



# BLIND SPOT

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an Independent Media Centre (IMC) publication

<http://ontario.indymedia.org/blindspot>

## Indymedia is two years old!

### Independent media movement is changing the world

In November 1999, in the streets of Seattle, there was more to the scene than jubilant protest amid tear gas and rubber bullets. This protest also gave birth to a new global network of self-expression for the marginalized – the Independent Media Centre (IMC). Several hundred media activists came together in Seattle to cover the protests against the World Trade Organization.

The basic idea is still the same today. Media activists pool their resources and experience from their communities to create a web site on which all can freely post, and often open a drop-in space with the technology resources to let people “become the media” themselves – by producing audio, video, and print publications. Many protests have featured live audio streams on the internet, and have seen video compilations created shortly after. The video *Showdown in Seattle* was created just two days

after the Seattle protest. This achievement is only possible because of the many articles and clips which journalists freely shared among each other.

The web sites ([www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) is the central one) all look similar. Most of them run on the original Seattle software, which was created in collaboration with activist programmers in Australia.

Anyone can publish to the newswire in the right-hand column, and comment on articles that are there. The centre column has feature stories – special links that the editorial team has put together for issues they feel are important. The left-hand column sports the Indymedia logo, and links to all the other IMC web sites.

There are currently over seventy Independent Media Centres around the world, hosted on a hand-

ful of web servers that all receive steadily increasing traffic. During the WTO protests in Seattle, the server received almost 1.5 million hits. For the G-8 protests in Genoa this summer, over 3 million hits were recorded. Now, Indymedia is seeing this kind of interest on a daily basis.

Each IMC is an autonomous group, that has its own mission statement, manages its own finances, and makes its own decisions. Media is no longer something to just get angry about – now you can get involved, and make your own opinions heard!

## Hard to believe ...

by D. Theriot-Orr

... that it has been two years since IMC was birthed by a group of committed visionaries, inspired by many who came before.

Hard to believe that two years ago the WTO was gearing up for what many thought would be a ho-hum little conference; all the pundits jumping all over each other to say how successful the conference was going to be – the “TINA” mentality – There Is No Alternative.

Little did they know that a little website that could would broadcast the utter failure of the conference to eager companeras around the globe.

And the little website grew...  
first to a few cities on the east coast...  
then to europe...  
mexico...  
and onward...  
70 SITES IN TWO YEARS!  
UNBELIEVEABLE!

And beautiful.

But, amongst all this, I have a note of caution.

The internet is a powerful medium, no doubt about that. However, the internet is only accessible to a small fraction of the world’s population. In all of our efforts, we cannot forget to continue to utilize the full range of activist technologies – zines, phone trees, photography exhibits, pamphlets, video projects, and so on. I fear that we are becoming too reliant on email and web-based communication in a time where only a privileged few have access to these tools.

In closing, to paraphrase Tom Hayden, from in front of King County Jail, Seattle, Dec. ‘99:

“It is not enough for us to decrease the rate of destruction... we must increase the rate of creation!”



# Multi-media projects

The Indymedia network has different audio / video / print projects that can all be accessed off the main web site.

The [print.indymedia.org](http://print.indymedia.org) site publishes a weekly 2-page .pdf (printable file) that deals with news and issues from around the world, using stories from the global Indymedia network. Also on that page are links to local IMC print publications, including this one, Blind Spot ([ontario.indymedia.org/blindspot](http://ontario.indymedia.org/blindspot)). All these .pdf publications are meant to be printed off by individuals and groups for reading, and for copying and distributing.

Every month FreeSpeech TV ([www.freespeech.org](http://www.freespeech.org)) collects video segments from Indymedia videographers around the

world into the “Indymedia newsREAL.” You can find out more about that project through [satellite.indymedia.org](http://satellite.indymedia.org)

More video footage is available at [www.indymedia.org/projects](http://www.indymedia.org/projects). The IMC video channel has video uploads from the entire network of local IMCs. There are feature video projects such as *This is What Democracy Looks Like*, which covers the 1999 protests against the WTO in Seattle, and *Breaking the Bank*, on the protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Many IMCs have their own radio projects, and several of them broadcast regularly on the internet. Find out more about IMC radio projects at [radio.indymedia.org](http://radio.indymedia.org)

## Open publishing ...

... means that the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help the readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free and change it and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news, they can, preferably on an open publishing site.

from [www.physics.usyd.edu.au/~matthewa/catk/openpub.html](http://www.physics.usyd.edu.au/~matthewa/catk/openpub.html)

# A knot of resistance against the lie

## Subcomandante Marcos

*from a statement videotaped in the mountains of Chiapas, Southeast Mexico, and delivered to the Media & Democracy Congress, New York City, January 31 & February 1 1997:*

A global decomposition is taking place, we call it the Fourth World War – neoliberalism: the global economic process to eliminate that multitude of people who are not useful to the powerful – the groups called “minorities” in the mathematics of power, but who happen to be the majority population in the world. We find ourselves in a world system of globalization willing to sacrifice millions of human beings.

The giant communication media: the great monsters of the television industry, the communication satellites, magazines, and newspapers seem determined to present a virtual world, created in the image of what the globalization process requires.

In this sense, the world of contemporary news is a world that exists for the VIP’s – the very important people. Their everyday lives are what is important: if they get married, if they divorce, if they eat, what clothes they wear and what clothes they take off – these major movie stars and big politicians. But common people only appear for a moment – when they kill someone, or when they die. For the communication giants and the neoliberal powers, the others, the excluded, only exist when they are dead, or when they are in jail or court. This can’t go on. Sooner or later this virtual world clashes with the real world. And that is actually happening: this clash produces results of rebel-

lion and war throughout the entire world, or what is left of the world to even have war.

We have a choice: we can have a cynical attitude in the face of the media, to say that nothing can be done about the dollar power that creates itself in images, words, digital communication, and computer systems that invades not just with an invasion of power, but with a way of seeing that world, of how they think the world should look. We could say, well, “that’s the way it is” and do nothing. Or we can simply assume incredulity: we can say that any communication by the media monopolies is a total lie. We can ignore it and go about our lives.

But there is a third option that is neither conformity, nor skepticism, nor distrust: that is to construct a different way – to show the world what is really happening – to have a critical world view and to become interested in the truth of what happens to the people who inhabit every corner of this world. The work of independent media is to tell the history of social struggle in the world, and here in North America – the US, Canada and Mexico – independent media has, on occasion, been able to open spaces even within the mass media monopolies: to force them to acknowledge news of other social movements.

The problem is not only to know what is occurring in the world, but to understand it and to derive lessons from it – just as if we were studying history – a history not of the past, but a history of what is happening at any given moment in whatever part of the world. This is the way to learn who we are, what it is we want, who we can be and what we can do or not do.

By not having to answer to the monster media monopolies, the independent media has a life work, a political project and purpose: to let the truth be known. This is more and more important in the globalization process. This truth becomes a knot of resistance against the lie. It is our only possibility to save the truth, to maintain it, and distribute it, little by little, just as the books were saved in Fahrenheit 451 – in which a group of people dedicated themselves to memorize books, to save them from being destroyed, so that the ideas would not be lost.

This same way, independent media tries to save history: the present history – saving it and trying to share it, so it will not disappear, moreover to distribute it to other places, so that this history is not limited to one country, to one region, to one city or social group. It is necessary not only for independent voices to exchange information and to broaden the channels, but to resist the spreading lies of the monopolies. The truth that we build in our groups, our cities, our regions, our countries, will reach full potential if we join with other truths and realize that what is occurring in other parts of the world also is part of human history.

In August 1996, we called for the creation of a network of independent media, a network of information. We mean a network to resist the power of the lie that sells us this war that we call the Fourth World War. We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives: this is a project of life, of humanity, humanity which has a right to critical and truthful information.