

# Can the peace movement

by Cathy McDonald  
National Features Writer  
Canadian University Press

*Demonstrations express political ambitions before the political means necessary to realize them have been created. Demonstrations predict the realization of their own ambitions and thus contribute to that realization, but they cannot themselves achieve them.*

John Berger, British Philosopher  
"Half a million people marched in Brussels today," the speaker announced to great cheers. "Two hundred thousand marched in London, 200,000 in Rome..." He looked out over the 5000 peace protestors assembled in front of the Parliament buildings. "I guess we can't match those numbers, but for Ottawa-Hull, this is pretty good."

For the 50,000 Canadians who protested the arms race on Oct. 22, singing and chanting down the main streets of 45 municipalities across the country, spirits were up, but the feeling of strength and purpose was beginning to wane.

After all, their main message, "Refuse the Cruise," was an improbable demand. The Canadian government had already agreed last July to test the American Cruise missile in Alberta, despite a year of building protest.

Along with the Pershing II, the cruise is the target of increasingly large and militant protest in Europe. One and a half million people demonstrated over the weekend of Oct. 22, International Disarmament Day, culminating a week of protest actions. The movement is determined to stop the deployment of 572 of the nuclear armed missiles in Europe, scheduled to begin this December.

In Ottawa, the march was quiet. A few chants and songs rippled down the column of people, and soon after arriving on Parliament Hill to listen to speeches, the crowd dissipated.

"This is one of the most disempowering marches I've been to in my whole life," said participant Derek Rasmussen, later that afternoon in his home. "I came out of it totally depressed."

"We're not going to change anything if we keep marching to Parliament Hill and asking Pierre Trudeau politely (not to test the Cruise)."

His house is cold, and 22-year old Rasmussen lies on his floor level mattress, looking tired. The former Trent University student now devotes all of his time to being a peace activist, and he is disillusioned with the Canadian movement.

"We're farting around," he said. "Look at

the European example. They hit the streets. The media are downplaying it, but since when do you see thousands getting arrested? They're filling the jails in West Germany. People aren't writing (letters) politely anymore..."

Rasmussen is part of a small but steadily growing movement in Canada that is frustrated with traditional forms of protest and is looking to more militant ways of making its voice heard. He belongs to the Alliance for Non-Violent Action, an Ontario-based coalition of peace groups.

The group has organized many acts of civil disobedience, including a Remembrance Day 1981 blockade of Litton Industries' plant in Toronto. Rasmussen's first arrest occurred at that sit-in, where he and 22 others were dragged away from the plant where Cruise missile guidance systems are produced.

The alliance repeated the event last year, where 150 were arrested in front of 1000 supporters. This year, three days of actions are planned for the week following Nov. 11.

Civil disobedience has also become popular in Montreal. For two days after the Oct. 22 demonstration, protestors set up blockades at the American and Soviet embassies, and successfully closed the Canadian Armed Forces recruitment centre for a day.

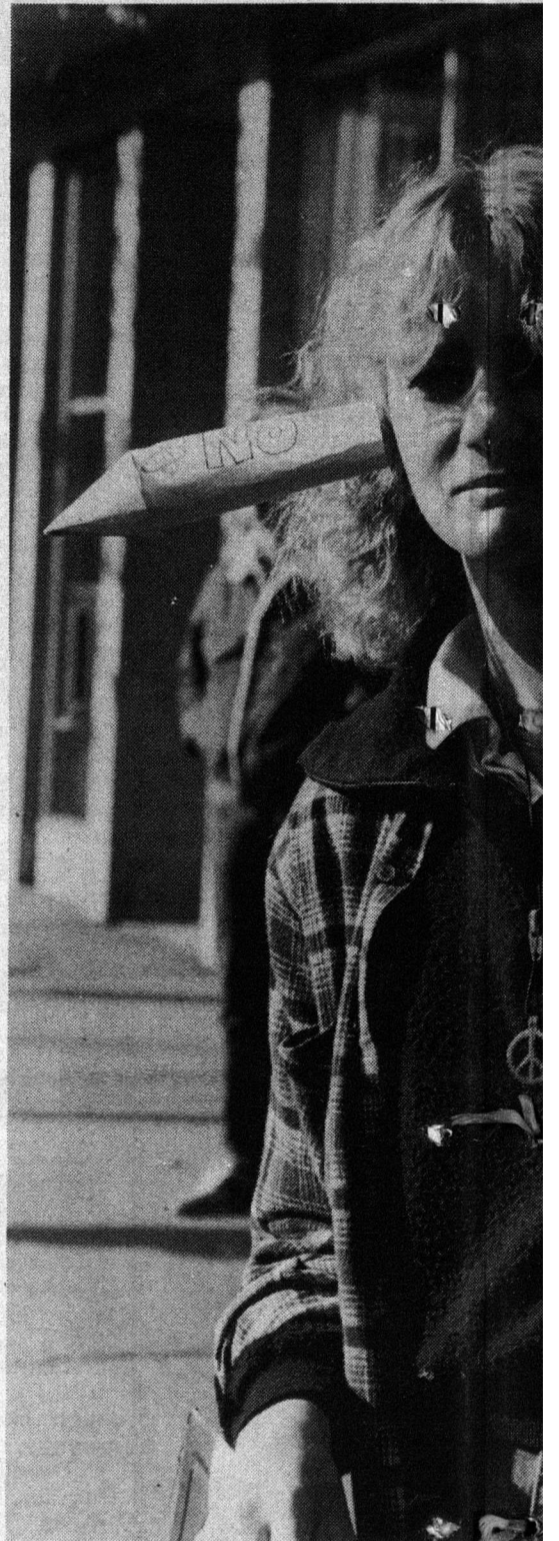
McGill University student Normand Beaudet, one of 45 people arrested, said he participated because demonstrations are not effective. "When you get 20,000 people out on the street in Montreal demonstrating against nuclear build-up and the government doesn't listen, you have to take further steps that are still non-violent," he said. "CD (civil disobedience) is one of them."

Rasmussen echoed that frustration. He said the cruise-testing agreement signed last July shows the futility of demonstrations, petitions, and letter-writing.

Even though a December Gallup poll showed 56 per cent of Canadians opposed testing of the Cruise, the issue was decided by cabinet without Parliamentary debate, and was endorsed by both the Liberal and Conservative parties. Trudeau's office reported receiving the second-largest number of letters on any single Canadian issue.

People are outraged the government can thumb its nose at popular opinion, Rasmussen says, yet the peace movement will not admit that their tactics may educate people, but are not effective in achieving political power.

The Canadian peace movement seems to have admitted losing its battle over the Cruise-



A graphic plea for peace.

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