and to convince them of the faults of U.S. actions.

This demonstration marked the beginning of many actions planned this fall by opponents of U.S. Central American policies. A network of organizations dedicated to promoting peace and justice in the region exist in the Olympia area. They are planning activities ranging from changing attitudes in this country to providing assistance in the construction of schools and health clinics in Central

America. Information on events may be obtained in the Evergreen Political Information Center and the Peace and Conflict Resolution Center on campus.

- Todd D. Anderson

Activists protest rainforest destruction

Twenty people rallied in front of Seafirst Bank on 5th and Columbia in downtown Olympia September 30 to protest the bank's loans to countries whose development projects destroy rainforests.

The demonstration, sponsored by the Rainforest Action Network and Earth First!, was part of an international day of protest against private banks, as well as the World Bank and other multilateral lending institutions, who lend money for rainforest destruction. September 30 was chosen to coincide with the opening of the annual meeting of the World Bank in Washington, D.C., where the Tropical Forest Action Group, an environmentalist coalition, held a Citizen's Conference on the projects the World Bank funds, and a march to the World Bank headquarters.

The World Bank and three other development banks together loan \$22 billion a year to projects in rainforest countries, according to the *World Rainforest Report*, published by the Rainforest Action Network. (Rainforest countries include Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, and Indonesia, among others). According to a U.S. government report, in 1982, Seafirst Bank had \$90 million in outstanding loans to Brazil, \$18 million to Venezuela, and \$257 million to Mexico. Bank of America, Seafirst's parent bank, had outstanding loans of \$2.3 billion to Brazil, \$2 billion to Venezuela, \$2.5 billion to Mexico, and \$1.5 billion to the Philippines.

According to Rainforest Action Network literature distributed by the demonstrators, "...tropical rainforests are being destroyed at the rate of one hundred acres per minute and at least one life form becomes extinct every day. At this rate, the rainforests will be virtually all gone in fifteen years." The literature also noted that millions of indigenous peoples, whose survival depends on the rainforest, are slowly being extinguished. Leukemia patients and others who depend on medicine from the rainforest are also threatened. Ultimately, if the rainforests are destroyed, carbon dioxide normally absorbed by the forests will accumulate in the atmosphere, causing reduction oxygen levels and an increase in temperatures near the earth's surface (the Greenhouse Effect), which could cause the

polar ice caps to melt.

TESC student Rhys Roth, an organizer of the Olympia demonstration, said the protest's purpose was mainly to "draw attention to the issue." According to Roth, the groups goals are: Ending the World Bank's destructive lending policies, preservation of remaining tropical rainforests and areas inhabited by indigenous people, reforestation where possible, and encouragement of sustainable agriculture in rainforest countries. Roth also noted that "the burden of proof is on the private banks. They need to explicitly clear their portfolios of loans to construction projects which are destroying rainforests."

Roth said he had spoken to David Paget, manager of the 5th and Columbia branch, before the protest, and had "appreciated talking with him." However, Roth is "hoping that he (Paget) will take moral responsibility commensurate with the benefits he receives" from the bank. Paget was unavailable for comment.

The protest started at 3:30 and ended shortly after the bank closed at 5:00. Throughout the protest, the demonstrators, mainly Evergreen students, held signs saying "Breath Easy, Save the Rainforest," "The World Bank Fund\$ Mass Destruc-



photo by Rhys Roth

tion," "Rainforest Destruction equals Genocide for Indigenous Cultures," and other slogans.

When asked about further protest, Roth replied, "the issue is not going to just go away, so we're not going to go away." "It's a crucial issue that needs to be addressed immediately," added Evergreen student Kristi MacLean, another organizer of the demonstration.

Protests also took place in Seattle and Tacoma.

-Lillian Ford