

Democracy Brigades April 21 2000 John Muir DB

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## **Granny D And Author Bill McKibben Arrested In Capitol During Protest Against Campaign Corruption And Global Warming**

WASHINGTON - April 25 - Led by Doris Haddock ("Granny D") and the revered environmental writer Bill McKibben, the 32-member John Muir Democracy Brigade, a merger of campaign-finance and environmental activists, sallied forth in the Rotunda of the national Capitol on Friday, April 21, with banners and speeches for an end to the endangerment of the earth by oil, coal, and nuclear industries. All 32, including Granny D, McKibben, and leaders of various organizations, were arrested by the Capitol police for "demonstrating" in the Capitol contrary to a federal law which carries a maximum six-month jail term.

"We no longer have proper representation," Ms. Haddock, the 90-year-old woman who walked across the continent for campaign finance reform, told a press conference on the Senate lawn before she led the group into the Rotunda. "Our elected leaders are consumed by the need to raise election funds from special interests, and they no longer are able to represent the needs of the people or of our ravaged earth.

"We must declare our independence from the corrupting bonds of big money," she continued. "Our right to alter our government must be used to sweep these halls clean of greedy interests so that people may use this government in service to each other's needs and the protect the condition of our earth."

This was the fourth Democracy Brigade action, and the largest, since last Oct. 26th. The demonstrators carried enormous banners proclaiming that "Campaign Finance Corruption Leads to Environmental Destruction," "When Democracy Is For Sale So Is the Environment," and "Clean Elections Equal Clean Environment," and demanding: "Stop Global Warming--Ban Campaign Contributions from Global Warmers." The Brigades, a project of the Alliance for Democracy, are demonstrating on behalf of full public funding for public elections. They aim to obtain official congressional hearings on that proposal by the spring of next year.

McKibben, the author of THE END OF NATURE, said that there is now a "strong consensus" in the scientific community that global warming is dangerous and that even some large companies, such as British Petroleum and Shell, have joined in the concern. "The only people that seem not to get it work in that building behind us," which "may have something to do with the millions and millions of dollars that flow in to that building from the interests that do not want to change the status quo," McKibben said.

Referring to Granny D's walk, McKibben said, "When I'm 90 I plan to walk across the country, and hopefully it will still be as sweet and lovely a country as it is now."

John Passacantando, executive director of Ozone Action, declared that "this type of peaceful civil disobedience is the new face of democracy. It's not just about voting any more because in some way that has been stolen from us by what's going on in this building behind us....It has ceased to be the people's house."

At some point, said Randy Hayes, president of the Rainforest Action Network, democracy "becomes a democracy theme park," in which the two major parties represent "a distinction without a difference" and jeopardize "the earth itself." Wenonah Hauter, director of Public

Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project, told the press conference: "The Democracy Brigade is here today to demonstrate that people will not stand for this type of legalized bribery any longer."

Representing the principal sponsor of the event, the Alliance for Democracy, Ronnie Dugger said, "We are a part of a general nonviolent uprising of the people against the sale of our government to the highest bidder." Congress and the White House, by "risking the killing of this green and pleasant earth and all that lives on it" to rake in campaign contributions, are committing "a crime so vast it has no name," Dugger also said.

The speakers and allied activists then followed Granny D into the Capitol Rotunda and spoke out in six separate groups, which the Capitol police arrested one at a time. McKibben was arrested with the first group and Ms. Haddock with the third. Ms. Haddock was reading a passage from the Declaration of Independence when she was arrested and handcuffed. The demonstrators, including all the speakers at the press conference, were photographed and their thumbprints taken, and they were ordered to appear in District of Columbia court on May 24th to answer the charges against them.

The press conference and Rotunda speak-out were carried at length on C-Span and were featured news on NPR's "All Things Considered." Ms. Haddock's arrest was the subject of an AP story and a feature article in Roll Call, the Capitol Hill newspaper.

The Rotunda actions will continue throughout the year 2000. Those who wish to participate in the next action may contact Randy Kehler at telephone 413-624-3836, or by email at [randyk@javanet.com](mailto:randyk@javanet.com). Further information may be obtained from the Alliance national office at 781-894-1179. <http://afd-online.org>