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Youths Make Spirited Case at Climate Meeting

By **ANDREW C. REVKIN**

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MONTREAL, Dec. 8 - On Wednesday night, as negotiations over the future of two international agreements on global warming ground on, it was time for a break.



Andrew C. Revkin

At a "bed in" in front of the main escalator bank at the climate talks in Montreal, young people sang "we all live in a carbon-intensive world" and "all we are saying is give youth a chance."

The lobbyists for coal and oil companies and the nuclear power industry fanned out to Montreal's storied restaurants and high-priced hotels. The campaigners for big environmental groups hunkered down to talk strategy.

But a stream of participants hiked through the frigid night to a corner building on the far side of Chinatown that pulsed with light and thudding music. Inside, a local nonprofit group called Apathy Is Boring was giving a party.

There was no apathy in attendance - just 300 people, most in their 20's, who had

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Ryan Remiorz/Canadian Press, Associated Press

Young people staged a bed-in Thursday at the United Nations climate conference in Montreal.

Through nearly two weeks of treaty talks here, the young attendees, more than 500 in all, have been staging daily demonstrations, mainly lighthearted, to highlight the meeting's importance for their generation. And they have been buttonholing delegates to share their concerns about the lack of significant new action to cut greenhouse gases linked to global warming.

On Thursday, the major action of the day was a "bed-in" on the sprawling polished floor outside the main meeting rooms. About 15 people lay down on pillows near pictures of a similar protest staged in Montreal in 1969 by John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

They started singing old Beatles songs, but with new lyrics: "We all live in a carbon-intensive world" and "All we are saying is give youth a chance."

The first young people who attended climate negotiations

come from as far away as Australia and Los Angeles to pester the "fossils" - the legions of gray-suited negotiators who, these young people said, were hijacking their future.

"Major social changes start with a shift in philosophy, and then a new generation is born with that at their core," said Josh Tulkin, 24, who works for a group focused on climate issues in the region outside Washington, D.C., and also for a network of youth organizations called SustainUs. "That generation is us."

Some wore T-shirts emblazoned with a message aimed at delegates: "Stop asking how much it will cost you and start asking how much it will cost us."

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came at the invitation of Greenpeace in 2000, fanning out in the halls at a meeting in The Hague aimed at completing the Kyoto Protocol, one of the agreements being discussed here. But in the past, they were mostly recruited by big international environment groups. Now many of them are from homegrown independent nonprofit groups of their own making, many focused on local issues like cutting universities' use of fossil fuels. They have their own Web sites, with one Web log, itsgettinghotinhere.org, the centerpiece.

"It has gone viral," said John Passacantando, the executive director of Greenpeace USA, in a telephone interview.

"There's never been a social movement that didn't have young people as the moral standard bearers. They realize the fate of their world is being decided in the shadows at these conventions."

There is little time for leisure. While some delegates went shopping with the per diem money provided by the United Nations, the campaigners, wielding cellphones and laptops, continued pressing delegations for meetings. On Thursday, about a dozen young people trooped through a maze of corridors to a room used by American negotiators for confidential talks. There they sat around a rectangular table with Daniel A. Reifsnyder, the director of the State Department's office of global change.

They met in part to lay out their case for new actions to reduce greenhouse gases, but also to complain about the fate of Nia Robinson, a young campaigner from Detroit working for Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative, a group focused on the social impact of global warming.

She had been ejected from the meeting hall on Wednesday for trying to deliver a "climate change survival pack" to American officials, consisting of a face mask for air pollution, a life jacket to counter the threat of rising sea levels and a can of Spam, symbolizing the potential disruption of traditional food sources for indigenous people.

They were politely told that the United States had nothing to do with her expulsion, which was carried out by security officials working for the United Nations. They were also told that the United States had no plans to start negotiating new agreements on climate change, that existing policies were already producing results.

As they emerged, Mr. Tulkin, of SustainUs, was near tears.

"While this upsets us, it also motivates us to go back and fight as hard as we can back in the United States," he said.

"We know we have to take it back into our own hands.

That's what we're doing at the cities, the campus and our communities. This is our future and we need to take control of it right now, today, take action."


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