

*SPECIAL ISSUE ON ORGANIZING FOR AUSTERITY: THE NEOLIBERAL STATE, REGULATING  
LABOUR AND WORKING CLASS RESISTANCE*

**“The Big Smoke” Screen**

**Toronto’s G20 Protests, Police Brutality, and the Unaccountability of Public  
Officials**

**IAN HUSSEY and PATRICE LeCLERC**

Sociology, York University. Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Sociology, St. Lawrence University. Canton, New York, USA.

**Abstract**

The G8 and G20 summits took place in Huntsville and Toronto, Ontario, Canada on 25-26 and 26-27 June 2010 respectively. Summits such as these often have large budgets attached to them and attract protests from people with various political leanings deploying a diversity of tactics, and these particular summits were no exception. In this article, we contrast official and media accounts of the protest and the policing of the events with a narrative grounded in protestors’ experience, in an attempt to complicate present popular understandings of these protests. In the discussion section of the article we provide theoretical and analytic insights into what the events of last summer can tell us about organizing and policing dissent.

**Résumé**

Le sommets du G8 et du G20 se sont tenus à Huntsville et Toronto, Ontario, Canada le 25-26 et 26-27 juin 2010 respectivement. Les sommets comme ceux-ci ont généralement des budgets importants et attirent des manifestations organisées par des individus avec des tendances politiques multiples, utilisant des stratégies diverses. Ces sommets ne font pas exception. Dans cet article, nous contrastons les descriptions des manifestations et du comportement de la police par les sources officielles et les médias, avec les récits issus de l’expérience des manifestants, dans un souci de complexifier la compréhension populaire des ces manifestations. Nous offrons des contributions théoriques et analytiques pour comprendre ce que les événements de l’été dernier peuvent nous dire à propos de l’organisation et le contrôle de la contestation.

Ian Hussey is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at York University. His dissertation is an institutional ethnography of the postcolonial politics of fair trade and market-driven development. He has also written about fair trade in Canada in the *Journal of Business Ethics* with Darryl Reed, Bob Thomson, and JF Lemay. He can be reached at [ihussey@yorku.ca](mailto:ihussey@yorku.ca). Patrice LeClerc is Associate Professor of Sociology at St. Lawrence University. She writes about comparative social movements and social policy in the United States, Canada and Quebec; her current work focuses on nationalism. She can be reached at [pleclerc@stlawu.edu](mailto:pleclerc@stlawu.edu).

Ian Hussey est doctorant en sociologie à l’université de York. Sa thèse de doctorat est une ethnographie institutionnelle de la politique postcoloniale du commerce équitable et du développement du marché. Il a également écrit sur le commerce équitable au Canada dans la revue *Journal of Business Ethics* avec Darryl Reed, Bob Thomson et JF Lemay. Il peut être joint à [ihussey@yorku.ca](mailto:ihussey@yorku.ca). Patrice LeClerc est professeure associée de sociologie à l’université de St. Lawrence. Elle écrit sur les mouvements sociaux et la politique sociale dans une perspective comparative, aux Etats-Unis, au Canada et au Québec; ses recherches actuelles sont centrées sur le nationalisme. Elle peut être contactée à [pleclerc@stlawu.edu](mailto:pleclerc@stlawu.edu).

**Keywords**

Anarchism; G8; G20; police brutality; social movements

**Mots-clés**

anarchisme; G8; G20; violence policière; mouvements sociaux

*There's something happening here*

*What it is ain't exactly clear*<sup>1</sup>

The G8 and G20 summits took place in Huntsville and Toronto<sup>2</sup>, Ontario, Canada on 25-26 and 26-27 June 2010 respectively (Friday-Sunday). Summits such as these often have large budgets attached to them and attract protests from people with various political leanings deploying a diversity of tactics, and these particular summits were no exception. Large budgets, summits where far-reaching political and economic decisions are made, and protests that include property destruction and burning police cars make sensational(ist) media stories. It is also often the case with these sorts of summits that what actually happened on the streets of the host city during the event is lost in the shuffle of television channels and news, video, and social networking websites. And sometimes two opposing narrative frames shape news stories about a particular aspect of the summits and protests. In the case of the Toronto G20 summit, the news reporting on the policing and protest came down to whether the police "did their jobs" or not. As early as the rally on Monday, 28 June 2010, the day after the G20 summit ended, in front of a downtown Toronto police station, well-known leftists like Naomi Klein were claiming that the police didn't do their jobs – that is, they should have confronted and arrested the Black Bloc for property destruction during a riot on June 26. Ten days after the summits, Toronto's city council weighed in with a 36-0 vote "to 'commend the outstanding work' of Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, his officers and other police forces working during the G20 summit in Toronto."<sup>3</sup> It is our contention that both of these assessments of the police

---

<sup>1</sup> Steven Stills. 1967. The song, "For What It's Worth," was recorded by Stills' band, Buffalo Springfield.

<sup>2</sup> The city of Toronto is colloquially called "the big smoke."

<sup>3</sup> David Rider. 7 July 2010. "Council commends 'outstanding' police G20 work." Toronto Star. <http://www.thestar.com/news/torontog20summit/article/833106--council-commends-outstanding-police-g20-work>. Leftist city councilors, like Gord Perks, were absent from the vote for some reason.

and certain protest tactics are too simple and misguided; we argue that things are more complicated than either of these positions allow.

In an effort to provide a more nuanced picture of the protests and policing, we contrast official and media accounts of the protests and the policing of the events with a narrative grounded in protestors' experience. To contextualize the summits, we open our essay with a brief history of the G8/G20 summits as well as background information on the 2010 summits held in Ontario. We then describe the 21-25 June 2010 (Monday-Friday) week of protests in Toronto leading into the summit weekend as well as the more contentious protests and accompanying police brutality that occurred during the summit weekend, June 26-27. We close the paper with a section that provides analytic discussion of these events as well as outstanding questions that we (and others) have regarding the actions and inactions of police and other public officials surrounding the summits, the extraordinary measures taken in the name of "security," and the mass, arbitrary arrests of hundreds of protestors.

In this closing section, we demystify the portrayal of anarchism and of the Black Bloc in the mainstream media. We scrutinize the abuse of a temporary law that gave police the power to search and request ID from anyone inside the security fence. We also criticize other police violations of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and of the Criminal Code of Canada, including sexual assault and discrimination by language and sexuality. We discuss how state and police repression may deter dissent, may radicalize people, and could lead to system alienation and to increased preferences for alternative political orders. We draw on social movement theory to assert that police violence is an instrumental act of social control, used not only to protect people and property and as a last resort. Hence, state and police violence is not "out of the ordinary" in a liberal democracy like Canada. These forms of violence happen daily in the communities of the poor, migrants, LGBTQ people, and people racialized other than white.

We do not support the idea that participants in the 26 June 2010 riot in Toronto were a bunch of "thugs" or "crazy anarchists," as some police officials, politicians, and mainstream journalists have claimed – though many of the rioters do seem to self-identify as anarchists. Furthermore, we do not agree with the idea circulated by Klein and others that the police simply "didn't do their job" when the Black Bloc was burning police cruisers and smashing windows. We think it is unlikely that most of what the police did and did not do was not coordinated and done for one reason or another at the behest of their commanding officers and/or political authorities. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the

Toronto G20 protests and policing is it is still unclear who made specific decisions about particular police (in)actions. We therefore conclude our paper by adding our names to those demanding a public inquiry into the expenditure of almost \$1 billion in public funds on "security" measures that led to the largest mass arrest in Canadian history, the blatant violation of fundamental civil liberties and rights enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the brutalization of hundreds of people by police.

### **A Brief History of the G8/G20 Summits**

There is a long history of heads of societies meeting together to make decisions about such matters as mutual aid, defence, the economy, legalities, alliances, enemies, ideologies, among others. They have also chosen with whom to negotiate, and which groups were to be left out. Many institutions have been created (and abolished) in order to facilitate such meetings. From the failed League of Nations, founded in 1919 as one of the first global efforts for security and social issues and later re-organized into the United Nations in 1945, to today's G8 and G20 gatherings, many experiments have been tried for mutual defence and cooperation.

The G6 was created in 1975, in the wake of the Middle East oil crisis.<sup>4</sup> Of historical note, the original membership included France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US. Canada joined in 1976, Russia in 1997. The G20 began meeting in 1999, the summit was originally for finance ministers and central bankers. The G20 now meets twice a year. Its members control 80 percent of the world's trade and Gross National Product. The meetings themselves are choreographed completely in advance, communiqués are drafted and agreed to well ahead of time. Unanticipated events are rare, though they do occur. Participants include the leaders of member-states as well as government ministers, bankers, and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Other events also occur in concert with the G20 meetings; examples from Toronto include the G(irls) 20 summit organized by the Belinda Stronach Foundation, which is envisioned as a regular event as part of future meetings (Mahoney 2010). There was also a B(usiness) 20 summit. Such meetings also attract protest, in this case there were protests

---

<sup>4</sup> Much of the specific information in this section is from Colin Robertson, "A Primer to the G8/G20 Toronto and Huntsville Summits," Canadian Defense and Foreign Affairs Institute, June 2010.

organized by grassroots groups associated with the Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN), as well as by other groups (Wood 2010).

In addition, a People's Summit took place 18-20 June 2010, at Ryerson University in downtown Toronto, the weekend before the G20. The People's Summit was meant to educate and agitate people from a variety of political leanings from liberal to social democrat to radical. The summit included a wide array of keynote speeches, workshops, cultural events, skills training, and presentations on a variety of issues, including self-determination, solidarity, environmental and social justice, peace, social/people's economy, human, women, and labour rights, revolution and transformative change from current political and economic policies. The steering committee for the event included grassroots groups, NGOs ("non-governmental" organizations), unions, and student organizations.<sup>5</sup> The breadth of political leanings represented in the People's Summit and on its steering committee reflects recent experience with global social justice movements with specific organizational codes emphasizing inclusivity and diversity and with a wide range of issues and tactics included in the common frame of reference of social justice, although some of the positions may be contradictory. These contradictions, however, reflect the diversity and inclusiveness of such events (Beyeler and Kreisi 2005).

286

Religious leaders from such faiths as Islam, Christianity, Hindu, Sikh, Judaism, Buddhism, Indigenous Spirituality and Shinto gathered at the University of Winnipeg on 21-23 June 2010, for the World Religions Summit organized by the Canadian Council of Churches. This summit has been organized alongside the G8 summit for the past five years. This is the first time the event has been held in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

This structure of parallel events is not unique to the G8 and G20. Many other multilateral groups meet regularly, with agreements reached in advance, with concomitant rallying of other groups to support or to protest. In Canada, many will remember the events of the IMF meeting in Québec City in 2001, a landmark in terms of global resistance and new forms of protest.

Particular narrative framings of the policing and protest of the G8 and G20 summits in Ontario were widely disseminated and reported on in local and national Canadian media leading up to, during, and for weeks

---

<sup>5</sup> The website for the People's Summit is no longer active. See these webpages for basic information on the event: <http://www.rabble.ca/whatsup/2010-peoples-summit-june-18-20-2010>, <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/March2010/18/c3043.html>.

<sup>6</sup> See this webpage for more detail: <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/news-g8>.

after the summits. However, when viewed from outside Canada, one heard little or nothing about the summits, protests, or the cost of the event, with the exception of a few photos of the iconic burning police car. John Kirton (2010, 1), Co-Director of the G20 Research Group at the University of Toronto, in his article "The Image of the Toronto Summit as Seen from Seoul", states: "in the lead-up to the Seoul Summit, Canadians-or at least their major media-were preoccupied with the action being taken against a few of their police officers for their failure to follow proper procedures in the fact of major street protests during the summit in June. Few in the media outside Canada...felt this story was newsworthy in any way." Our examination of the coverage of the summits by *The New York Times* (NYT) throughout 26-30 June 2010 seems to support Kirton's conclusion about newsworthiness. For instance, the NYT coverage included a page 8 "spread" of two articles, one on economic issues and the other on the cost of security (June 27). The articles were accompanied by a photo of a woman walking her dog by police with bicycles and by a photo of one of the mass arrests. By June 30, the NYT coverage had been reduced to a one-paragraph article about the number of arrests throughout summit week (p. 1). LeClerc's local paper, the Watertown Daily Times (less than 100 miles south of the St. Lawrence River) on June 27 had a photo of police with an article that focused entirely on economic issues (p. 1). The June 27 edition of the UK-based *Guardian* had an article with a photo and the headline "G20 rioters disrupt protest: Police arrest 560 after masked anarchists smash property; journalists report use of excessive force to maintain 1 640 m security cordon." The July 28 issue of *The New Yorker* has five full-page colour ads by the government of Canada touting Canada as "a great place to do business", and additional advertisements for tourism in Alberta, Ontario, and Canada generally (inside front cover, 5, 11, 16, 23, 33, 75, inside back cover, back cover). Tourism Toronto (2010, 19) chose to take out a full-page full colour ad in the June 27 edition of the NYT, headlined: "You don't have to have diplomatic immunity to have a good time in Toronto."

The government of Canada claimed positive outcomes from the summits, especially the pledge from (some) countries to plan to cut deficits. But even *Macleans* called for an end to such meetings which it says exist to "provide world leaders with an opportunity to mingle and pose for a group photo" (editorial, 19 July 2010). Post-summit polling done on July 1-9 by Angus Reid shows that the achievements of the meetings did not receive much attention, even in Canada where the media coverage of the summits was high: 23 percent of Canadians, 20 percent of the US, and 19

percent of Great Britain followed the final outcomes. At the same time, 52 percent of Canadians, 21 percent of the US, and 16 percent of Great Britain followed coverage of the demonstrations.<sup>7</sup> For Canadians polled on June 11-12, Reid found 78 percent felt the security expenditures were unjustified.<sup>8</sup>

This begs the question, what happened on the streets of Toronto during summit week? In what follows we recount a descriptive narrative of that week in Toronto, but first in what immediate follows we provide some basic background information on the G8 summit in Huntsville and the G20 summit in Toronto to set the proverbial stage.

### **Background Information on the 2010 G8/G20 Summits in Canada**

The 36<sup>th</sup> G8 summit and the fifth held in Canada took place in the small town of Huntsville, Ontario, in the historic and prestigious Deerhurst Resort in the middle of “cottage country.” The event is said to have occurred on June 25-26 but the meeting was really only held for about three quarters of June 25 because of the tradition of the G8 “family photo” and travel time to Toronto during the morning of June 26. The Huntsville summit participants included: core G8 members, “Africa outreach” (the heads of government of Algeria, Egypt (invited but not in attendance), Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa), “extended outreach” (the heads of state of Colombia, Haiti, and Jamaica), and the leaders of international organizations (African Union, Commonwealth of Independent States, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Energy Agency, New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Bank, World Health Organization, and World Trade Organization).

The 2010 G20 Toronto summit was the fourth G20 summit and the first held in Canada. The summit was said to take place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) on June 26-27. The meeting actually formally began in the evening of June 26 with a working supper at the luxurious Fairmount Royal York Hotel in downtown Toronto. The meeting continued and concluded the next day at the MTCC, so between the G8 and G20 summits there was about two days of meetings. The Toronto G20 summit, the first of two in 2010, was originally meant to take place

---

<sup>7</sup> “Americans, Britons and Canadians Tuned Out During G8/G20 Summits.” <http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/43131/americans-britons-and-canadians-tuned-out-during-g8g20-summits/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Canadians Troubled by Summit Security Costs.”

[http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/39100/canadians\\_troubled\\_by\\_summit\\_security\\_costs/](http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/39100/canadians_troubled_by_summit_security_costs/).

immediately following the G8 summit in Huntsville, but it had to be moved because Huntsville doesn't have the capacity to provide appropriate hospitality to the large number of G20 delegates, their families and security personnel, and national and international journalists.<sup>9</sup> The Toronto summit participants included: core G20 members, invited nation-states (Ethiopia, Malawi, Netherlands, Nigeria, Spain, and Vietnam), and international organizations (African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Financial Stability Board, International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund, NEPAD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations, World Bank Group, and World Trade Organization). The agenda for the G20 summit is set by the host country, and like the preceding G8 summit, it largely focused on economic matters relating to the on-going global economic crisis.

These types of summits are extraordinarily costly to host countries, to the government of attendees, to the host city, and to the people. The budget for the summits was \$858 million, the bulk of which was spent on "security" for the G20 summit in Toronto.<sup>10</sup> The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) received \$330 million or 38.5 percent of the overall expenditure. The budget included almost eight dozen (95) new CCTV (closed circuit television) cameras for downtown Toronto, more than 6km of 3m/10ft zinc-coated fencing, sound canons, rubber bullets, smoke bombs, teargas, pepper spray, a temporary jail in a converted film studio, a pre-summit police training drill on counter-terrorism in the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce tower in Toronto's finance district, NORAD (North American Aerospace Defence Command) monitoring air traffic, and hundreds of private security guards working for a company not licensed to operate security services in Ontario (the company was licensed in a rush right before the summits, after media had widely reported that the company wasn't licensed to operate in Ontario). The budget also included the salaries, overtime, and benefits of 19,000 police, meals, travel and fleet requirements for police, accommodation for out-of-province police and commanding officers in the national police hierarchy.

Related to the high cost and the size of the security apparatus bought and assembled is the fact that these summits resulted in the largest mass arrest in Canadian history. Hundreds of peaceful protestors were

---

<sup>9</sup> Most international journalists didn't even bother to go to Huntsville; the vast majority who did were photojournalists.

<sup>10</sup> CBC News. 5 November 2010. "G8/G20 costs top \$857M."

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/toronto/story/2010/11/05/g20-costs-tabled.html>.

taken to detention despite the fact they were lawfully protesting in the “free speech zone” set up by police on the grounds of Ontario’s Provincial Legislator, Queen’s Park. In total, 1105 people were detained, over 900 of the detainees were either never charged or subsequently had their charges dropped by the Crown (709 were never charged), 12 people have since plead guilty, and as of March 2011 over 80 cases are still before the courts. The existence of the “free speech zone” along with police actions throughout the week of the summits resulted in the suspension of basic civil rights and flagrant violations of guaranteed rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Thorne 2010).

Leading up to the summits, the government of Canada also estimated that they would spend \$50 million in Huntsville, which is located in the political riding of Tony Clement, the federal Minister of Industry. This budget included \$5 million to resurface the runway of North Bay’s Jack Garland Airport; however, the G8 leaders ended up flying into and out of Toronto’s Pearson International Airport. The largest capital project that came out of this \$50 million budget seems to be the new rink in Huntsville; the building includes a 1500 seat rink or concert venue and facilities for various aquatic sports and leisure (swimming pools, wading pools, and hot tubs).

290

---

### **Week of Action, 21-25 June 2010<sup>11</sup>**

*What a field day for the heat  
A thousand people in the street  
Singing songs and carrying signs<sup>12</sup>*

On June 24-25, NGOs like the Council of Canadians, Oxfam International, and World Vision staged events in Huntsville that would most accurately be described a “photo ops” (NGOs like to think of them as “media stunts”). Most of the local protests against the G8/G20 took place in Toronto during the week of action that led into the weekend of the summits. Social media were used for organization and re-organization (such as the change of tactic and locales based on changing events). June 21-24, dubbed “Themed Days of Resistance (Build Up)” by the Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN), brought together organizations of indigenous peoples,

---

<sup>11</sup> See this webpage for basic scheduling information:  
<http://www.g20.torontomobilize.org/schedule>.

<sup>12</sup> Stills 1967, “For what it’s worth.”

women, people of colour, the poor and working class, disabled people, queer and trans people, amongst others. Actions taken include rallies, marches, meetings and parties, and film screenings. Monday, June 21, a day for action around migrant justice, income equity, and ending war and occupation, included a march in the afternoon and street theatre and "creative civic transformations" in the evening. Tuesday, June 22, a day of action around gender justice, queer rights, and disability rights included street theatre and a march. Wednesday, June 23, a day for action around environmental and climate justice, included a "Toxic Tour of Toronto" and a people's assembly on climate justice. Thursday, June 24, a day of action for indigenous sovereignty, included the largest march on the streets of Toronto thus far in the week. With momentum building throughout the week, the TCMN dubbed June 25-27 as "Days of Action." Friday, June 25, included a family friendly feminist political picnic, and a rally, march, block party, and tent city to raise awareness about homelessness and migration. The Council of Canadians organized a "Shout Out for Global Justice!" at Massey Hall for that evening. Author and activist Naomi Klein was amongst the speakers and at the end of the event she challenged the largely middle-class audience to join her on a walk to the tent city, and a few hundred people did.

### **Summit Weekend, 26-27 June 2010**

It is estimated that 20,000 people participated in the mainstream "People First, We Deserve Better" march that took place June 26, and the TCMN estimates that about 40,000 people participated in the protests overall. The Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress spearheaded the People First march. The coordinating committee for the event also included Oxfam Canada, Greenpeace, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. The march started at the "free speech zone" at Queen's Park (the location of the provincial capital, a large, park-like setting just north of downtown, the site of many protests and other actions over the years), headed south but purposefully avoided walking along the north-face of the security fence, and ended up back where it began, completing a circular route. The march was organized into "blocks." The blocks at the front of the march consisted of union-affiliated people, Oxfam affiliates, and environmentalists (dubbed the "green block" by Greenpeace). Organizers of the event wanted to separate themselves from any potential "anarchists," and actively tried to isolate unaffiliated people, particularly people clad in all black clothing, near the tail end of the march.

The organizers of the march were concerned about the widely circulated public call-out for a militant, confrontational demonstration given the name “Get Off the Fence” by the people calling for the action. The idea was for people to break off from the People First march when it turned back toward the “free speech zone” and to then participate in a militant protest that confronted the police, the security fence, and capitalists, or at least symbols of capitalism and the state, like Starbucks, chain restaurants, banks and financial institutions, and police cruisers.

The People First march by and large went the way it had been planned to happen. The situation on the ground was a fairly banal march of about 20,000 people in the downtown of a city that had 19,000 police gathered to provide “security.” Beyond CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) intelligence gathering and harassment of radicals for months beforehand and at least two undercover police, one male and one female, having infiltrated the TCMN for months of build-up organizing, the higher-ranking police officers in the summit security command centre had access to an incredible amount of “real-time” video coverage from the dozens of additional CCTV cameras on downtown streets as well as video footage shot from helicopters and airplanes overhead. It would have been very difficult to do something downtown during the week leading up to the summits, and especially the weekend of the summits, that was not filmed or photographed by the police or the thousands of everyday people taking photos and videos with their phones and other gadgets, many of whom seemed more than willing to share their footage directly with police or indirectly via internet uploads. This incredible (and scary) level of surveillance is one of the reasons many people have a hard time coming to grips with what happened immediately following the People First march and the remainder of Saturday, 26 June, and Sunday, 27 June 2010. In what follows, we will recount some of these events and then evaluate some of the possible explanations of what happened.

The story starts in the early afternoon of Saturday, June 26, in Toronto’s fashion district (Queen Street West, just west of Spadina Avenue). Between 200-300 people have broken off from the People First march to participate in the militant action – most in all black clothing with their faces covered, the clothing of some other people adorned communist symbols, and some folks are simply wearing “everyday” clothes. Some people in the group smash the windows of a police cruiser that for some reason is sitting in the middle of the road. There was a police officer in the cruiser at the time. Some of the 100-200 visible police in the area move toward the car. The militants back off. Once the police get their fellow

officer out of the smashed up cruiser, they back away and the radicals go back to smashing the car. The cruiser is set on fire and the crowd starts walking toward the police, smashing windows at Starbucks, chain restaurant locations, bourgeois clothing boutiques, and banks, as well as the screens of automatic banking machines and the windows of a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) minivan along the way. The police continue to retreat and simply yell at bystanders who are madly snapping photos with their phones to move out of the way.

The militants cut south on Bay Street. When the group reaches the heart of Toronto's finance district (Bay/King), they smash two more police cruisers and light them on fire. The roughly 100-200 visible police in the area retreat to about 100m away to stand and watch.

The radicals then head west and north, smashing the windows of another Starbucks and other stores along the way. Police are seen at this time clearly running away from the protestors. At one point bricks are pulled out of the median of the road and thrown through some more windows. Police in full riot gear in the area are filmed going into a nearby alleyway; they remove their equipment and take a break while a nearby rented unmarked police minivan is smashed. Windows were also smashed at a nearby police station. The rioters then march west to Queen's Park where many of those in the group clad in all black huddle in a circle, remove their black clothing, leave it on the ground, and blend into the larger crowd and presumably leave the area.

The militant action covered 32-36 city blocks (depending on what one considers a "city block") in about 90 minutes without any police interference. One has to assume that the federal and Toronto municipal police and/or politicians officially and unofficially in command of the Integrated Security Unit (ISU) in charge of security for the summits made a decision to not move any of the thousands of police in the city into position to do anything about this relatively small riot. But this is puzzling because CSIS had ruled out any serious threat of terrorism, so the whole justification for the huge security budget and police presence was to deal with rioters – or was it? From the police (in)action, it seems that all they were concerned about was protecting the fence, which wasn't scalable anyway.

Shortly after the Black Bloc shed their black clothes and presumably left the Queen's Park area, hundreds of police (well over 1000) surrounded the designated "free speech zone" and began arresting people for simply being there. People who were just sitting around were pepper sprayed, others were beaten with batons; police on horseback charged and

trampled people; and yet other people were shot with rubber bullets. Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair went on the TV news after this police rampage had begun but while the police brutality in Queen's Park was still happening and stated that he was aware that guns for firing rubber bullets had been deployed but that he was not aware that these guns had been fired. He continued to deny that rubber bullets had been fired even after reporters pointed out that they had seen instances of this happening or spoken to people shot with them, one reporter even had one of the previously fired rubber bullets in his hand to show Blair – so was Blair lying to avoid blame or criticism or is he a dupe? At the time of our revising this essay in March 2011, ten months after these events transpired, it remains unclear exactly who was making which decisions for the ISU.

Later Saturday night, hundreds of people collectively walking the downtown Toronto streets and occasionally chanting such things as “peaceful protest” are arrested without cause outside The Novotel Toronto Center. The police surrounded the crowd, didn't tell them to disperse and didn't provide room for people to leave “the kettle.”<sup>13</sup> The police then removed two journalists from the crowd; one was escorted out of the area and told if he stuck around he'd be arrested, while the other was assaulted and placed under arrest. After the journalists were no longer around to report on the incident, and while the crowd was singing “Give Peace A Chance,” police start pulling people out of the kettle and arresting them.

The next morning – Sunday, 27 June – a Jail Solidarity Rally was held in front of the temporary jail. Again without warning, the police attacked a peaceful crowd, fired rubber bullets, and arrested dozens. Later that day, in the early afternoon, the now infamous “Officer Bubbles” incident happened outside the TCMN's convergence centre in a neighbourhood on the west side of Toronto. The basic story is a young woman blew bubbles at a line of police. One of these officers, Constable Adam Josephs (given the nickname “Officer Bubbles” after this event), is videotaped saying, “If the bubble touches me, you're going to be arrested for assault.” The woman put the bubbles away, but was still arrested minutes later. A series of racist computer animated videos were put on YouTube shortly thereafter. The

---

<sup>13</sup> Oxford Dictionaries defines “kettling” as “a method used by police to maintain order during a large demonstration by confining demonstrators to a small area” (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/kettling>). In our experience, kettling is a technique police use in order to arrest a group of people on the streets, usually during political events. The police, often in riot gear (large plastic shields, batons, and helmets), surround a group of people, slowly move in on them, and eventually arrest the group or select members of it by pulling people out of the kettle one by one.

videos are about Constable Josephs, a black police officer, and have 1970s funk music playing in the background. The videos were removed before too long because Josephs threatened to sue the maker of the videos for defamation for \$1.25 million. It came out that Josephs' Facebook "info page" lists his employer since 2007 as the city of Toronto and that he describes his work as "I collect Human garbage." Josephs also lists his favourite quote on Facebook as "Live life to the fullest and don't forget to laugh along the way." Indeed.

After the bubble slinging young woman was arrested, the police surrounded the people in the area in front of the convergence centre. The group was denied legal counsel, and some were arrested for having a lawyer's phone number written on their arm, others were arrested for wearing a bandana around their neck (both precautionary actions usually part of training for social justice protest) or for having a back pack, and yet others were randomly pulled out of the crowd and arrested without explanation. None of the few hundred police in the area bothered to explain to the community members, those being detained, or the media what was going on. The police eventually told the group that they could leave if they showed ID and allowed their bags to be searched – both clear violations of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Later that afternoon at a major intersection on the west side of the city (Queen/Spadina), the largest mass arrest of the weekend took place. About 400-500 people were surrounded by hundreds of police (over 1000). Many of these people weren't even protestors, rather they were just going about their daily business. Amongst the crowd were journalists with clearly visible media accreditation badges hanging around their necks. The riot police told people that they had to leave the area or they'd be arrested, but the crowd was surrounded so the command made no sense and the police didn't actually seem interested in letting them go. At one point the people in the kettle sang "Oh Canada." For the last two hours of this four-hour incident it was pouring rain. Eventually six chartered public transit buses arrived and were filled with people who were taken to the temporary jail for detention. The police didn't have the capacity to arrest everyone, so the people who didn't fit on the buses were simply let go. So again, "everyday people" were arbitrarily detained, not told why nor able to retain and instruct legal counsel and were not informed of their rights by the police – all clear violations of Charter rights in Canada.

### Analytic Discussion and Outstanding Questions

*Paranoia strikes deep  
Into your life it will creep  
It starts when you're always afraid  
You step out of line, the man come and take you away<sup>14</sup>*

One of the things that continues to puzzle as we review the events of last summer, and speculate on long and short term outcomes, as well as theoretical explanations, is the fact that most of the demonstrators were “ordinary” Canadians who were there with something to say about social justice. As William Carroll said: “The idea is to replace alienated social relations with those of mutual support, to break the class power of capital—power over—while fostering new forms of community of power with. This is the class struggle, and it necessarily intersects with a raft of social justice and ecological issues and movements” (Coburn interview with Carroll 2010, 73).

The framing of the various participants by others – and especially by the media – is a major part of the battle. As long ago as 1992, Klandermans drew our attention to the social construction of protest, where movements construct ideological packages with specific meanings, and then compete with others for media attention, to determine whose symbolic definitions prevail. In the case of most of the protestors, they wished to present an injustice frame, initially for their particular causes and agenda (which, as stated above, was to be done in coalition and consensus mobilization), and later for their treatment by police.

We have outlined above some of the reprehensible behaviour by police forces toward protestors during the summits. But the offenses go beyond these occurrences and beyond the law enforcement agencies to the legal system itself and the rights guaranteed by the Charter. One of the legal issues is the content and legitimacy of a temporary law secretly passed by the province of Ontario giving the police special powers. The now infamous temporary law was an amendment to the Public Works Protection Act undertaken at the request of Toronto Police Chief Blair on 2 June 2010; it was in effect throughout the summit weekend and expired on June 28. It was not even published until it had expired, adding to the confusion. What special powers the temporary law gave police and where these powers applied was not only unclear in June 2010, Police Chief Blair

---

<sup>14</sup> Stills 1967, “For what it’s worth.”

added to the public confusion by lying about the content of the law to the media when he said that the temporary law gave police the power to arrest people who were within five meters of the outside of the security fence who refused to show ID or agree to a police search of their person (Yang 25 June 2010). The temporary law actually gave police the power to search and request ID from anyone inside the fence. It is well documented in the media and on social networking and video-sharing websites that the police repeatedly cited this law when conducting illegal searches and requests for ID throughout the city, not just within five meters of the outside of the fence and certainly not just inside the fence. The lack of clarity – seemingly intentional – about precisely what actions and locations the law covered meant that people were not fully aware of their rights and which police demands they were legally obliged to follow. The temporary law also ran contrary to Charter rights, the public's right to public land, and expectations and trainings run by groups such as the TCMN. It also likely intimidated some from participating in the protests.

In addition to these abuses of government and police power, there have been many reports of taunting, sexual assault, and discrimination by language and sexuality – again, serious violations of Charter rights and of the Criminal Code of Canada. Some people have brought charges against the police and the state because of this treatment.<sup>15</sup> These events and reports warrant a public inquiry into what happened, if Chief Blair, any other police officers and officials, and any politicians abused their power, not to mention the almost \$1B price tag. There is some movement for a public inquiry, but the federal and Ontario governments have vehemently opposed these efforts. All of this increased the cost of the summits: fall-out costs of dealing with the mass unconstitutional arrests, court proceedings, lawsuits, and investigations into police brutality and other misconduct.

The repression and violence on the part of the official forces raises many questions. Given the past history of summit protest, and protest at other international meetings, the actions of contention in Toronto could not be unexpected. Especially with the history in Canada in general and Toronto in particular, of cooperative, generally peaceful protest among social justice groups, and their open organizing ahead of time (and the penetration by police in some cases). There were few really new tactics in use. The Black Bloc, for instance, has been a part of social protest across the world since the 1980s, usually performing the same or similar activities as took place in Toronto (McLaren 2010).

---

<sup>15</sup> For a video displaying much of this, go to [www.underoccupation.com](http://www.underoccupation.com).

A lot of the media coverage of the Toronto protests focuses on the “Black Bloc”, which is almost always referred to as a violent anarchist organization. Impressions that anarchism is inherently violent and that the Black Bloc is an organization are easily found but misguided. The popular commentary on the Toronto protests exacerbated these misunderstandings. As opposed to what the mainstream media claims, the Black Bloc is not a membership organization, or an organization at all. It is rather a *tactic*, one that is often done in coalition. Targets are almost all related to capitalism, or people or institutions that support capitalism and/or colonialism (McLaren 2010). Thus, vandalism is not arbitrary, but particularly chosen, and attacks on groups such as police may also be retaliation or because they are in the way (Van Dusen 2010).

Despite misinformation campaigns, anarchist and other anti-capitalist movements are growing (Breton *et al.* 2010). Social anarchy is primarily about promoting liberty and challenging hierarchy, domination, and oppression, particularly class oppression. The aim is to build community and personal freedom, to refuse domination and to live and imagine alternatives (Thorne 2010). Anarchists aim to live their lives and govern themselves with sociality, not individualism (Torres 2007). They believe that they can build a better world (Breton *et al.* 2010). To do this, they experiment with organizational forms wherein everyone participates and decisions are made at the most decentralized, communal level via cooperation, mutual aid, and solidarity, and free of government (Gelderloos 2010). Anarchists think that government is, in fact, evil because it rests on violence and restricting liberty; thus, government is not only unnecessary, it is also harmful. In addition, anarchists understand private property as theft because it results in economic exploitation and domination; therefore, property should be re-communalized and people should trust each other and live a gift economy (Goldman 1969). Anarchist and anti-capitalist beliefs and practices are often met with state and police repression.

As was seen in Toronto, repression sometimes deters and sometimes radicalizes. Sometimes this results in system alienation and this may gain sympathy from outsiders. Repression increases preferences for alternative political orders as a possible public good (Opp and Roehl 1997). Repression can also be seen as an outgrowth of a political system that is not seen as able to be legally challenged, and police violence increases this radicalization, including more extreme and more transgressive tactics. Repression is also seen as stiffening resistance and encouraging evasion of surveillance. It also produces shifts of tactics (McAdam *et al.* 2001). Particularly, if selective, it tends to isolate the more militant groups, closing

off prescribed contentions. The experiences of the protestors and the onlookers in Toronto seem to fall within this conceptualization.

Some previous theories, especially those of Donatella della Porta and Herbert Reiter (1998), attempt to define protest policing in a neutral way by claiming that police are attempting to implement a "protest management strategy" in relating regularly to protest groups. However, more recent work (Rafail 2010, 503) suggests that "the police use force for reasons besides the protection of persons or property and instead may be a part of a broader protest management strategy where force is not only used as a tactic of last resort", and that law enforcement more recently has focused on intelligence gathering and selectivity for policing "public order." Therefore, violence by police can be seen as an instrumental act of social control (Gamson 1990). The acts of some of the police during the summit seem to fall in this category, but it remains unclear how many officers participated in the violent (and criminal) acts. In many cases, we ask where were most of the expensive and much vaulted police? Many of the actions and inactions of police and politicians described in this paper are of the kind that tend to vacate the moderate centre and cause activists to look for new channels or new ideological context and content for the next wave of protest.

As mentioned briefly above, another aspect of social protest in this decade in general and the protests against the G20 in Toronto in particular is the use of social media, especially in organizational tactics. These forms of media certainly do lower actual costs of participation, organization, recruitment and training. They also have weaknesses, including their accessibility. These media can also produce non-participation, as people can follow actions and maintain (some level of) anonymity by joining Facebook groups or following Twitter without having to show up. And, as has been recently seen in the Middle East, governments may disrupt such media, and police and political regimes may also use social media for their own advantage, including scaring away protestors, luring them to particular places, as well as monitoring their online communications (Papic and Noonan 2001).

About 100 police officers are under investigation or have been under investigation since the summits for G20 related activities. Given that over 900 of the 1105 people detained either never had charges laid against them or had their charges dropped, there are in the end almost as many police under investigation as there are people with charges pending – and many of those charges are trumped up. Police-friendly adjudicating bodies

have cleared many of the police alleged to have done wrong, though others are facing criminal charges.

The mass arrests are seen by many folks who comment on G20-related Canadian online media articles and by many people we've spoken with as "out of the ordinary" orderliness of liberal democracy. We find that it is often the case in conversations such as these that it isn't acknowledged that police brutality happens on a daily basis in the communities of the poor, of migrants, of LGBTQ people, and of people racialized other than white. Claims that police brutality in Canada in general and Toronto in particular is out of the ordinary are often predicated on white, heterosexual, and class privilege.

The Toronto protests left a lot of people in a tailspin. As Lesley Wood (2010) said, local activists were concerned that this event would take away from their daily work in organizations like the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, No One Is Illegal, and Justicia for Migrant Workers. And this has proved true in the sense that many radicals were harassed by CSIS in the lead up to the summits and eighteen organizers are still facing trumped up conspiracy charges, most of whom made bail but the severe bail conditions limit their ability to participate in organizing work, let alone speak with one another as friends and/or lovers.

300

---

As we said in the introduction, we don't subscribe to the idea that the militants were a bunch of "crazy anarchists" – though many of them self-identify as anarchists, but that certainly doesn't make them crazy – and we don't subscribe to the idea that the police simply didn't do their job when the Black Bloc was burning police cars and smashing windows, as Naomi Klein and others have claimed. It seems unlikely that most of what the police did or did not do was not orchestrated and done for one reason or another dictated by their commanding officers and/or by political authorities. It isn't as if the police didn't know about the "Off the Fence" action, a call-out for the event was published online well in advance. Also, as we previously pointed out, at least two police agents infiltrated the TCMN months before the summits. Yet, the Black Bloc action went largely uncontested by the police. On one level, we think that was wonderful. We certainly don't want to see radicals arrested for challenging capitalism and colonialism, but the policing of the militant action and the mass, arbitrary arrests that followed don't make a lot of sense. We are left with many outstanding questions, including: why did the police not confront the Black Bloc? Why did the police leave 100-200 officers nearby just to witness the events that transpired? Where were the other almost 19,000 officers? Why did the police suddenly spring into action, after the Black Bloc had

dissipated, to conduct mass, arbitrary arrests and brutalize hundreds of people? And, who made which decisions about specific police actions and inactions? Questions such as these and many others have led to widespread calls for a full-scale public inquiry into the expenditure of public funds and the actions and inactions of the police. The Canadian federal government and the Ontario provincial government have thus far been successful in preventing such an inquiry.

### **Acknowledgements**

Hussey thanks the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their financial support. Hussey and LeClerc are grateful to the two peer reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

### **References**

- Associated Press. 2010. "Vandals tarnish protest of summit in Toronto," 27 June 2010.
- Booth, Robert. 2010. "G20 Rioters Disrupt Toronto Protest." *guardian.co.uk*, 27 June 2010.
- Beyeler, Michelle and Hanspeter Kreisi. 2005. "Transnational protest and the Public Sphere." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 10, no. 1: 95-109.
- Breton, Emilie, Anna Kruzynski, Magaly Pirotte and Rachael Sarrasin. 2010. "Understanding anarchism through the veil of misinformation: follow-up on the G20 in Toronto." *Le Devoir*, 24 August 2010.
- Coburn, Elaine. 2010. "'Pulling the Monster Down': Interview with William K. Carroll." *Socialist Studies: the Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies* 6, no. 1: 65-92.
- della Porta, Donatella and Herbert Reiter. 1998. "The Policing of Protest in Western Democracies." In *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*, ed. Donatella della Porta and Herbert Reiter, 1-32. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gamson, William A. 1997. "The Success of the Unruly." In *Social Movements: Readings on their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics*, ed. Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, 357-365. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Gelderloos, Peter. 2010. *Anarchy Works*. San Francisco: Ardent Press.
- Goldman, Emma. 1969. *Anarchism and Other Essays*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Kirton, John. 2010. "The Image of the Toronto Summit as Seen from Seoul." Toronto: University of Toronto G20 Information Centre.
- Klandermans, Bert. 1992. "The Social Construction of Protest and Multiorganizational Fields." In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClug Mueller, 77-104. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mahoney, Jill. 2010. "Obama? Harper? Who Needs them? This summit is women-only." *The Globe and Mail*, 1 June 2010.

- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McLaren, Jesse. 2010. *The Toronto Call*.  
*New Yorker*. 28 June 2010.
- Opp, Karl-Dieter and Wolfgang Roehl. 1997. "Repression, Micromobilization and Political Protest." In *Social Movements: Readings on their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics*, ed. Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, 190-207. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Papic, Marco and Sean Noonan. 2001. "Social Media as a Tool for Protest," *Stratfor*, 3 February 2001, <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110202-social-media-tool-protest>.
- Rafail, Patrick. 2010. "Asymmetry on Protest Control? Comparing Protest Policing Patterns in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver 1998-2004." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 15, no. 4: 489-509.
- Robertson, Colin. 2010. "A Primer to the G8/G20 Toronto and Huntsville Summits." Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, June.
- Stills, Stephen. 1967. "For What It's Worth." Released by Buffalo Springfield. Atco Records.
- Thorne, Niki. 2010. "The G20 in Toronto: An open letter to family and friends who weren't there," *Toronto Media Co-op*, 18 July 2010.
- Tourism Toronto. 2010. "You don't need diplomatic immunity to have a good time in Toronto." *New York Times*, 27 June 2010, A19.
- Torres, Bob. 2007. *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights*. Oakland, WV: AK Press, 2007.
- Van Dusen, David. 2010. "Emergence of the Black Bloc." Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, 2010.  
*Washington Post*. 2010. "G20 Members Facing Dilemma," 27 June 2010.
- Wood, Lesley J. 2010. "Bringing Together the Grassroots: A Strategy and a Story from Toronto's G20 Protests." *Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action* 11: 86-98.
- Yang, Jennifer. 2010. "G20 Law gives police sweeping powers to arrest people." *Toronto Star*, 25 June 2010.