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TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2004

NYC Mayor Threatens Protestors

by Michael in New York on 8/17/2004 09:42:00 AM

Mayor Bloomberg has been tussling with all sorts of protestors -- policemen and firemen have been dogging him for a raise; numerous groups coming to protest during the Republican Convention are pushing for specific sites to stage their rallies. The group United for Peace and Justice -- an overarching group repping many smaller groups -- has been repeatedly denied access to the Great Lawn for its rally. The city says the Great Lawn can't handle the expected 250,000 marchers; organizers quite reasonably point out the long history of far larger groups meeting on the Great Lawn for rock concerts by Paul Simon, Garth Brooks et al hitting 500,000+ and how the Lawn has even been *rented out* for relatively private events like Disney's Pocahontas premiere. (Tickets were handed out to some 100,000 plus New Yorkers.) The city said the maximum it could handle would be 80,000. An Arab American group promptly requested the Great Lawn for a rally of 75,000 but were promptly turned down as well.

Now **getting frustrated**, Bloomberg said today:

"he expected most protestors who come to the event later this month would 'be reasonable,' but he warned that 'if we start to abuse our privileges, then we lose them.'"

Hmm, so political protest is now a privilege? I guess so, when the FBI comes knocking on your door to intimidate you for daring to take part in a rally.

By the way, NYC is anticipating protestors well into six figures and perhaps more than a million to descend on the city. It's sure to be the biggest convention protest since Chicago in '68. Here's hoping everyone behaves themselves and it can stun the Republicans into realizing the passionate opposition they face from mainstream Americans and wake up the undecideds. A bad result would be for the media to focus on the fringe elements that are sure to take part or for rallies to turn into WTO-style vandalism.



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