

**THE RESURRECTION OF WESLEY EVEREST**

MURAL DEDICATION  
CENTRALIA, WASHINGTON  
1997



# **The Resurrection of Wesley Everest**

## ***Mural Dedication Speech by Mike Alewitz***

December 13, 1997

Brothers and Sisters,

THIS IS A VERY PROUD DAY for me, having been welcomed into this town, to beject is already known all around the world. People know ab a part of what I consider to be a very important project. This project is already known all around the world. People know about t this mural. It has set an example for workers both around this country and internationally.

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, there are some people I want to thank: John Ruhland and the Labor Party, who approached my about this John Regan, who initiated this project, saw it through to the end, and deserves a great deal of respect from this community; Helen Lee, and the Labor Center at Evergreen State College, not only for this mural, but for the work they do, day in and day out, to educate and empower working people to change their working conditions and change their world. I want to thank Amy, Anne Fischel, and all the other volunteers, whether it was some one on the street making a suggestion, or someone who spent a couple of days helping paint, is irrelevant. All of you, by your being here, by participating, by contributing money, make this a truly social project, of which I am one part.

Mostly I want to thank the members and supporters of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), living and dead, who took the great step of presenting to working people the idea that you could build a great industrial union; that the union was something more than a dues-collection agency; that a union was a way to improve the lot of everyone, whether the hourly wages or cultural and spiritual life; that we are something more than beasts of burden. We are not "timber beasts," which is what they called us in this part of the country.

We are the ones that feed and clothe society. We are the ones that write the books and make the art. We produce everything, and we have a right to what we produce!

By organizing this mural, the working people of this community, the carpenters and operating engineers and the many other unions that were the backbone of this project; by putting this visual statement on the wall and reaching out to the new immigrant workers, are once again re-raising these kinds of ideas. This society faces a fundamental economic and social crisis. The solution to that crisis i not going to come from the Democratic and Republican parties in Washington DC. It is going to come from the same place it has always come form...working people taking to the streets, organizing, demonstrating, getting arrested, going to jail and fighting for what is right and what is just.

In 1917, workers in this country were marched off to war down the streets of our towns while the bands played. And they got to Europe, and they fought in the trenches, and tens of thousands of workers from this country were slaughtered, or slaughtered tens of thousand of workers from other countries. That experience has been repeated in different wars throughout your and my lifetime. Two kinds of people came back from

that war. There were people who came back and thought there was something to celebrate about. They built statues about it, and they still march around and wave flags.

But there was another group of people who came back from that war. They said: This horror should never be repeated. This struggle has been going on since that time.

And lest you think that nothing has changed, think again. Because today they cannot march the troops down the streets. In Vietnam we turned that thinking around, and it is no accident that many of our children to be part of this. And they organized and fought against war. They said: Carpenters and Operating Engineers from this country should not kill Carpenters and Operating Engineers of other countries so that the wealthy can get even wealthier. I have no interests in fighting and dying for oil corporations or any corporation. Those days are over! We will never go back to them.

The plain fact is: There are two contending classes in our society. There are those of us who work, who produce, who feel the activists in this project went through the experience of opposing the Vietnam War. And when they try to whip up a hysteria against Iraq, or Iran, or Palestine, or Nicaragua or Cuba; we know that workers all over the world are of the same class, and here, just as in 1918, the question is: in whose interest should society be run?

Today, if you took the wealth of the ten richest people on the planet, just ten people, you could feed everyone in the world. That is the choice that we have today, and it is the same choice they had in 1918. And these brave brothers and sisters who fought to build the labor movement made a choice: to not be part of the problem, but to be part of the solution. That is the same choice we have to make today.

I do not want to wait seventy years for a monument to those who languish in jail today. Because today there are class-war prisoners. That has not ended. I don't want to wait seventy years for a mural to Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has been framed-up and is awaiting death in Pd, who clothe, who make art, who make videos, who move things, who deliver things, who cook things, who clean things. And there are those who profit off of our labor. They live lives of leisure, and make billions of dollars off us. And today, in 1y, in seventy years. We must act today. And when I return to New Jersey, I will be sending a poster to Mumia Abu-Jamal, and to Roisin McAliskey. I will tell them, speaking for myself, I am dedicating my efforts in this project to their freedom. I dedicate my work to them with the idea that we must have a living monument to Wesley Everest. It cannot be something painted on a wall, but something we do in our daily lives. For these brothers and sisters, who made the ultimate sacrifice for us, we must make a small sacrifice in return, for those in prison today, those who have been victimized. We must make them part of the living reality of the labor movement today.

I want to thank all of you for doing just that. I want to thank you for coming out here today. I hope you will make this a living monument. Because this mural will fade from the wall. Its not like that lifeless bronze statue (dedicated to the Legionnaires.) It will fade from the wall. but that will not matter, if what we do is remember this day, Philadelphia. And I don't want to wait seventy years to build a monument to Roisin McAliskey, who languishes in prison because her family is active on behalf of Irish independence.

And for all the other prisoners we have today, we cannot wait not wait and we take it to our brothers and sisters in the unions, and we take it to Little Tijuana, and we take it to immigrant workers in this country and we say: You are welcome, join our struggle, build our unions in solidarity forever.