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## The Press and Preemptive Arrests

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Posted By [Timothy Zick](#) On September 22, 2008 @ 11:40 am In [Uncategorized](#) | [9 Comments](#)

As [this report](#) <sup>[1]</sup> indicates, police are dropping charges against several journalists arrested during the Republican National Convention in St. Paul. The mayor pats himself and the city on the back for “protecting” and “promoting” press liberties. To the contrary, as I noted in a prior [post](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, pressing and subsequently dismissing charges has become a critical aspect of public policing at mass demonstrations and rallies. The tactic has also been used at various presidential events in recent years. The tactic appears to be to arrest now and sort the charges later — a sort of preemptive strike used to control mass contention. The fact that so many press members were caught in the net this time highlights a distinct harm from this pernicious strategy. It is bad enough that many — in some cases hundreds — of protesters are processed in this fashion. To interfere with the function of the press in this manner deprives us of instantaneous access to information of public concern. At least the city plans to use a broad definition of “the press” in determining which charges to drop. It’s unfortunate that they did not exercise more care in pressing the charges in the first place.

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URLs in this post:

[1] this report: <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=20547>

[2] post: [http://www.concurringopinions.com/archives/2008/09/the\\_political\\_c\\_1.html](http://www.concurringopinions.com/archives/2008/09/the_political_c_1.html)

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