

# **Scene Report: Anarchism in Canada**

CrimethInc.

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In the early morning hours of May 18, 2010, three black-clad figures darted out of a branch of Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) located in a trendy Ottawa shopping district; moments later the building was engulfed in flames.

News of the attack spread quickly through the corporate and alternative media, setting the tone for the looming G20 protests in Toronto: they would be militant, they would be confrontational, and they would be angry.

Although it stood out as a particularly brazen example of direct action, the RBC arson did not occur in a vacuum; that particular branch, along with countless others throughout the country, had already been subject to a campaign of targeted property destruction dating back as early as 2007. A major sponsor of the Vancouver Olympic Games and a central financier of the ecologically devastating Alberta Tar Sands megaproject, RBC was widely despised by those involved in the Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, and anticapitalist movements.

A video communique released by a group called the FFFC drew a direct link between the Vancouver Games and the upcoming G20 Summit; both events were taking place on stolen Indigenous land, were intimately connected to global capitalism, and were causing widespread social suffering and environmental devastation.

In 2010, Canadian anarchists and anti-authoritarians came together to mount a year of resistance that put Canadian anarchism on the map. But where did this resistance come from? How did it take shape, and what lessons can we draw from its example?

## **BACKSTORY1: Canada's First Wave**

The historical roots of Canadian anarchism date back to the early 20th century, with the appearance of revolutionary syndicalist trade unions such as the IWW and the OBU. Since its colonial beginnings, Canada's economy has been primarily based on natural resource extraction, and the country's relatively late push towards industrialization was geared towards this as well. Consequently, most early anarchist agitation emerged within the mining, lumber, dockworkers', and railroad industries. This culminated in several massive strikes, including general strikes in Vancouver (1918) and Winnipeg (1919).

The years following the First World War saw the arrival of a wave of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, many of whom brought with them a yearning for European-style social democracy, and a corresponding rise in labor and farming collectives. By 1932, these forces had coalesced into the creation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)—a social democratic political party that would later form the basis for the New Democratic Party (NDP). As it had in Europe, the post-World War II shift towards focusing on electoral politics heralded a precipitous decline in the influence of radical labor movements in Canada.

## **BACKSTORY 2: The Front de Liberation du Quebec, and the Rise of the Urban Guerrilla**

During the 1960s, a new form of radical leftism burst onto the Canadian political stage: the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), an armed Marxist group that drew its inspiration from the wave of national liberation struggles then sweeping Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The FLQ grew out of the Rally for National Independence (RIN), an early Quebecois separatist party.

Through a campaign of bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, and bank robberies, the group advocated armed insurrection against the Canadian government and the establishment of a workers' state in a liberated Quebec.

The group's first attacks occurred on March 7, 1963, when three Montreal army barracks were hit with Molotov Cocktails. Over the next several months, the FLQ escalated their attacks, targeting several English-owned businesses, banks, railway lines, an army recruiting station, McGill University, and Loyola College. By June 1, all three of the original members had been arrested—though the FLQ itself was far from finished.

Over the course of the next seven years, FLQ cells carried out over 200 armed actions, including the attempted assassination of Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and bombings of the Montreal Stock Exchange and the home of the city's mayor, Jean Drapeau. The group will always be best known, however, for carrying out the kidnappings that triggered a series of events known as “the October Crisis.”

### **The October Crisis**

On October 5, 1970, two members of the FLQ's “Liberation Cell” kidnapped British Trade Commissioner James Cross; their demands included the release of twenty-three FLQ political prisoners, the identity of a police informant, and the airing of their manifesto on live state television. Three days later, the group's manifesto was read out live over all CBC television channels in Quebec.

On October 10, members of the FLQ's “Chenier Cell” kidnapped Quebec's Labour Minister Pierre Laporte. Over the next several days, support for negotiations with the kidnappers grew within the mainstream Quebec separatist movement, and on October 14 the group issued a call for a student walkout. The following day, Premier Robert Bourassa invoked the National Defense Act and called in the Canadian army to support the police as 3000 students rallied in Montreal in support of the FLQ.

On October 16, with tanks and soldiers occupying the streets of Quebec and the prospect of popular insurrection on the horizon, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau imposed the War Measures Act. Originally created to sanction the internment of foreign nationals during the First World War, the invocation of the War Measures Act granted sweeping additional powers to the state and completely suspended habeus corpus. Responding to the Prime Minister's effective declaration of martial law, the Chenier Cell strangled Laporte and left his body in the trunk of a car abandoned at an airport just outside Montreal.

The October Crisis officially came to an end on December 3, 1970, when members of the Liberation Cell released Cross in exchange for safe passage to Cuba.

### **The Legacy of the FLQ**

As a nationalist, Marxist-Leninist political organization, the goals of the FLQ were hardly anarchistic; nevertheless, they inspired a generation of anarchists with their insurrectionary tactics. Today, Quebec is a primary hotspot of anarchism in Canada. Montreal hosts North America's largest anarchist book fair—accompanied by a month-long “festival of anarchy”—and its annual march against police brutality, held each year on March 15, perennially results in street fights with the police.

In 2004, a group calling itself the Internationalist Resistance Initiative (IRI) bombed a hydro generator located near the Quebec/ US border, timing the attack to coincide with George W. Bush's first visit to Canada. The same group also took credit for firebombing the car of a prominent oil executive in 2006, and most recently for bombing a military recruitment center near Trois-Rivieres in July 2010. A communique issued following the latter attack expressed the same disdain for Anglo-imperialism that characterized the earlier Quebecois armed separatist camp: "The soldiers of the Canadian Army, let it be very clear, they are not 'ours,' they belong to the one to whom they foolishly pledge allegiance, Her Majesty Elisabeth II."

### **BACKSTORY 3: Second Wave**

Canadian anarchism got a boost in 1976 with the emergence of Open Road, a journal based out of Vancouver. A cultural anomaly when it first came out, Open Road effectively blended the do-it-yourself ethic of punk counterculture with the aesthetic professionalism of more popular publications—earning the nickname "the Rolling Stone of anarchism."

Other publications soon followed, including Bulldozer, an influential antiprison publication based in Toronto.

One of the individuals involved in Bulldozer was Ann Hansen, who joined the project in 1980 upon returning to Canada from an extended stay in Europe. While in Europe, Hansen had spent six months studying urban guerrilla groups such as Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF), and had become heavily influenced by the Autonomists—the originators of contemporary black bloc tactics.

#### **Direct Action**

In the fall of 1980 Hansen travelled to Vancouver, where she moved in with two of her future co-conspirators, Brent Taylor and Doug Stewart. Together with local radicals Gerry Hannah and Julie Belmas the three began to experiment with small-scale actions, vandalizing the local headquarters of a mining company and the offices of the BC Ministry of the Environment. After Hannah and Belmas retreated to the Rocky Mountains, Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart stole a large cache of dynamite and a collection of semi-automatic weapons and formed a clandestine organization, which they christened Direct Action.

On May 31, 1982, Direct Action carried out a bombing against the unfinished Cheekye-Dunsmuir Hydro substation on Vancouver Island. The blast destroyed four hydro transformers, causing over \$5 million in damage. A communique issued to the media on June 14 claimed credit for the action; it explained that the group had attacked the facility to protest industrial expansion, which they accused of "raping and mutilating the earth" for over 200 years. That summer the militants, now reunited with Hannah and Belmas, stole a pickup truck and loaded it with explosives. Hansen, Taylor and Belmas then set off on a cross-country trip towards Toronto.

On October 14, a powerful explosion occurred just outside Litton Industries, a factory on the outskirts of Toronto that manufactured parts for US cruise missile guidance systems. The blast injured 10 people and caused nearly \$4 million in damage. Direct Action claimed responsibility and issued a communique contextualizing the bombing as a response to the resumption of the US/Soviet nuclear arms race and emphasizing the need to take up armed struggle against "the

nuclear masters.” A second communique followed, apologizing for the injuries and suggesting that they were caused by the inaction of the security guards who had failed to heed the warning to evacuate the building.

Upon returning to Vancouver, members of the group began casing franchises of Red Hot Video, a movie chain that specialized in explicitly violent pornography. By now, they had attracted the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian equivalent to the FBI, who placed them under surveillance.

On November 22, three Red Hot Video outlets were fire-bombed by a group calling itself the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade; two Direct Action members—Hansen and Belmas—helped carry out the attacks. These arsons occurred within the context of a broader campaign being waged by more mainstream feminists against Red Hot Video; after the attacks, the chain was subject to widespread media attention, and many stores were run out of business.

On the morning of January 20, 1983, the members of Direct Action were arrested by the RCMP while traveling on the Sea-to-Sky Highway just south of Squamish. At their trial the following year, the five militants received sentences ranging from six years to life; upon receiving a sentence of life in prison, Ann Hansen threw a tomato at the judge.

### **The Lessons of Direct Action**

In the years following the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir bombing, green anarchism found a fertile home in British Columbia, much as it has in the US Pacific Northwest. The first Earth Liberation Front (ELF) action in North America was an arson carried out in 1995 against a wildlife museum in BC, and EnCana oil pipelines and infrastructure in the province have been bombed six times since October 2008. BC is also home to a chapter of Earth First! and a sizeable community of radical environmentalists heavily involved with forest defense work. The general opposition to development prevailing among anarchists on the west coast makes sense in light of the fact that much of the province’s natural ecology remains relatively intact, whereas Canada’s other major population centers have long since been robbed of their natural beauty and transformed into post-industrial cityscapes.

## **BACKSTORY 4: Anti-globalization, Anarchism, and the Canadian Context**

A more recent headwater of the contemporary Canadian anarchist movement can be found in the anti-globalization era, a response to neoliberal policies at home, the spread of free trade agreements, and the expansion and intensification of IMF economic shock therapy across the globe. The mass mobilizations of the heyday of the anti-globalization movement radicalized a generation and popularized anarchist principles and practices, laying the foundations for many current anarchist projects.

### **Ontario Days of Action, 1995**

With the election of Conservative Premier Mike Harris in 1995, a merciless neoliberal onslaught was unleashed upon Ontario residents; public spending was slashed, including a drastic reduction of social assistance rates. In response, a grassroots anti-poverty organization based in

Toronto—the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP)—began working with the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and other organizations to develop a collective opposition to the Harris government. This culminated in the “Ontario Days of Action,” a series of one-day general strikes in different Canadian cities. The Toronto Day of Action mobilized over 250,000 people. But despite such massive turnouts, the OFL leadership prevented the strikes from assuming a more confrontational character, and consequently failed to achieve any significant concessions.

Learning from the shortcomings of the Days of Action and their failure to challenge the Harris government, OCAP intensified its focus on “Direct Action Casework.” This involved supporting welfare claimants, picketing agencies and employers, squatting abandoned buildings, and fighting the criminalization of poverty.

### **Queen’s Park Riot, 2000**

OCAP and other Toronto-based groups called for an action on June 15, 2000 to revitalize a “movement of generalized resistance.” A march of homeless people and their supporters arrived at Queens Park to demand that the government meet with them and address their concerns. The provincial government responded by mobilizing riot police. OCAP and its supporters met this provocation by fighting back, resulting in what became known as the “Queen’s Park Riot.” The riot engendered a new militancy amongst participants and local progressive organizations, resulting in the founding of the Ontario Common Front, a province-wide campaign of economic disruption.

### **Quebec City, 2001**

From April 20 to 22, 2001, Quebec City hosted one of the largest demonstrations of the antiglobalization era. Over 50,000 people mobilized to oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) ministerial, taking over the city core.

Divided into green, yellow, and red protest zones according to anticipated levels of risk, the city was transformed into a veritable playground of resistance. Protesters tore down the security fence that surrounded the ministerial meeting and held their ground against police who utilized tear gas, water cannons, concussion grenades, and rubber bullets. One of the highlights of the weekend was a “Medieval Bloc” with a full-sized catapult that fired teddy bears at the lines of riot police.<sup>1</sup>

The demonstrations in Quebec City were coordinated by the locally-based Summit of the Americas Welcoming Committee (CASA, in its French acronym) and the Montreal-based Anti-Capitalist Convergence (CLAC). In response to the criticisms of “summit hopping” following

the WTO protests in Seattle, the organizers emphasized a focus on long-term local organizing efforts; this model served as an inspiration for the Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN), which helped to coordinate the protests against the 2010 G20 in Toronto with the assistance of a reconstituted CLAC.

The FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City represented a high-water mark for the anti-globalization movement in North America. Four months later came the attacks of 9/11 and a shift in

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<sup>1</sup> In response to the charge that such performance art was insufficiently militant, the participants explained that the teddy bears were infected with bubonic plague.



the political terrain: nationalistic backlash, anti-terror legislation, increased surveillance, and the diversion of many activists' energy into the ultimately ineffective liberal anti-war movement.

### **Kananaskis, 2002**

On June 26 and 27, 2002, the 28th G8 Summit was held in the remote town of Kananaskis, Alberta. Due to the inaccessibility of the summit location, two demonstrations were organized: one in nearby Calgary and another in Ottawa. The Calgary demonstrations were a bust: numbers were relatively small and confrontation was minimal, though many businesses closed for the duration of the summit. The "Take the Capital" demonstrations in Ottawa fared better. Thousands descended upon the streets of downtown Ottawa for three days of creative actions including a No One is Illegal march, a demonstration at the US Embassy, and a large snake march. Perhaps the most noteworthy effort was an occupation; a handful of protestors broke into a local abandoned building that had sat vacant for over seven years, demanding a "use-it-or-lose-it" bylaw to convert unused buildings into social housing. The occupation lasted for a week under the banner, "Sick of Waiting? Occupy!"

### **Montebello, 2007**

In August 2007, leaders from Mexico, the US, and Canada met in Montebello, Quebec to discuss the future of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP). An anticapitalist action camp was established in Montebello in early August to provide a space for protestors to stay, raise awareness, and make plans. In addition to three days of actions in Montebello, protests also occurred in Ottawa and Montreal.

The Quebec Provincial Police's use of agents provocateurs in Montebello generated tremendous controversy. Identified as undercover agents by participants in the black bloc and subsequently pointed out to labor leaders, three masked individuals holding rocks were accused of attempting to incite violence. Pacifists later used this incident to portray the actions of the black bloc during the Toronto G20 demonstrations as the work of police infiltrators.

## **BACKSTORY 5: Indigenous Influence**

In the absence of a revolutionary Canadian labor movement, traditional notions of class warfare have been superseded in many anarchist circles by the narrative of Indigenous resistance to corporate development. As inhabitants of a nation built on a foundation of murder and theft, many anarchists in Canada feel an affinity with the communities most consistently targeted by capitalism: the First Nations of Turtle Island.

We can't do justice here to the story of European colonization and occupation, nor the ruthless campaigns of displacement and genocide that followed. We can only provide a brief overview of this process and highlight some of the stories of Indigenous resistance that have influenced Canada's contemporary anarchist movement.

## **First Contact**

In 1534, Jacques Cartier landed on the shores of Gaspé Bay, in modern day Québec. In front of a small group of curious Haudenosaunee villagers, Cartier plunged a large wooden cross into the earth, claiming the “newly-discovered” territory in the name of France. In a cultural misunderstanding that had serious historical ramifications, the Huron-Iroquois word for village, “kanata,” was mistakenly interpreted as the name of the newly discovered territory; thus, the name Canada was born out of a linguistic gaffe—and a centuries-long campaign of colonial displacement and genocide began.

## **The Arrival of the British**

The pace and severity of the colonization of Turtle Island intensified with the establishment of the first British colony in 1607. Whereas French settlers had largely been traders, pillaging the land’s natural resources for export to European markets, the British settlers were farmers who pursued an aggressive policy of territorial expansion.

After their defeat in the Seven Years’ War, France was forced to cede control of the majority of their North American colonies to the British Empire. To consolidate these gains and address the grievances of the tribes involved in Pontiac’s Rebellion, King George III issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, formalizing the borders of the British Dominion of North America and establishing a royal monopoly over all treaties negotiated with the country’s First Nations.

With power thus consolidated, the British initiated a process of forced assimilation ostensibly intended to “civilize” the nation’s Indigenous inhabitants, leaving the business of territorial expansion to the monolithic Hudson’s Bay Corporation (HBC)—to which the crown leased huge tracts of land extending to the Pacific Ocean. This policy of assimilation was codified in pre-confederate legislation such as the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, which granted land and a small sum of money to “enfranchised” Natives deemed sufficiently socialized by their European colonizers. This process of enfranchisement, mandatory for all Indigenous males over the age of 21 capable of speaking, reading, and writing in French or English, included a renouncement of their Native status and tribal affiliations, the adoption of a European surname, and their recognition as “a regular British subject.”

This policy was largely abandoned in 1879, following a report by Nicolas Flood Davin to sitting Prime Minister of Canada John A. MacDonald arguing that the adult Indigenous population had proven incapable of transitioning from their “present state of ignorance, superstition, and helplessness” to their imagined role as refined British subjects. Instead, the Davin Report recommended refocusing the government’s attention on “civilizing” Native children through a system of compulsory boarding schools administered by the church; thus the Canadian Residential School system was born.

## **The Residential Schools**

From 1880 until the closure of the last federally-administered Residential School in 1990, the Canadian government presided over a network of Canadian indoctrination camps the stated goal of which was to “kill the Indian in the child.” To this end, generations of children were torn from their communities and thrown into Christian boarding schools, where harsh corporal punishment was inflicted on students caught speaking their native tongue. The absence of public over-

sight and the climate of racist impunity created the conditions for widespread sexual abuse at the hands of Roman Catholic and Anglican priests, leaving a legacy of trauma that persists among survivors of the Residential Schools to this day.

The cramped and squalid conditions of these schools were also an ideal breeding ground for disease. A 1906 report issued by Dr. P.H. Bryce, the chief Medical Inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs, attempted to shed light on these appalling conditions. It indicated that many of the schools had a mortality rate of 50%, with the majority of these deaths occurring within the child's first year at the school; an addendum to the report, released in 1909, alleged that Native children were being purposefully exposed to tuberculosis and left to die by teachers and staff members.

Bryce was subsequently fired and his findings covered up. In 1920, federal legislation was introduced declaring attendance in the Residential School system compulsory for all Native children between the ages of 7 and 16. Attendance peaked in the 1930s; it only began to drop off in the 1950s, when the state took over administrative control of the schools and began the process of assimilating Native children into the regular public school system. The true history of the Residential Schools did not reach the consciousness of Canada's settler population until the 1990s; to this day, most Canadians remain ignorant of it.

## **indigenous Resurgence**

The past two decades have witnessed a resurgence in Indigenous resistance to corporate developers and the Canadian state. Fed up with the reformism of the traditional left, many anarchists have turned for inspiration to this new wave of anti-colonial struggle. At a time when the ecological consequences of industrial capitalism have become impossible to ignore, Indigenous warriors, elders, women, and youth are widely respected for their bravery in opposing the destruction of their traditional land-bases.

## **Barriere Lake**

The Algonquins of Barriere Lake are a small community of 400 people living in a remote area of unceded territory in northern Quebec. Their strong sense of cultural identity is grounded in their customary form of self-governance, known as Mitchikanibikok Anishinabe Onakinakewin, and a traditional way of life in close connection to the land. Since 1989, they've waged a campaign of nonviolent direct action to halt logging and mining companies' incursions into their ancestral hunting grounds—an area of over 10,000 square kilometres north of Ottawa. This struggle has largely taken the form of highway blockades and mass demonstrations; the police have frequently responded with tear gas and police batons. Their perseverance in the face of overt repression and efforts to undermine their traditional governing structure has inspired other First Nations communities and earned them the support of anarchists in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto.

## **The Oka Standoff**

The Oka Crisis was a 79-day armed standoff in Oka, Quebec between Canadian security forces and members of the Mohawk community of Kahnasatake. The dramatic events galvanized First Nations communities across the country, producing an outpouring of solidarity actions and economic disruption that brought Native land claims to the forefront of the national consciousness.

The confrontation began on July 11, 1990 when a highway blockade that had halted the expansion of a golf course onto a Mohawk cemetery was attacked by members of the provincial Surete du Quebec (SQ) with tear gas and flash grenades. Mohawk warriors responded with gunfire and a member of the SQ was killed in the resulting firefight. The SQ withdrew, leaving several police vehicles and a front-end loader behind; the Mohawks immediately put these to use, crushing and flipping over a police cruiser to fortify their barricade and emphasize that they weren't messing around.

In solidarity, Mohawks from the nearby community of Kahnawake blockaded the Mercier Bridge, a high-traffic corridor connecting the island of Montreal to its heavily populated southern suburbs of Chateauguay. This provoked widespread anger and rioting amongst the local settler population, prompting the Premier of Quebec to call in the Canadian army in an effort to bring a speedy resolution to the standoff. After weeks toe to toe with the Royal 22nd Regiment, the Mohawk warriors unilaterally disarmed and strolled out of the pines where they had made their stand. The golf course was never expanded, and the actions of the Mohawks set a precedent for armed self-defence against colonial encroachment.

### **The Haudenosaunee of the Grand River Territory**

On February 28, 2006, members of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy occupied the proposed site of the Douglas Creek Estates residential complex near the town of Caledonia, Ontario, halting construction and bringing attention to a long-standing land claims dispute. In 1784, as reward for the Iroquois tribes who fought alongside the British in the American Revolution, the Crown had granted the Haudenosaunee title over the Hal-dimand Tract—a geographical area extending six miles in both directions from the Grand River; today this territory encompasses many towns and cities in southern Ontario, including Caledonia, Paris, Brantford, Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo. The Crown alleged that the Six Nations council agreed to sell this land in 1841, minus the territory that comprises the modern-day Six Nations reserve. Historical records show that representatives of Six Nations quickly petitioned against this surrender of their traditional land, claiming that they had only intended that it be made available for lease.

On April 20, members of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) stormed the Douglas Creek occupation site, tasing Native activists and arresting twenty-one people. Later that day, a large crowd from Six Nations retook the site, chased the OPP from the area, and erected barricades. The resulting tensions, known as the Caledonia Crisis, drew in many non-Native supporters from around southern Ontario, including anarchists from Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener, Waterloo, London, and Toronto. Though the barricades have since come down, the Douglas Estates remain occupied, and activists from Six Nations continue to resist the colonization of their land; millions of dollars of construction has since been halted at proposed development sites in Brantford, and a former police station on the Six Nations reservation was recently occupied and transformed into a youth center.

### **Looking Ahead**

The direct action tactics employed by the Indigenous inhabitants of Turtle Island suggest new possibilities for Canadian anarchists as well. In December 2010, fifty-four First Nations bands in British Columbia announced their intention to block the proposed \$5.5 billion Northern Gateway

Pipeline Project, which would transport oil from the Alberta Tar Sands through their traditional territories to tankers in the Pacific Ocean. Shortly before the G20 Summit in Toronto, First Nations communities threatened to blockade the 400-series highways that serve as the primary transportation arteries of Canada's commercial hub; this would have paralysed the Summit and caused untold economic disruption. The government quickly capitulated to their demands, which included an exemption for First Nations from a newly planned Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

Canada's vast geography and transportation infrastructure are its economic Achilles Heel. Anarchists must learn from the success of our Native allies, who have shown how a relatively small group can exert powerful leverage by threatening economic disruption

### **Indigenous Influence on Anarchist Struggles: Case Study - Guelph, ON**

Guelph is a small city in southern Ontario that boasts a vibrant anarchist community. The city is rapidly being integrated into the metropolis of Toronto; sprawl and destruction of land is a daily reality that cannot be ignored. Since the early 2000s, anarchists in Guelph have been involved in anti-poverty and anti-police campaigns, numerous ELF actions, and countless clandestine acts of sabotage. The community boasts an active Anarchist Black Cross, the Fierce 'n' Fabulous radical queer crew, the Arrow Archive Zine Library, the Guelph Anarchist Reading Group, and a wealth of anarchist printing and distribution efforts.

In summer 2009, an occupation of Hanlon Creek on the edge of Guelph successfully delayed the construction of a business park on one of the last remaining old-growth forests in southern Ontario. This occupation was directly inspired by previous Indigenous land reclamations and anti-development campaigns. Public dissent had long been building against the project alongside disenchantment with democratic methods of change. In the early morning of July 27, approximately 50 individuals, mostly anarchists, took over the site and halted construction; for 19 days people held the land. An explicit goal of the occupation was to frame it as part of a broader anti-colonial struggle, foregrounding the theft of this land from its original inhabitants. Indigenous land defenders from across Ontario supported the struggle, including residents of Six Nations and the Mohawks of Tyendinaga.

The occupation also received public support from residents of Guelph. Farmers and neighbors dropped off food at the site and locals protested the development at City Hall; all this created a space for people to meet and share stories of struggle and solidarity. Hundreds came to participate in the occupation.

The occupation ended with construction being stopped for the season, as the development company was unable to meet their deadline. One positive outcome of the campaign was a declaration by members of the business class that Guelph was "unfriendly to business." The city had to be bailed out by the federal government for \$600,000 to pay for the failed contract, and another larger development in the downtown had to be put on hold due to lack of funds.

The City of Guelph launched a \$5 million SLAPP (Strategic Litigation against Public Participation) lawsuit against five organizers as a deterrent to further action. The following year, many people prioritized the mobilization against the G20 in Toronto, and as a result construction went ahead as planned.

In hindsight, turning efforts towards organizing for a global summit rather than continuing to defend the land against development was not a strategically sound decision and resulted in a decline rather than a growth in the capacity of anarchists in Guelph.

## **Riot 2010 Part 1: The Vancouver Olympics**

In 2007, the tag “Riot 2010” started appearing on mailboxes and the walls of back alleys all over Vancouver. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what it referred to: the Winter Olympics were coming to the city, despite massive public opposition.

In the years leading up to what the government had dubbed the “greenest games ever,” anarchists joined forces with Indigenous people and grassroots organizations to sound the alarm over the havoc the Olympic industry was wreaking on poor people and the biosphere. In 2008, a group known as the Olympic Resistance Network (ORN) formed to contest the Games, using the media spectacle to broadcast an uncompromising critique of colonialism and capitalism. They accomplished this through high-profile direct actions and a relentless outreach campaign culminating in the first ever anti-Olympic convergence, timed to coincide with the Games.

Three important factors distinguished the Vancouver experience from more traditional anticapitalist convergences, such as protests against the summits of the World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO).

First, the Olympics are popular the world over. The idea of amateur sportsmanship and the spirit of friendly competition among nations is a powerful myth obscuring the capitalist agenda of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It was challenging to expose the nefarious agenda and history of the Games, and equally difficult to convince troublemakers to come to Vancouver to participate in actions against something seemingly as benign as figure skating.

Second, Indigenous sovereignty was the most prominent message of anti-Olympics organizing. “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” was the rallying cry of the ORN. The venues and infrastructure of the Games, including highway expansion and multi-billion dollar megaprojects, were all built on unceded Coast Salish territory.

Finally, the NGO-industrial complex, big labor, and the NDP all stayed away from anti-Olympic organizing altogether. While those groups often bring numbers and resources to major convergences, they also bring their bureaucratic style of management and a weak analysis of the structures of oppression. Their absence gave more radical activists space to push an anticapitalist and anti-colonial agenda to the forefront.

A series of successful disruptions beginning in 2007 forced the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC) to bring their pre-Olympic events indoors with heavy security. Sabotage and vandalism against sponsors, occupations and blockades at promotional events, and actions against the Olympic torch helped build momentum leading up to the main event. When February 2010 finally arrived, all the pieces were in place.

### **Background**

In July 2003, the International Olympic Committee selected Vancouver as host city for the 2010 Winter Games. At this time, the Four Host First Nations corporation was established, comprised of government-funded band councils from the region. The co-option of Indigenous identity into the Olympics’ branding was a top priority for government and business, on account of the potential for disruption posed by Indigenous people. Olympic organizers also endeavored to exploit Indigenous culture through mascots, medal designs, and other imagery.

The first phase of the anti-Olympic campaign took place between 2002 and 2005, consisting of small rallies, forums, and a failed grassroots campaign for a “No” vote against the Games

in a citywide plebiscite. During this period, struggles began to intensify around housing and homelessness, primarily in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). This began with the 2002 campaign to turn the vacant Woodward's department store into social housing, involving a week-long occupation of the building and a three-month tent city on its sidewalks.

In 2006, the campaign entered its second phase, characterized by larger militant protests and clandestine acts of vandalism and sabotage. This movement presented a radical critique of the Olympic industry as a whole, and expanded to a national level with solidarity actions and disruptions of Olympic events across the country, along with videos, speaking tours, newsletters, conferences, workshops, and other educational campaigns. Over 30 public direct actions occurred, including squats, event disruptions, and blockades, and at least 60 acts of vandalism and sabotage were carried out. There were over 80 Olympics-related arrests in Vancouver and other cities between 2006 and 2010, almost all resulting from public actions. Some 27 more arrests occurred during the Games.

The anti-Olympic movement had a considerable impact on public discourse and the Olympic industry. Polls reported over 30 percent support for the anti-Olympic protests and over 70 percent agreement that the Olympics cost too much.<sup>2</sup> Pollsters were surprised by the massive unpopularity of the Games, which only arose after militant direct actions began in 2007.

Among the Indigenous groups involved in the campaign, the Native Youth Movement (NYM), Native 2010 Resistance, and Downtown East-side Women's Center Elders' Council stand out. Secwepemc NYM participated in several anti-Olympic protests and conducted speaking tours in Eastern Canada and the US. Native 2010 Resistance was a short-lived Indigenous anti-Olympic group based out of Vancouver that organized rallies and an action in early 2008. The Elders' Council was often at the forefront of protests.

After some previous efforts to establish an anti-Olympic organizing group in Vancouver, the Olympic Resistance Network (ORN) was established in the spring of 2008. It was comprised of radical grassroots organizations, including the Anti-Poverty Committee (APC), No One Is Illegal (NOII) and 2010 Games Watch, joined by several individual anarchist and Indigenous organizers. Other anarchists and Indigenous activists did not participate in ORN, choosing to organize autonomously. The Vancouver Media Co-op (VMC), which provided the best coverage of the anti-Olympic convergence in February 2010, originally began as a communications committee within the ORN.

In contrast to the ORN, a more reformist movement was comprised of NGO-type groups such as the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), Pivot Legal Society (a "progressive" lawyer's group in the DTES), Impact on Communities Coalition (IOCC), and others. These groups' main strategy was to use the Olympics to promote their causes, relying on positive media coverage and lobbying for legal reforms. For these reasons, the reformists had little public interaction with the ORN and organized their own separate activities, including forums, conferences, workshops, and other educational campaigns. Over 30 public direct actions occurred, including squats, event disruptions, and blockades, and at least 60 acts of vandalism and sabotage were carried out. There were over 80 Olympics-related arrests in Vancouver and other cities between 2006 and 2010, almost all resulting from public actions. Some 27 more arrests occurred during the Games.

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### **Anti-Olympic Convergence, February 10-15, 2010**

In fall 2007, organizers began calling for an anti-Olympic convergence February 10-15, 2010. The dates were announced by several Indigenous persons involved in anti-Olympics organizing during an intercontinental gathering organized by the Zapatistas and the National Indigenous Congress in Mexico. The organizing of this convergence was eventually taken up by the ORN.

Meanwhile, in preparation for the Olympics, the government established a \$1 billion security apparatus with a force of 17,000 personnel. This included nearly 7000 police, 5000 soldiers, and over 5000 private security guards. Police, intelligence, military, Coast Guard, Border Services, and other agencies were placed under the control of a newly-established RCMP Integrated Security Unit (ISU).

### **Olympic Resistance Summit, February 10-11, 2010**

The Resistance Summit was held in two venues in East Vancouver, located around the Commercial Drive area. Some 500 people attended training workshops, forums, and panels. Attendees came from across North America. Among the participants was an organizer from the 2006 anti-Olympic campaign in Turin, Italy, a member of the No Games Chicago coalition that successfully fought that city's bid for the 2018 Summer Games, and a delegation of Circassians, the Indigenous people of Sochi, Russia, where the 2014 Winter Games are to be held.

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<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Press Harris-Decima survey.



## **Anti-Torch Actions, February 12, 2010**

Two anti-torch protests were organized for the final day of the torch relay, which was timed to conclude with the Opening Ceremonies of the 2010 Games. One protest was set for 9 a.m. at Victory Square in the DTES, another for 10 a.m. on Commercial Drive. These two neighborhoods were centers of opposition to the Olympics.

By 9:30, several hundred people had gathered at Victory Square; 150 of these were protesters. As the torch convoy approached, protesters surged into the intersection and blocked the street. Cops on motorcycles attempted to push through the crowd but were stopped by a mass of determined people. As 20-30 cops, including six horse-mounted officers, attempted to contain the crowd, the torch relay was diverted up a side street. Protesters ran across the park and up to the next block in an effort to block the torch runner. The convoy sped up and passed by several scheduled stops, until it reached Commercial Drive.

Gathering beforehand, some 200 protesters had blocked the intersection of Commercial Drive and Venables Street, dragging large rocks into the road and stringing barbed wire across it. Police didn't even bother bringing the convoy up Commercial, but instead diverted it down another main street several blocks away.

Upon hearing the relay had been rerouted, the protesters ran south on Commercial to prevent it from returning to the Drive. Several blocks down, the crowd ran into a line of mounted horse cops blocking the street, who were soon reinforced by more bike cops. Demonstrators chanted "Get those animals off those horses"; after a few minutes, the protesters ran through a nearby alley and bypassed the police line. They stopped at Commercial and First Avenue where they blocked traffic for the better part of an hour. These victories raised people's spirits and set the stage for the combative protest later that day.

## **Take Back Our City Rally, Opening Ceremonies, February 12,2010**

The "Take Back Our City" rally was primarily aimed at achieving as large a mobilization as possible. Because the ORN's militant approach had been exaggerated and demonized by the corporate media and the authorities, a separate coalition was established to organize the February 12 rally. This was the 2010 Welcoming Committee, initiated by ORN members but comprised of a larger coalition of over 50 groups, including many reformist and liberal organizations that would not work publicly with the ORN.

The Welcoming Committee established its own communications and logistics, and planned the program and route of the rally. It was promoted as a "family friendly" rally and march, starting at the Vancouver Art Gallery at 3 p.m. and then traveling to BC Place, site of the Opening Ceremonies—which were to begin at 6 p.m.

By 4:30,5000 people had gathered at the Art Gallery. Speakers and performers regaled the crowd until it was time to march. Native elders, warriors, and drummers took the lead; a mob of reporters gathered at the front of the march as it proceeded towards BC Place. At a side street approaching the huge sports stadium, the protest met a line of Vancouver police, members of the Crowd Control Unit (CCU) in "soft hats"—without helmets or shields. As the elders pushed up against the police line, cops warned them that people were going to get hurt. At this point, the elders withdrew and the black bloc was requested to move to the front line.

Masked militants began pushing up against the police line, which was reinforced with more CCU officers, and then later by the RCMP. Another line of horse-mounted cops in riot gear appeared behind the lines of cops.

For nearly an hour, the two forces confronted each other. Militants threw projectiles into the police lines, including large plastic traffic pylons. The black bloc made several charges against the police line and seized hats, flashlights, and gloves from CCU officers. Three officers were injured, two of them by projectiles.

It was later learned that BC Premier Gordon Campbell and Indian Act chiefs from the collaborationist Four Host First Nations missed the national anthem and were late for the opening ceremonies because their bus was delayed by the protest.

### **Heart Attack, Saturday, February 13, 2010**

The 2010 Heart Attack march was a daring plan to “clog the arteries of capitalism.” The action was organized by militants from the ORN and promoted as an action in which a diversity of tactics would be respected.

Some 400 people gathered in Thornton Park at 8:30 a.m., including a black bloc 100 strong. At the park, the group practiced basic maneuvers with flags, then proceeded down Main Street towards Hastings, eventually marching to the downtown business district. At this point, newspaper boxes and dumpsters were dragged into the street to delay police cars behind the protest, while spray paint appeared on walls, sidewalks, and vehicles.

As the protest passed the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) department store at Georgia and Seymour, militants emerged from the black bloc and began smashing the store’s plate-glass windows. HBC was targeted because of its role as an Olympics sponsor and its historical part in the colonization of Canada. Several windows were knocked in with metal chairs from a nearby cafe—as well as newspaper boxes and what appeared to be batteries in a sock. Red paint bombs were also thrown against some of the store’s windows.

One block away, a newspaper box was thrown through the windows of a Toronto Dominion (TD) bank. By this time, the CCU was deployed and began following the protest as it proceeded to the West End, towards the Lion’s Gate Bridge—its ultimate objective. At Denman Street, the march ran into CCU agents accompanied by shooters carrying M4 carbines and less-lethal launchers; the officers began attacking protesters with batons. After some pushing and several de-arrests, the protest dispersed. Seven people were arrested; others would be arrested over the following days.

In one incident, as militants took shelter behind an electrical box to de-mask, a CTV camera operator approached and began filming. CTV was the official Canadian broadcaster of the Games, and had entered into a contract worth over \$300 million with the IOC. The next day, one of the militants confronted the camera operator and was arrested shortly after for assault. Another comrade was arrested two days later and charged with counseling mischief over \$5000.

The 2010 Heart Attack received widespread coverage—far more than the larger mobilization of the previous day. Footage of black-clad militants smashing out the windows of HBC appeared around the world. The action succeeded in its objective of disrupting business and clogging traffic: the Vancouver police themselves closed the Lion’s Gate Bridge, a central artery between Vancouver and Whistler, positioning large numbers of CCU members across the access road. The bridge

was not reopened until 11:30 a.m., with police and transit authorities claiming a “serious accident” had led to its closure. Several hundred VANOC buses were delayed as a result.

The action became the most controversial of the entire anti-2010 campaign. Reformists and pacifists, some of whom had worked with the ORN, publicly denounced the black bloc. Among these was David Eby, a former Pivot lawyer who had become the executive director of the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), a state-funded civil rights “watchdog.” Eby had previously defended many activists in the city, and in the BCCLA had worked with some ORN members in press conferences about police harassment and a lawsuit challenging new bylaws restricting signage and “free speech.”

A few days after denouncing the militants, Eby was pried during a public forum in East Vancouver. At the forum, Chris Shaw of 2010 Games Watch and Derrick O’Keefe of the anti-war group StopWar.ca and the news site Rabble.ca also denounced the black bloc actions. Corporate media, police, and government officials immediately condemned the Heart Attack march, alleging that the legitimate protest had been hijacked by a “criminal element” comprised of anarchists from Ontario. Corporate media also reported on the controversy and portrayed the “movement” as having been split. In reality, of those who denounced the action, only Shaw had actually been involved in the radical anti-Olympic campaign.

### **Housing Rally, Anti-War March, Olympic Tent Village, February 15-28,2010**

The final day of the convergence had two themes: housing and war. In the afternoon, a rally began at Pigeon Park with the slogan “No More Empty Talk—No More Empty Lots! Homes Now!” Across the street, a 50-foot banner reading “Homes Now” was dropped from a nearby low-income tower. After some speeches and singing, the protesters marched to 58 West Hastings, a vacant lot owned by Concord Pacific, one of the main “developers” of condos in the DTES. VANOC had leased the site as a parking lot and surrounded it with chain-link fencing.

Participants immediately set up tents in the empty lot and established a medical aid station. Food Not Bombs provided food. The Olympic Tent Village was organized by the DEWC Power of Women Group, with assistance from a grassroots Christian group. Many radicals also helped out with security.

At 6 p.m., approximately 200 protesters gathered for an antiwar rally organized by StopWar.ca under the slogan “Do You Believe in Torture, War and Occupation, Theft of Indigenous Land? The Canadian Government Does,” mocking the 2010 Olympic slogan (Do You Believe?) and highlighting the ongoing Canadian Forces occupations of Afghanistan and Haiti.

The tent village remained for two weeks, organizing itself through daily meetings. By the end, 41 homeless people had been given housing by the city and BC Housing (a state agency). On the final night, as a continuation of the protest coinciding with the Olympic closing ceremonies, a rally blocked Hastings Street for twelve hours before a platoon of riot cops finally cleared the street. Even after the support organizations withdrew on February 28, the tent village continued until mid-March, when a court injunction ordered the removal of those who remained.

### **Aftermath**

The anti-Olympics protests of 2010 prompted an immediate response from Ontario reformists such as Judy Rebick of Rabble.ca, who denounced the actions of the black bloc and vowed that

they would not be welcome at the G20 protests. This increased the pressure on militants in southern Ontario, and created tension within Toronto organizing around diversity of tactics.

After the Olympics, debates occurred in a variety of media as anarchists and their comrades counteracted criticism from liberals. These exchanges helped re-establish radical media in Canada as a force to be reckoned with. In the end, the anti-Olympic movement solidified bonds between grassroots activists in Vancouver and created strong nationwide networks of anarchists. These networks would soon reconverge in Toronto to make good on the slogan that still adorns the walls of East Vancouver: Riot 2010.

In the four months between the Vancouver Heart Attack action and the riots that transformed downtown Toronto into a phantasmagoria of burnt police cars, anticapitalist graffiti, and shattered windows, the country's corporate media was abuzz with one question: who were these black-clad hooligans and what were they up to?

## **Riot 2010 Part 2: The G20 Comes to Toronto**

In December 2009, Canadian anarchists learned that, in addition to the G8 summit already scheduled to take place in Huntsville, Ontario, Prime Minister Stephen Harper had agreed to host a G20 summit; even more shocking was the announcement that the summit would be held in the heart of downtown Toronto—Canada's largest metropolis.

Many anarchists had viewed the G8 as a tactical nightmare. Huntsville, a quiet cottage town located in the scenic Muskoka Lakes region, lacked obvious symbolic targets; worse, its small-town geography increased the likelihood that demonstrators would easily be encircled and contained by security forces. Toronto, on the other hand—with its sprawling commercial district, multiple corporate headquarters, and wide city streets connected by an intricate network of alleyways—offered an ideal location for uncontrollable demonstrations. The Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN) soon emerged as an open network to bottomline the logistics of the counter-summit demonstrations. Activists of various ideological stripes filled its ranks, with anarchists well-represented in all the network's committees—including action, fundraising, communication, and legal support. The TCMN was assisted by members of the newly reconstituted CLAC 2010 in Montreal, which coordinated transportation for hundreds of activists from Quebec and shared invaluable lessons from the 2001 anti-FTAA protests in Quebec City.

Recognizing that the TCMN's mandate did not cover actual action planning, anarchists from Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, London, Hamilton, and other cities formed Southern Ontario Anarchist Resistance (SOAR). SOAR took on the task of organizing three high-risk actions: the "Get Off the Fence" breakaway march, an all-night roaming dance party dubbed "Saturday Night Fever," and a day dedicated to autonomous actions. Some anarchists chose not to participate in SOAR directly, preferring to work in closed affinity groups. The G8/G20 security operation involved 19,000 security personnel: 10,000 cops, 4000 military, and 5000 private security guards. It was billed as the largest such operation in Canadian history, costing approximately \$1.2 billion. A six-mile security fence was erected around the downtown core of Toronto where the G20 leaders and their delegates were to meet.

## **Days of Action**

Street actions against the G8 and G20 began in Toronto on Monday, June 21. The first event, billed as an anti-poverty march, drew about two hundred people and involved a brief occupation of an Esso gas station and a demonstration outside the Children's Aid Society (CAS). The Tuesday march focused on queer resistance to the G20, while a march targeting banks and corporations from Canada's extractive industries took place on Wednesday. Thursday's rally for Indigenous rights grew to over 1000 people.

The slogan for the march on Friday, June 25 was "Justice for Our Communities." Planned by a coalition of grassroots organizations including OCAP and NOII, it was billed as a combined march, block party, and tent city. Organizers had conducted extensive outreach in marginalized communities throughout Toronto in an effort to make the event properly representative of the diversity of struggles going on in the city. At this point hundreds of protesters were arriving every hour on buses from Ontario and Quebec.

The demonstration began at noon in Allan Gardens, near the intersection of Sherbourne and Gerrard. This park, located in the downtown east end, was chosen for its storied history; in addition to hosting massive labor rallies in the 1930s, it had been the site of a rally of the Canadian Nazi Party that sparked a popular riot on May 30, 1965.

On the day of the march, a cordon of bike cops and uniformed officers was established around the park's perimeter. Initially, police stopped and attempted to search everyone arriving, checking bags and seizing banners, flag poles, goggles and other protective gear. Several people challenged the searches on the way into the park. Shortly after these incidents captured the attention of nearby media, police stopped conducting searches.

A number of anarchists had come prepared to march in full black bloc regalia, but without the intention of initiating conflict with the police or damaging property. The intention was to show solidarity with the struggles of migrants and other marginalized groups and to get a feel for acting collectively. The bloc was initially small, around 30-40 people, but swelled to perhaps double that during the march. The entire demonstration involved 3000-4000 participants, including unions, students, seniors, communists, Indigenous people, and advocates of a variety of national liberation struggles.

By the time the march reached the downtown core, police had put on their riot helmets. Just past Yonge and College streets, they made their first arrest of the day—a young deaf man of color, who was arrested for failing to obey a verbal command and jailed without access to ASL interpretation services.

After marching through downtown for several hours, the crowd began to peter out around University Avenue and Dundas Street. Some of the demonstrators returned to Allan Gardens to participate in a dance party and temporary tent city; others rushed to the SOAR spokescouncil to discuss the next day's action.

## **Get Off the Fence: Saturday, June 26**

The "People First: We Deserve Better" rally called for early Saturday afternoon by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and various other labor organizations and civil NGOs was the largest demonstration of the G20, with upwards of 40,000 participants. SOAR had called for a "Get Off The Fence" action, vaguely promoted as a sort of breakaway march that would attempt to get

to the fence surrounding the summit. Many plans for coordinating actions on Saturday were presented and scrapped during heated debate at the Friday night spokescouncil. The meeting ended with the consensus that there would be no plan, which produced cheers and applause.

The route of the “People First” march was worked out in coordination with police. It began in Queen’s Park, proceeded south down University Avenue to Queen Street, then west to Spadina Avenue, north to College, and finally back to the established “protest zone” in the park. It was routed to turn back a full six blocks from the security fence.

As anarchists arrived in Queen’s Park and coalesced into a bloc of 100-150, they learned that a section of radical unionists and a contingent with NOII flags also wished to break off from the main march and head south towards the fence. Despite this, things looked pretty bleak. Anarchists with street experience worried about the small size of the bloc and its relative disorganization—there were no scouts or communications teams to speak of and not many flags or banners.

Many concerns had been voiced in the months leading up to the G20 that a march toward the fence on Saturday was a veritable suicide mission. A number of trustworthy comrades whose presence would have bolstered the bloc chose not to attend for fear of being arrested and missing the anarchist-organized anti-prison demonstration scheduled for the following day. It had also been suggested that the CLC would be antagonistic towards anarchists and would use union marshals to force them to the back of the march—thus making it impossible for them to draw support from the crowd to break away.

As the march got moving, however, the bloc entered the middle of the larger group without conflict. The idea circulated that the bloc would join other contingents when they tried to head south.

After marching down University Avenue and west on Queen Street, a section of the protest headed by NOII flags turned at John Street and dashed south. At this point, the black bloc was behind and somewhat isolated from this group, but did eventually move to support them. The surging crowd made it some distance down John Street but was quickly stopped by lines of riot cops. While anarchists had debated for hours about how to avoid putting “regular protestors” and those with uncertain citizenship status at risk with confrontational tactics, it was actually a group of mostly people of color, migrants, and their allies who first charged the police. Perhaps in the future, anarchists can stop trying to “look after” those they believe have less privilege and focus instead on establishing stronger bonds with others who are willing to fight the systems of state control.

After it became clear that this line of riot cops was heavily reinforced, the crowd returned to Queen Street and continued to march west to Spadina. During this time the main bloc merged with another smaller black bloc that had been moving separately in the march, and numbers swelled to around 200. When the march arrived at Spadina, another charge south was attempted, this time with the NOII contingent and sections of the black bloc rushing together. After another standoff, from which many returned bloodied by police batons, the crowd lingered at the intersection of Queen and Spadina. This was the point from which the People First march turned north to return to Queen’s Park and the “free speech” protest pen. Many members of the march lingered, curious to see if anything else was going to happen.

There was much debate about which direction to go—both within the black bloc and between the bloc and other groups. Some thought another charge should be made to the police line, while others argued that the bloc should keep marching further west. At various points, black bloc

participants argued with others from NOII about whether the point of the march was to try to reach the fence or to go wherever necessary in order to remain active on the streets of Toronto. At a critical moment, many in the black bloc were chanting “West on Queen! West on Queen!” in an attempt to steer the demo away from the convention center hosting the G20 and towards a trendy shopping district.

Yet after heated debate, everyone agreed to double back and proceed east along Queen Street. The bloc was convinced to head in the general direction of the convention center and the financial district, though many felt this would prove to be a tactical mistake. Supporters outside of the black bloc had heard from scouts and runners that the way east was clear of riot police, and in the end the bloc listened to their advice. This was perhaps the defining moment, determining all that followed.

Since the rest of the permitted march had continued north past Spadina and Queen, the way remained open behind the crowd: surprisingly, the cops had not moved in to block the street off yet, likely busy fortifying their positions on every street going south. The crowd that had lingered began to move east, and the black bloc finally cohered and ran to the front of this group. It seemed the numbers of the bloc had swelled again to 200-300, with anywhere from 400-800 other protestors also marching east. At this point, the bloc came upon a police cruiser, caught unawares by the decision to double back. There was a single officer inside; the windows of the car were smashed and the hood was stamped on while the officer looked out in horror. This attack was met with cheers and shouts of encouragement from the bloc and the rest of the march, boosting morale and making it clear that the crowd would support militant tactics. After the windows of the car had been smashed, a group of police ran in to rescue the trapped officer before quickly and clumsily withdrawing. The officers were visibly shaken and unsure how to proceed.

By this time the bloc had travelled many blocks from the rest of the labor march; anyone uncomfortable with confrontational street tactics had had enough time to return north.

As the bloc continued down Queen Street, the windows of many stores and buildings were smashed, including a Nike store, a Starbucks, and the Gap. The windows of a government building housing an immigration office were also destroyed, as was a CTV van. The march was moving quickly at this point, surprised that the way east was clear.

As the crowd arrived at Bay Street—the central artery of Toronto’s financial district and the Canadian equivalent of Wall Street—antagonisms flared again between the black bloc, the NOII contingent, and others. The suggestion was again made to go south; many comrades were convinced that this would mean marching into an area where it would be easy for the police to surround the bloc. At one point a physical altercation almost erupted between individuals from the two groups. Ultimately, however, as the crowd filled the intersection of Queen and Bay, the bloc once again listened to those who wanted to go south and moved in that direction.

The attacks against property continued. At Bay and King Street a massive window complex of a Bank of Montreal was attacked; a hammer thrown through the air stuck into the pane like a hatchet thrown into a wall, creating a beautiful spiderweb of splintered glass. A black-clad militant ran up and pulled it out to use again.

Officers had abandoned a police car at this intersection; it immediately lost its windows. This attack seemed to slow the march as many stopped to observe the destruction. There was now a gap between the front section that had passed through the intersection and a much larger group still on the other side. There were only a few cops following the back of the march, as the majority of the police force was still busy fortifying their southern lines for an anticipated attack.

At this point, the security fence was visible a block and a half away; those in front waited for the rest of the bloc to catch up and hurriedly attempted to plan some sort of attack on the fence. Unfortunately, no one had really expected to get this close, and it didn't seem as though anything could be done to breach the perimeter with the resources on hand.

As the bloc gathered, many screamed to push further south. The sounds of breaking glass filled the air from every direction. Lines of riot cops poured into the intersection of Bay and Front Street, and the bloc moved back towards King. The now iconic torching of the first police car took place at some point during this back and forth, and it seemed to scare police off for a good few minutes. Around this time, a second police cruiser pulled into the intersection—but it was quickly abandoned, as the four officers inside realized that they were dangerously outnumbered. These officers fled on foot as their cruiser was immediately swarmed, smashed, and lit on fire. Witnesses reported that they had never before seen such a significant force of police acting as fearful as they did at this moment.

This didn't last long, however, and the bloc became boxed in on Bay Street as it attempted to retreat north. Fortunately, at just the right moment, people charged the northeast corner of the intersection of Bay and King. Perhaps because two of their cruisers were burning behind them and hundreds of dangerous anarchists were hurtling screaming towards them, the line of riot police retreated, stumbling backwards, and let the crowd through.

The bloc continued east on King, then turned north at the next intersection onto Yonge Street—Toronto's renowned shopping strip. The property destruction continued as many more banks and corporate chains were attacked. Other targets included a leather store, a jewelry shop, and a pornography store. As the destruction continued, anarchists became bolder and began stepping into the smashed storefronts, removing furniture and looting a Bell Canada outlet of cell phones—many of which were smashed on the ground. American Apparel, a clothing store that bills itself as anti-sweatshop but employs non-status immigrants in sweatshop conditions in South Central Los Angeles, had its windows smashed and shit smeared on its merchandise before its mannequins were taken out, dismembered, and used as projectiles to attack the neighboring strip club. At this point it became impossible to keep up with the number of banks and corporate chains attacked. The devastation went so far that some later claimed that it was the largest example of property destruction ever carried out by anarchists in North America; media reports have subsequently estimated the cost of the damages at over \$3 million.<sup>4</sup>

At College and Yonge, the crowd arrived at Police Headquarters. Rocks and bricks were thrown at the riot police deployed in front of the building. These were the first police encountered since the crowd left the intersection at Bay and King.

As the march continued west on College Street and neared Queen's Park, the windows of an unmarked police minivan in an intersection were smashed, while across the street a platoon of riot cops advanced, gunners moving into position to counter anyone who approached them. They shot several "muzzle blasts" of talcum powder mixed with tear gas and a small wafer-like projectile.

The black bloc dispersed at this point, forming a circle inside which members removed their black clothing and protective gear. While some anarchists filed back into the park, excitedly

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<sup>4</sup> Editors' note: Some sources allege that property destruction totaled \$3 million or more at the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle; the Earth Liberation Front arson at the Vail ski resort in 1998 was estimated at \$12 million.



discussing the day's events, most left the area, not wanting to be arrested before they could participate in the anticipated Saturday Night Fever roaming dance party.

After the bloc's quick dispersal, security forces moved in on crowds of largely peaceful protesters to exact revenge. Meanwhile, after witnessing footage of the riots on television, a large crowd had begun to coalesce at Queen and Spadina, where the Get Off the Fence contingent had initiated its path of destruction. With no police in the immediate vicinity and a general state of lawlessness prevailing in the city, several unmasked individuals used this opportunity to light one of the previously damaged police cars on fire after playing with its sound system and pulling a stack of police documents from the car's trunk. With few experienced militants left on the streets to caution against carrying out such attacks without proper attire, most of these individuals were later identified through footage captured by CCTV cameras and, in some cases, given harsh prison sentences.

Throughout the day, the destruction and burning of police cruisers was broadcast live on local news, with a frantic anchor saying, "I don't understand where the police are and how they could let this happen!" Against the idea that the police permitted this to happen, witnesses argue that they were stretched thin across the city and were focused on dispersing and arresting any crowds they perceived to be linked to the black bloc. It took them a few more hours to clear Queen Street, which they eventually did.

The mass arrests began Saturday afternoon, with arrestees brought to a temporary jail set up in a former movie set in the eastern part of the city. As the night progressed, many crowds spontaneously formed only to be viciously attacked by police; snatch squads started to round up anyone who looked like an anarchist or a protester. The Saturday Night Fever event planned for that evening was cancelled, as almost all of the organizers were now behind bars.

At this point, coordination among anarchists severely broke down, and the lack of a communications team or anything resembling a unified twitter update feed meant that most were spread out and isolated throughout the city, unsure of what was going on and unable to amass in significant numbers to accomplish more during this volatile situation.

### **The Party's Over: Sunday, June 27**

The next morning began with a raid at a residence building on the University of Toronto campus. Seventy activists were arrested, many of whom were visiting from Quebec. Their charges were later dropped when it emerged that the police did not have a proper warrant to enter the building.

At 10 a.m., a jail solidarity rally gathered at a park near the temporary detention center on Eastern Avenue. Shortly after the demonstrators arrived, riot cops were deployed and snatch squads began grabbing people from the crowd and throwing them into unmarked minivans. Officers committed violent assaults during many of these arrests, and fired tear gas at the crowd. Demonstrators retreated to Queen Street East, where many were rounded up and mass-arrested.

At 3:30 p.m., police stopped a bus with Quebec license plates. They detained fifty people and arrested ten. A bomb squad was called in to search the bus. Throughout the day, police continued to board transit vehicles and randomly stop people walking in the downtown area, searching for anyone wearing black or who appeared to be a protester.

Despite this climate of intense repression, many anarchists attempted to gather for the Fire Works For Prisons noise demonstration, planned for 5 p.m. Police snatch squads detained every-

one in the surrounding neighborhood who had black clothing with them or who attempted to flee. They succeeded in preventing anyone from amassing at the proposed meeting point, and it seemed to those scouting the neighborhood that at least a few affinity groups had been completely rounded up while most others had one or two people from their groups detained. The police effectively canceled the demonstration.

In the late afternoon, police surrounded the TCMN convergence space, a red and black building in the working class neighborhood of Parkdale where free meals and childcare were being provided. Soon after, a crowd of people who had heard about the siege began to form and march west to confront the police. By 7 p.m. the cops had kettled about 300 people at Queen and Spadina, including many confused bystanders. At this point a torrential storm opened up; many of those kettled were forced to stand in the rain for almost three hours before being mass-arrested.

Beginning Sunday afternoon, prisoners were released from the temporary detention center, some without shoes and others without their personal belongings. All described having been held in cold, cramped wire cages and having been forced to share toilets with no doors. Women and trans individuals reported threats of rape and sexual harassment, while others were forcibly strip-searched in front of male police officers. Many arrestees were denied access to legal counsel for well over 24 hours, in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Guard: Man, what did you do that they put you down here?

Testament: Me? I didn't do nothin'.

Guard: Well, you must have done something. Everybody who did nothing is in the normal holding area.

Testament: Naw, seriously, this is a big misunderstanding. I'm just, like, a musician  
.. .

Guard: Oh shit! You're one of those rapper guys!

Testament: Yeah, that's—wait, how do you know about that?

Guard: Dude, you're like the ace of spades in this shit! Everybody's been talking about you and watching the video. A lot of them are talking shit, but I'll be honest with you, that song was pretty fucking brave. I grew up in Scarborough—I've been listening to hip-hop all my life, but your shit is different.

Testament: Oh man, please don't tell me I'm the ace of spades. You sayin there's a deck of cards with targets on them? Wait, you really liked the song?

Guard: Yeah, it was the shit. This place is fucked up, eh?

Testament: You're telling me? I'm the one in cuffs goin to get strip- searched.

Guard: Yeah, you should write a song about this when you get out and call it Torontonamo! Oh, and give me a shout out!

Testament: Yo man, I ain't even had anything to eat now in like 18 hours, they keep giving me processed cheese sandwiches on buttered white bread even though they know I'm vegan.

Guard: What? They gotta feed you—you're the ace of spades! I'll look into it.

Testament: Please stop calling me the ace of spades.

## Legal Fallout

In the early morning hours of June 26, members of the Toronto Police Service's "Guns and Gangs" unit battered down the doors of two Toronto houses and arrested four members of SOAR at gunpoint. Over the following hours, a dozen more individuals were snatched up: some grabbed off the street, others stopped in vehicles. It soon emerged that these arrests were the result of evidence gathered by two undercover police agents who had infiltrated various anarchist organizations in the region— including AW@L (Anti-War at Laurier), the TCMN, and SOAR itself—as part of a Joint Intelligence Task Force operation.

These two agents, who had operated under the names "Khalid Mohammed" [legal name Bindo Showan] and "Brenda Doughtry" [legal name Brenda Carey], were well-known within anarchist circles. "Khalid" had been active in SOAR until members of his affinity group became concerned about his erratic behavior and asked him to stop attending meetings. His early efforts to promote violent and reckless actions had raised the suspicions of activists in Guelph, where he had earlier attempted to infiltrate the city's tight-knit anarchist community. After relocating to Kitchener-Waterloo, "Khalid" changed his strategy and began offering free rides, beer, and material support to members of AW@L. He also began to pit activists from different cities against one another by spreading rumors and playing up perceived divisions based on race, class, and theoretical disagreements. Unfortunately, a lack of forthright communication between anarchists in Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo allowed him to gain a position of trust, which he used to gather a great deal of evidence against the alleged G20 "ringleaders." Much of this was exaggerated and taken out of context by the Crown Attorney in an effort to paint these individuals as violent terrorists.

Unlike "Khalid," "Brenda" was far more effective in evading suspicion; the announcement of her betrayal came as a shock to everyone. Based out of Guelph, "Brenda" was actively involved in the planning of the G20 protests; at the time of her disappearance she was a registered legal observer with the Movement Defence Committee (MDC), in addition to sitting on both the Fundraising and Action committees of the TCMN. To top things off, she also attended SOAR meetings, and even shared an apartment with one of the alleged "ringleaders," Mandy Hiscocks.

The police infiltration had devastating effects on anarchist organizing in southern Ontario. The actions of "Khalid" and "Brenda" led to the arrest of some of the region's most dedicated activists. These arrests and the strict conditions that accompanied them had the intended effect of tearing SOAR apart and dealt a significant blow to efforts to create a regional network of anarchist militants.

The majority of the 1090 arrested during the G20 weekend were released by June 28, 2010; only 320 were charged. Charges included burning police cars, assaulting police, carrying weapons, criminal association, and mischief. Of those who remained in jail, eighteen were accused of being "ringleaders" and charged with multiple counts of conspiracy, facing sentences of up to ten years.

The majority of those charged with conspiracy were active within SOAR, though not all: Pat Cadorette and Jaggi Singh, both charged with several counts, were members of CLAC involved with anti-G20 organizing in Montreal. In May of 2011 in exchange for his conspiracy charges being dropped, Singh agreed to plead guilty to counseling to commit indictable mischief—referring to a NOII press conference held on June 24 at which he stated that the security fence was illegitimate and should be torn down. The plea bargain also included the precondition that he not be

called to testify against any of his co-accused. On June 21, 2011, he was sentenced to time already served.<sup>5</sup>

Syed Hussan, a respected organizer with NOII and the TCMN, was arrested on the morning of June 26 as he was getting into a taxi. During the lead-up to the G20 counter-demonstrations, Hussan had served as a central figure on the TCMN's communications committee. If found guilty, he faced deportation to Pakistan.

Darius Mirshahi and Chris Bowen, better known by their hip-hop monikers Testament and Illogik, were both arrested on the morning of June 27 and charged with conspiracy to commit mischief—a separate conspiracy from the 18 co-accused—as well as masking with intent to commit a criminal act and counseling to commit mischief. This latter charge was tied to their popular music video “Crash the Meeting,” which the Crown attempted to blame for much of the destruction that occurred during the Get Off the Fence march. After five months of non-association conditions that prevented them from performing, composing music, or even speaking together, their charges were stayed for lack of evidence.

Eric Lankin, the last of the SOAR accused to be held in custody, was finally granted bail on September 3 after two denials. Alleged SOAR “ringleader” Alex Hundert, initially released on July 19, was rearrested on September 18; prosecutors accused him of breaching his “no demonstration” condition by speaking on public panels at the University of Waterloo and Ryerson University. He was released from prison with extremely restrictive conditions in mid-October, including an unprecedented ban on “publicly expressing a political opinion,” only to be re-arrested soon after for alleged intimidation of the Crown Attorney. He was released again on January 24, 2011, and remained under limited house arrest for many months.

On September 29, Jaroslava Avila, an anarchist and Mapuche activist studying political science at the University of Toronto, became the last of the co-accused to be arrested. Her charges were dropped three months later.

Following the G20 riots, police circulated a “most wanted” list, including photos of many individuals who participated in the later attacks against the cruisers left at Spadina and Queen. Dozens of people were identified in this manner and turned themselves in or were arrested. Additional arrests occurred through August and into September, primarily in Ontario but also in Quebec and BC. Some officials hinted that anarchists from New York had been identified and would be charged, but this never panned out.

One of those later identified through photographic evidence was Kelly Pflug-Back, a community organizer from Guelph. The Crown absurdly accused Kelly of being the on-the-ground “leader of the black bloc.” After pleading guilty to seven counts of Mischief and Disguise with Intent, she was sentenced on July 19, 2012 to eleven months in prison, plus time served.

Another individual charged with participating in black bloc actions was Ryan Rainville, an Indigenous anarchist. After three months in prison, he was released under strict house arrest to a Native spiritual healing center in Toronto. Rainville eventually pled guilty to three counts of Mischief Over \$5000 and Breach of Peace, but contested the charges of assault and obstructing

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<sup>5</sup> Singh had been charged in connection with the 1997 APEC summit, the 2000 G20 summit in Montreal, the 2001 FTAA summit in Quebec City, and the WTO meetings in Montreal in 2003, and many other protests; as a known and unrepentant anarchist organizer, it had long been a cliché for police to single him out for arrest. Almost all of these trials ended in “not guilty” verdicts. While other conspiracy defendants had been seized in pre-dawn raids before the G20 protests, Jaggi participated in the weekend's events, then gave an interview to the journalist of his choice and took a week to assist other arrestees before setting his affairs in order and turning himself in to the police.

police that had been pressed as a result of the presence of a police officer inside one of the vehicles he admitted vandalizing. He repeatedly defended his actions in the courtroom, vowing struggle against all forms of oppression and drawing a distinction between violence against property and the systemic violence of capitalism.

In mid-June, three individuals were arrested for the arson of the Ottawa RBC. Charges against two of them were later stayed for lack of evidence. On December 7, 2010, a judge sentenced the third individual, Roger Clement, to three and a half years. Asked by the court if he would like to take the opportunity to apologize, Clement refused to do so. Instead, he offered a humble apology to his friends and family for the inconvenience he had caused them, and for the fact that the money that would be used to incarcerate him was not being spent on something more worthwhile.

The seventeen individuals still facing conspiracy charges finally resolved their cases on November 22, 2011 without setting a legal precedent for conspiracy convictions related to demonstration organizing. Six accepted plea deals in return for the others having their charges withdrawn. Alex Hundert and Mandy Hiscocks pled to one count of counseling mischief over \$5000 and one count of counseling to obstruct police; Leah Henderson, Peter Hopperton, Erik Lankin, and Adam Lewis pled to a single count of counseling mischief over \$5000. Their sentences ranged from six to eighteen months. The seventeen released a collective statement proclaiming “We emerge united and in solidarity.”

### **The Lessons of 2010**

For many, the now-iconic images of squad cars burning in the heart of Canada’s financial district were an exhilarating validation of the Riot 2010 slogan. Short of an attack on Parliament Hill, one would be hard pressed to imagine a more vivid symbol of anarchist struggle against the Canadian state.

Yet, while at most summits in recent memory it was considered a victory to smash up a shopping district and disappear, Toronto seemed to present a situation in which generalized street fighting and securing of areas of the city with barricades could have been possible if anarchists had stayed in better communication with each other and the crowds of supportive protestors and hooligans. The fact that this did not occur illustrates strategic errors in the buildup to the summit, not to mention the absence of an effective communications structure.

In hindsight, anarchists in Ontario may have been held hostage by their own ambitions. SOAR worked so hard to prepare a full weekend of anarchist actions that they were unprepared when the Get Off the Fence march opened the possibility of general upheaval. Some longtime anarchists didn’t even attend, saving themselves for what they believed were more promising events—none of which ever happened precisely because of the success of the Get Off the Fence action. At a crucial moment, when the police were on the defensive and anarchists had every opportunity to push further into uncharted territory, anarchists abandoned the streets in order to prepare for the Saturday Night Fever mobile dance party. There is something to be said for quitting while you’re ahead—and without a communications structure, this may have been the best choice. But this was the turning point that allowed the police to regain the upper hand and thwart all of SOAR’s further plans. Saturday’s events show that sometimes anarchists’ aspirations are only limited by their inability to imagine that they will succeed.

The mobilizations of 2010 helped create a new political climate in Canada that many anarchists found challenging to come to terms with. Following the Toronto G20, many comrades were forced to navigate crippling non-association clauses that barred them from planning or attending public demonstrations. Much time and energy was spent raising money for legal costs and court support.

This enabled non-anarchists to frame the public discourse about the actions of the police in Toronto. Liberals, social democrats and right-wing libertarians presented the events of the G20 as exceptional; instead of channeling public indignation towards a deeper understanding of the need for real change, they focused on seeking minor reforms, often through fruitless calls for public inquiries and rallies demanding that police “respect civil rights.”

Immediately after the G20, conspiracy theorists began to circulate rumors that the black bloc was orchestrated by undercover police officers as a justification to crack down on peaceful protestors. These accusations, based on a superficial understanding of the use of agent provocateurs in the Montebello protests of 2007, spread quickly among a population so deeply conditioned by the dogmas of nonviolence and state omnipotence that it could not imagine how a few hundred anarchists could get the better of the authorities. Some conspiracy theorists went so far as to claim that the burning police cars were Hollywood props, while others suggested that the vehicles were left as “bait”—implying that those who lit them on fire were playing into a trap.

Unfortunately, these misconceptions still linger in some circles. Anarchists produced comprehensive analyses debunking them, but failed to disseminate these widely beyond activist alternative media. In the immediate aftermath of the G20, much of the anarchist community was reeling from arrests or keeping a low profile in hopes of avoiding further repression. In hindsight, it was a grave mistake to remain silent during this period. At this crucial moment, anarchists could have used their new visibility to build on their successes and deal a critical blow to pacifist hegemony.

## **The View from 2012**

Canadian anarchists learned some hard lessons from the RCMP-led Joint Intelligence Group operation carried out in the year and a half leading up to the Olympics and G20. Freedom of Information requests filed by independent journalists subsequently revealed the presence of no less than twelve undercover police operatives across the country participating in this operation—most of whom still have not been identified. As the initial shock of “Khalid’s and “Brenda’s betrayal wore off, Canadian anarchists moved to re-establish informal regional and national networks, armed with a more nuanced understanding of police surveillance and infiltration tactics.

Many of our comrades have completed the prison sentences they incurred as a result of the 2010 protests, while others are still involved in the legal process. Mandy Hiscocks and Alex Hundert, both currently incarcerated, are focusing on organizing within the prison system, and have shared their experiences through blogs maintained by outside supporters.

Although the iconic images of burning police cars in downtown Toronto were inspiring to anarchists and anti-authoritarians, the same can’t necessarily be said of other segments of Canadian society. Anarchists active in the Occupy movement had to deal with the conspiracy claims popularized by so-called “info-warrior” types in addition to the perils of being singled out by liberals and right-wingers intent on cooperating with police. This was not unique to Canada—a similar dynamic played out in Occupy camps in the US—but whereas elsewhere, antagonisms

flared between participants who adopted differing tactics, in Toronto anarchists were viewed skeptically before the occupations even began.

As the dust settles on Riot 2010, its high points have been eclipsed by the massive Quebec student strikes of 2012. This movement, largely propelled by the anarcho-syndicalist student group ASSE, indicates an exciting new direction for anarchist organizing. Just as the Toronto G20 summit heralded the arrival of the “age of austerity,” the Quebec student movement implies a new phase of struggle. We can anticipate a period of intensifying class warfare in which we will have to contend with the increasing repression that will doubtless accompany the downward spiral of capitalism.

## **Editors’ Postscript**

For most of the organizing leading up to the riots of 2010, the protests at the Olympics were the only goal; yet the G20 protests arguably eclipsed these. This shows how a protracted buildup campaign grounded in multiple communities can create momentum extending far beyond the original objective. At the same time, it’s worth reflecting on the intelligence error that led anarchists to underestimate the Get Off the Fence march. This tells us a lot about the current global context and what strategies are likely to be most effective.

Until 2009, it seemed to make sense for anarchists to cast ourselves as the protagonists in struggles with the state; this set realistic goals in a time of low social conflict. Today, however, more and more people are drifting toward open revolt, while the state is scrambling to pick off its enemies before the next crisis. Even before the Occupy movement, the confrontational demonstrations at both the Pittsburgh and Toronto G20 protests drew more participants from the general public than expected. In this context, rather than planning what “we” should do, we should focus on creating situations in which everyone can get out of control. This is especially pressing as the authorities identify anarchists as enemy #1.

Anarchists in Ontario spent months laying plans that never panned out, exposing themselves to massive conspiracy charges for actions they never got to participate in. Yet the riots took place regardless of the arrests of supposed ringleaders; in fact, the final nail in the coffin of the original SOAR plans was the readiness of average participants in the Get Off the Fence march to escalate beyond all expectations. Given the wide range of participants in this escalation and the negative consequences for those unfamiliar with proper security practices, it might have been wiser to invest more energy in educating the general public about resistance tactics and less in laying “secret” plans.

An effective communications system might have enabled anarchists to respond more swiftly and flexibly to the developments of that Saturday, but this points to a more fundamental issue. In the information age, the structures that channel communication are the most determinant factor in struggle. The flows of information create the social formations that preserve or interrupt the status quo; everything depends on whether we can establish subversive connections and currents. This goes not only for Twitter feeds and independent media co-ops, but also for the relations between black- bloc anarchists and groups like No One Is Illegal—not to mention angry civilians without political affiliations.

In the mass mobilization model, people who share ideological common ground converge in one location opposite a convergence of their foes, concentrating a global rivalry into one flashpoint.

Since the Toronto G20, anarchists worldwide have shifted to a new model, participating in diffuse social upheavals that originate in common conditions rather than political positions. This spreads the clash throughout society rather than concentrating it in one location. Now that this approach has caught on in North America with the occupation movement, Riot 2010 may go down in history as the last climax of the mass-mobilization era. It's up to us to distill the worthwhile lessons of that era to pass on to the next one.



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