

# THE CONTINENTAL WALK



**The Pentagon - October 18, 1976**

# The CONTINENTAL WALK NEWS

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Two of the three routes joining in front of the Lincoln Memorial Saturday at 1:30 pm

*Photo by Karl Bissinger*

## SATURDAY

On Saturday morning (October 16) the three main routes of the Continental Walk gathered at three separate locations on the border of the District of Columbia for the final leg of the Walk.

The first to start off was the Boston to Washington route which left Prince Georges County in Maryland down Rhode Island Avenue at 8:20 am with 200 people. Ten minutes later the San Francisco to Washington route left Montgomery County in Mary-

land heading down Connecticut Avenue with 180 people. Two hours later, the New Orleans to Washington route left Arlington, Virginia, heading across the Key Bridge with 150 people.

Before we left, alot of uncertainty had been built up on where we would walk. We wanted to walk in the streets, but the police had said that if our numbers (unspecified) weren't sufficient, they'd put us on the sidewalks. It was a magnificent site to see a couple hundred people stepping out to take one half



On steps of Lincoln Memorial after routes have converged

*Photo by Karl Bissinger*



Monks from Japan Buddha Sangha, who walked on all 3 routes, chant on Lincoln Memorial *Photo by Janet Charles*

of the road on the way to the Lincoln Memorial.

All three routes were timed to converge simultaneously at the Lincoln Memorial at 1 pm. As each route proceeded along more people began to join. On the Boston route one bus after another from out of town

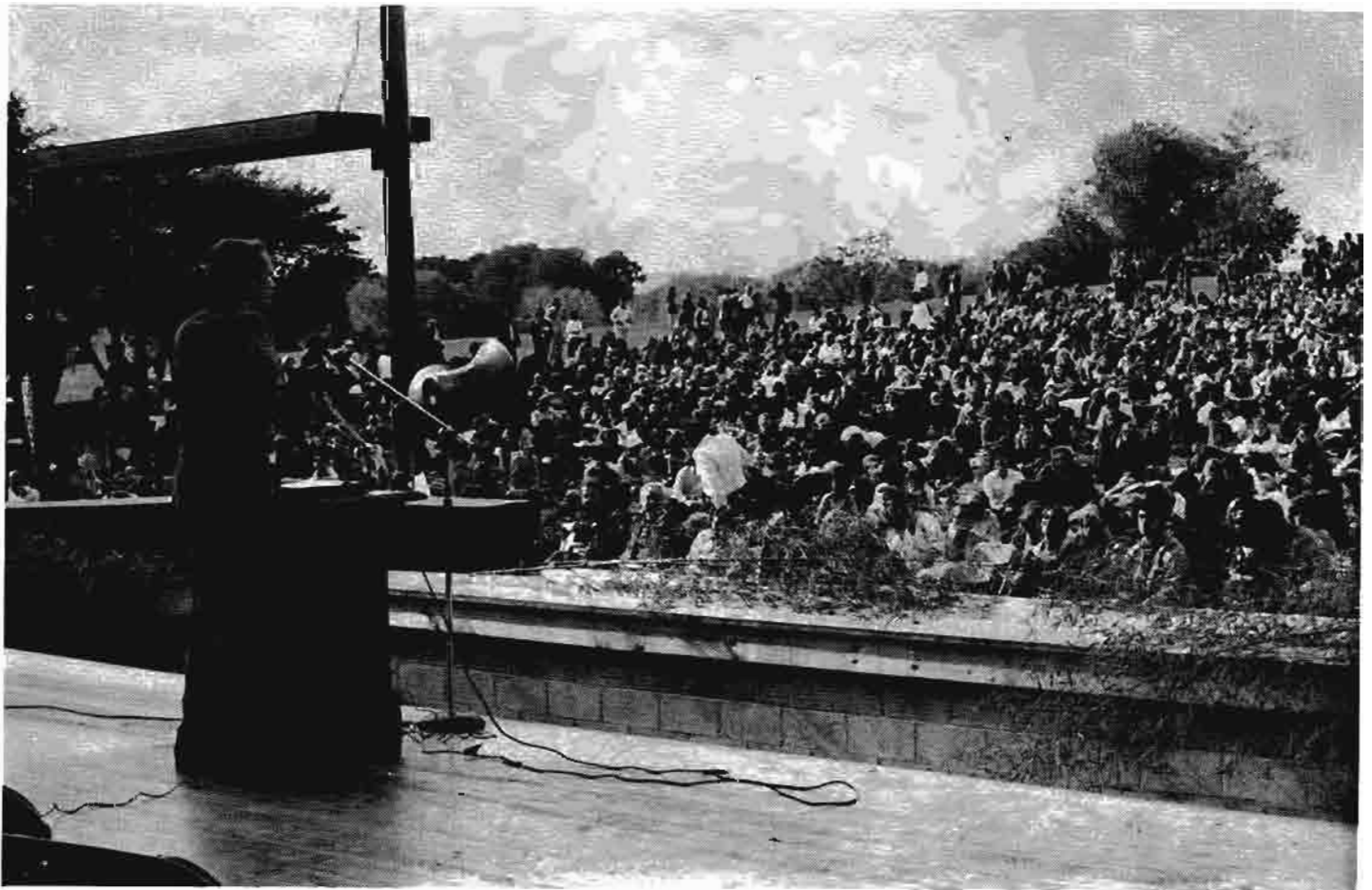
would stop and discharge its passengers.

The 50 representatives of the Japanese peace movement scattered among the three routes added immeasurably to the power of the Walk – especially with the beating of their drums.

At Dupont Circle the Powder Horn Puppet Theater from the Midwest joined the San Francisco route with a 12-foot high puppet of the Mississippi River, a herd of buffalo puppets, a bird man on 6-foot stilts, etc. At the Capitol grounds the Bread and Puppet Theater joined the Boston route with a "procession in two parts: yes and no". "No" was represented by a military band, Uncle Fatso (capitalism), spectres of death. "Yes" was represented by a soft music band, herd of "horses", flower banners, flowing white birds held aloft on 15-foot poles, sun, stars, etc. The Trident Monster traveled on the New Orleans route with its 408 black streamers (one for each nuclear weapon) on rope stretched out 525 feet (the length of the real submarine) and held up by bamboo poles.

As the Southern route passed through Georgetown, it swelled to 200 people; as the Western route passed by the White House, it swelled to 400 as the Northern route passed by the Capitol, the numbers jumped in leaps and bounds to 500.

The most dramatic and moving part of the entire Washington scenario was the joining of the three routes. These three routes, which began in separate



Saturday rally at Sylvan Theater listens to Sam Lovejoy

*Photo by Bill Offenloch*

areas of the country, thousands of miles apart finally came together after months of walking, at the Lincoln Memorial at 1:30 pm.

After some brief remarks, the three routes – now one – walked to the Sylvan Theater at the base of the Washington Monument for the afternoon rally. The rally of 2000 to 3000 people featured a skit by the Bread and Puppet Theater, singing by Rev. Frederick Kirkpatrick and Charlie King, as well as speeches, reflecting the breadth of issues dealt with on the Walk.

That evening 300 people filled the auditorium at Luther Place Memorial Church for the film festival featuring "Lovejoy's Nuclear War", "Last Grave at Dimbaza", and "Fighting for Our Lives".

## SUNDAY

The Ecumenical Service and Peace and Justice Fair on the following day provided time for walkers, organizers, and local participants to spend time together talking, singing, and learning. The day was disappointingly cold and rainy, but as has been the case with the Walk since its beginning, the weather didn't stop us!

The Ecumenical Service, pulled together by Sally Benson of Clergy and Laity Concerned and Art Waskow of the Institute for Policy Studies, was



Igal Roodenko and Jim Peck at WRL table at Peace and Justice Fair Sunday  
*Photo by Janet Charles*

developed around the theme of Genesis. The seven days of creation were read, contrasted by a response which described our destruction (pollution, nuclear weapons, etc.) of that aspect of life. Large colorful banners depicted each day of creation. There was music, poetry, prose, and a strong feeling of community and solidarity as everyone joined in the singing of "We Shall Not Be Moved" as the service drew to a close.

The Fair included booths by National Walk spon-



Ecumenical Service with banners by Sandy Spieler

*Photo by Janet Charles*

soring organizations, and other national and local Washington based movement groups. There were workshops on Chile, South Africa, government secrecy, the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, and Congressional lobbying. There was also entertainment throughout the afternoon. Inexpensive, nutritious food was sold by the Center for Service in the Public Interest, and fresh cider and baked goods were sold by the Walk. The afternoon was busy, friendly, and very well attended. A meal for 250 people was served Sunday evening followed by a strategy meeting for Monday's demonstration.

## MONDAY

Monday morning began with a lot of uncertainty (which had been built up over the previous few weeks) as a result of government denials of street permits. The U.S. Parks Department granted parade permits only for the sidewalks in their jurisdiction, which included the Arlington Memorial Bridge, the first part of our walk to the Pentagon. If we got past that we still had to deal with the Virginia police (the Pentagon is entirely surrounded by Virginia) who only granted permits for the shoulder of the road. Assuming we actually made it to the Pentagon, we had to deal with the Pentagon's denial of access to "their" steps.

We had decided to negotiate vigorously for the street with the intention of walking into the street. If the negotiations got no where, we would take the sidewalks so we could reach the Pentagon, White



Rally in front of the Pentagon

*Photo by Larry Johnson*

House, etc., and not jeopardize the permits we did have for the rest of the day.

The police were prepared . . . after denying permission to walk in the street, they brought in about a dozen mounted police and a station wagon with two rather vicious-looking, snarling and barking police dogs. We took the sidewalk across the bridge, then after more negotiating we finally were permitted to walk in the streets the rest of the day.

Seven hundred of us paraded in front of the River entrance of the Pentagon and filed onto the ceremonial grassy area with only a small executive parking lot between us and the entrance. As the talking and singing proceeded, a smaller group was making last minute preparations to carry the coffins (containing



Procession of Death leaving the Lincoln Memorial, Monday morning

*Photo by Karl Bissinger*

names of people, programs, or places which have died as a result of government spending), a model of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and a Declaration of Nonviolence to the steps of the Pentagon; meanwhile we were negotiating with the authorities for permission to place the coffins on the steps of the Pentagon to avoid arrests.

As Rev. Bernard Lee finished his speech, the five coffins were picked up and slowly carried from the crowd across the parking lot. As the steps were approached a line of some 30 riot police with yard long night sticks ran out of a bus parked nearby and



*Photo by Larry Johnson*  
In Virginia heading towards the Pentagon, Monday



Guards "protecting" the Pentagon as coffins and "bomb" are brought to the steps  
*Photo by Larry Johnson*

blocked the entrance to the Pentagon.

When the 100 or so demonstrators reached the line of police, they put down the coffins and argued for permission to place the coffins on the steps. After a few minutes, the demonstrators remaining near the coffins were dragged off to the two waiting buses as Charlie King sang "Gonna Lay Down My Coffins and Bombs, Down by the Pentagon", "Solidarity Forever", etc. The 55 arrested were taken to Alexandria for arraignment where two minors had charges dropped, 48 were released on personal recognizance and five non-cooperated with the procedure remaining in jail fasting 5 days before being released with charges dropped.

The 48 who have to return for a November 5 hearing were charged with "blocking entrances and driveways" and "failure to comply with official directions." Most of those arrested intend to make the case political, avoiding a strictly legalistic defense.



*Photo by Bennet Hall*  
Ed Hedemann of WRI being arrested at Pentagon

As the coffins were laid down, those demonstrators waiting on the lawn shed their black robes and unfurled dozens of colorful flower banners, and released balloons. The somber funeral feeling of the morning was quickly turned into an affirmative, celebrative one. The walkers filed out of the Pentagon grounds, clenched fists raised in solidarity with those on the buses who had been arrested. From the Pentagon, walkers went back into Washington for a brief rally at HEW. Anne Braden of SOC and Rev. James Orange of SCLC spoke of the human needs which HEW would not meet due to lack of funding.

A delegation of walkers who were evicted from a Mississippi housing project went to HUD to demand reinstatement, repayment of excess rent payments, and open housing at the project. They rejoined the procession at HEW.

From HEW the walkers went on to the White House where a moving picket was formed on the sidewalk in front. Demonstrators carried placards bearing the names of all the towns and cities that the Walk had passed through. As the walkers picketed outside, a delegation which included Anne Braden, Barton Hunter of FOR, Rev. Bernard Lee of SCLC, Vickie Leonard of the National Walk staff, Susan LaFlamme representing the long distance walkers, Stewart Meacham of the AFSC, Rev. Quijn Sato of Gensuikyo went inside to meet with John Marcum a representative of the National Security Council and

an officer in charge of arms control. Though the meeting was pleasant and courteous, it was clear that foreign policy would be little changed.

The day ended with a brief rally in Lafayette Park across from the White House where William Douthard spoke briefly and music was played by the Seldom Heard String Band. The rally ended with statements by Bernard Lee and Vickie Leonard, spokespersons for the White House delegation.

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Coming into a city just four weeks before a major demonstration, working 8 to 8 every day and sometimes many more hours, seems insane but with the tremendous cooperation between staff (New York and Washington, D.C.), organizers and local community people, the project worked and was a huge success. Behind the five days of activities in Washington, D.C., was months of hard work by organizers, long distance walkers and local folks. Behind the five days of activities in Washington, D.C., were more than twenty full time staff working to get the D.C. community and media aware that the Continental Walk was coming to Washington!

Prior to September in D.C. local organizations had been aware of the Walk but no one had been able to hire a full time person to take responsibility for coordinating the five day weekend of activities. In late August Pat Lacefield was hired to begin the



Vigil in front of the White House, Monday afternoon

*Photo by Bill Offentloch*

work. Part of the New York City staff moved to the District in mid-September to build on the work already begun and hire additional people to help with all the jobs that had to be finished, which ranged from contacting local groups about the Fair booths to making banners, soliciting housing, coordinating buses, poster, producing leaflets and fliers and building media relations. Walter Fauntroy, the District Representative to the House, offered space in his church for our office. The Washington Peace Center had already offered their desk and phone; so from the two locations, the Walk began organizing.

Wonderful things happened over those weeks. Local folks provided housing for Walk staff saying it was their contribution to the Walk. Sandy Spieler joined the staff from Minnesota (Powder Horn Puppet Theater) providing the imagination and know-how for beautiful banners and puppets. Luther Place Memorial Church and New Bethel Baptist Church gave their churches without charge for Walk activities. The media knew who we were and all the hard work done by staff paid off by the excellent coverage and interest. After initially refusing to meet with representatives from the Walk, the White House granted an appointment with a Walk delegation as publicity began to appear. Our sound equipment was provided without charge. Community groups helped in many ways including not charging for typesetting leaflets by one organization. Things were chaotic but it worked.

#### LARRY SCHOENTHAL

Larry Schoenthal, a friend of many West and East coast movement people, a participant in the Continental Walk, an activist with the Farm Workers and anti-nuke groups—was killed in an auto accident in Oregon in September.

Memorial services for him have been held in San Luis Obispo and Santa Cruz.

#### THEY WALKED TO WASHINGTON, D.C., FOR DISARMAMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Folks in the New York office would like to do a picture book on the Continental Walk. Vickie Leonard, on our staff since the Walk left San Francisco, has volunteered to pull together a 108-page collection of photos, reports, and stories on the 20 routes of the Walk. If you have any good photos (black/white, color, slides, whatever) of the Walk in your area, please send us a copy. We'll need to know where the photo is from, when it was taken, what is it of, and who the photographer was, if possible.

Also, please send reports of the Walk and any stories, recollections and anecdotes you have about it. Vickie would like to have all resources and material collected by Thanksgiving so as soon as you can send whatever you have will sure help.



Gail Pressberg, Vickie Leonard, Susan LaFlamme, Rev. Bernard Lee, Barton Hunter, David McReynolds, Rev. Shibuya after just crossing Arlington Memorial Bridge.

Photo by Janet Charles

Cover photo by Karl Bissinger shows crowd at Pentagon during short rally before the arrests began.