Ugly scenes today marred the unveiling of what may become a landmark paper, as an angry mob of organic synthesis researchers invaded the chemistry department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before seizing and ultimately destroying a so-called "synthesis machine."

An article in the journal Science, describing the development of what is in effect a cyborg post-doc, prompted an initially peaceful protest outside the chemistry department under placards carrying the slogans KEEP NATURAL PRODUCT SYNTHESIS NATURAL, SUZUKI COUPLINGS ARE CHEATING and GIVE ME C-H ACTIVATION OR GIVE ME DEATH. However, witnesses described a marked increase in tension after the arrival of a counter-demonstration of inorganic chemists, who taunted their organic counterparts with highly charged epithets including "pot-boiler" and "column monkey".

An anonymous demonstrator later told C&EN Onion: "It all kicked off when the fucking stamp collectors showed up. This was always an undercurrent of anger, but that was when it boiled over and you became keenly aware just how many people had brought BuLi with them."

Asked to explain the motives of the inorganic counter-demonstrators, a hooded organometallic researcher said, "We're just here looking for trouble. I've got no dog in this fight, unless you're gonna tell me that thing's got an onboard SQUID magnetometer."

Anger having now reached fever pitch, a large group stormed the building, making directly for the lab housing the controversial machine. Minutes later, the helpless automaton was flung from a second floor window, landing amongst cheering protesters and breaking, ironically enough, into a number of fragments. Amid frantic shouts that the machine may have developed the capability to heal itself, clamp-stand-wielding synthetic chemists smashed what little remained. To their credit, many of them first donned appropriate personal protective equipment.

John Wiseman, a technician present during the break-in, remained sanguine as he detailed the damage to the lab. "The automated synthesis platform was what they came for, of..."
course, but someone also found time to steal a bunch of NMR tubes and a fresh batch of DMP. You know what these people are like.”

Wiseman also claimed that clashes involving armed factions of researchers were not without precedent: “You’d be surprised. There are a lot of radical chemists out there.”