



MORTAR

VOLUME 3

Revolutionary Journal of
Common Cause Anarchist Organization

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Common Cause is a specific anarchist-communist organization, founded in 2007, with active branches in Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Toronto, Ontario, Canada. We believe that anarchists must participate in campaigns for social, environmental and economic justice as an organized force in order to help spread anarchist principles of direct action, autonomy and self-organization among wider segments of the class. We believe the best way of spreading these principles is through active participation in struggle, and to this end, our members are actively engaged in many different fronts of the class war, ranging from labour and community struggles, to campus organizing, Indigenous solidarity, prisoner support, and police abolition work. As part of our larger fight against capitalism and the state, we seek out intermediate struggles and methods that challenge the institutions of patriarchy, white supremacy and disableism that serve to divide the class and perpetuate oppressive hierarchies based on gender, sexuality, race and “ability”.

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We are not in the least afraid of ruins.
Buenaventura Durruti

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Editorial: Here We Go Again

Thanks for picking up the third volume of *Mortar*, Common Cause's journal of revolutionary anarchist theory. In our two previous journals, the article topics that we chose to explore and expound upon were, more often than not, grounded in our own direct experiences, such as organizing in our neighbourhoods against gentrification, navigating the dynamics of Left/activist spaces, and confronting sexual violence. This time around, we're taking a different approach and exploring topics that, although relevant and important, are less familiar to us. In this volume of *Mortar* we have set out to strengthen our understanding and analysis of subjects such as populism, ecology, reactionary movements, and anti-police organizing, to the end of forming coherent strategies of engagement that are both sober and considered.

This was a purposeful decision, and one that we came to for several reasons. We identified a number of gaps in our own organizing and political theory, and spent our time researching and writing *Mortar* as an attempt to start closing them. In other words, we selected topics that we wanted to learn more about, in order to help develop our politics. We also hope that we have something useful to contribute to conversations on subjects that we are in no way experts on, but which we nonetheless see as important facets of revolutionary struggle.

Common Cause is an organization with a small membership, spread across three cities in southern Ontario. We try to do our best as organizers, but at the end of the day, we have a limited capacity, and must pick our battles strategically. For many of us, our lack of involvement in particular struggles stems from a disagreement with prevailing strategies and tactics, some of which seem to us to be irreparable. We see structural problems in existing organizations, networks and

activist campaigns that preclude them from revolutionary potential, because they have been built on reformist or even conservative foundations. We therefore find it to be a useful contribution to anarchist movements to put forward competing ideas about how such organizations could, and even *ought* to be structured. We hope that others engage with our analysis and ideas, either by testing them through practice, sharing your critiques and disagreements, or both.

The writing, editing, and designing of this journal remains a collective process. Every member of Common Cause is encouraged to participate in the production of each volume, from inception to completion. Topics that we feel are worth exploring are put forward and voted on by our members. Logistics are handled by a working group formed of elected delegates from each of our three branches. Multi-city writing groups are struck, and chairs are selected to bottom-line meetings for each article. The research and writing process spans over several months, and the arguments contained in each article are vetted by two organization-wide review meetings. We believe that this process, while difficult and stressful at times, is a worthwhile experiment in collective political development, and a practical expression of our anarchist principles.

This edition of *Mortar* begins with a discussion of the sorry state of the Canadian Left in 2015, which we view as being mired in a cycle of tawdry and ineffectual populism. Whether in whipping up last-minute support for a protest, expressing outrage designed to inflame progressive passions, or attempting to beat the Right at its own game, our over-reliance on populist mobilization strategies is a fatal flaw. Not only is populism a disingenuous and ineffectual means of garnering support – we argue that it is fundamentally authoritarian in nature. The fact that so many prominent leftists unthinkingly refer to the need to create a “base” belies a hierarchical structure in the offing. While some left-wing tendencies clearly have no issue with this sort of thing, it is patently anathema to the core principles of anarchist communism, and to anarchism more broadly. Selecting from a number of recent topical examples, the article demonstrates the capitulation of the Left to populism, and tries to chart a way forward that actually squares with the emancipatory politics we all profess.

The second article of this journal contends with the pitfalls and potentials of organizing around environmental issues in Canada, with particular focus on the Energy East pipeline project. In taking a closer look at demographic data related to extractive industries, we were led to some surprising conclusions which contradict many commonly-held assumptions about just who does this sort of work. Rather than absolving, condemning, or seeking to direct these workers towards a “bright green” economy, we suggest steps towards a new approach to environmental organizing that is rooted in the communities where they live, and relies intimately on their participation. Further, we take a critical look at solidarity activism in support of Indigenous blockades, arguing that by working towards the organization of strong working-class communities, we will be in a much better position to provide meaningful assistance when the time comes. As things stand, anarchists in southern, urbanized Canada have seemingly adopted a siege mentality with regards to blockades such as the Unist’ot’en Camp. We think it’s time to open up multiple fronts, starting where we live.

Next, we examine three reactionary tendencies currently festering within the Canadian working class: Islamophobia, men’s rights activism, and anti-Native sentiment. This piece seeks to better understand where these specific political currents came from, how they sustain themselves, and the role of the Canadian political and capitalist class in fostering and manipulating these divisions among the working class, to our collective detriment. The article makes the case that these three reactionary ideologies are liberal to their core, meaning that anarchists need to rethink our approach to how to confront and ultimately defeat them.

Finally, we wrap things up with an article on anti-police organizing. In the midsts of swelling levels of resistance to the systemic use of racist police terror in the United States, we examine the history and contemporary development of policing in Canada as an institutional outgrowth of a colonial, white supremacist, and capitalist power structure. This article explores the incorporation of modern principles of counterinsurgency into a domestic policing framework that seeks to maintain “law and order” while preserving ruling-class legitimacy amidst an increasingly tenuous social peace.

The article concludes with an argument that organizing against the police means building an oppositional culture that permeates every facet of proletarian life.

As with the last two journals, the conclusions of the articles in *Mortar* should not be taken as definitive positions of Common Cause or its individual members. Instead, these articles represent an attempt on our part to find sure-footing on topics that we feel deserve attention and honest engagement.

You can contact us and send any feedback you may have to mortar@riseup.net.

In solidarity,
Common Cause



On Contesting Populism

Two Toronto Members, One Hamilton Member, One Kitchener-Waterloo Member

In recent decades we, the Left, have had shockingly little to show for ourselves. Our various tendencies each have their own take on why this is, and the explanations are all familiar to us. Material conditions are not yet ripe. The Left is fragmented and sectarian. There is a crisis of leadership in the unions. Our activists lack the requisite commitment and discipline. The movement lacks militancy. Those of us with privilege have not yet become good enough allies. And from our class struggle anarchist scene, too often: the Left just needs to refocus on “class.” While there are no doubt kernels of insight to be found in some of these worn out tropes, let’s be honest. There are material conditions, and then there is the North American Left of 2015.

In Canada, neoliberal restructuring continues to erode the living standards of large sections of the working class. Urbanization, capital flight, and reaccumulation-by-gentrification have reorganized our cities. In Toronto, this reorganization pushes the growing lower strata of the class

into the new inner-suburban proletarian districts. State immigration policies swell the ranks of a migrant worker underclass labouring under worsening conditions in the agricultural, manufacturing, and service sectors. All these pressures combine to fragment and re-fragment our class. We cannot overstate the Left's failure to contend with this onslaught. Countless hours of internal debate have not produced a productive reorientation to these conditions. Our public forums, publications, and Internet presence are an echo chamber that deafens us to the very voices that should inform our politics: those of our neighbours and co-workers. Marginal, isolated and inward-looking, no matter our particular tendency we share a common affliction: our politics are ridden with populism.

Populism spans the political spectrum, but is commonly associated with the political Right. Locally "Ford Nation," led by former mayor Rob Ford and his brother and former city councillor Doug, represents a populist political current of suburban Toronto. Ford Nation positions residents of the city's inner suburbs as the disenfranchised common people, the political underdog whose interests are opposed in a perpetual contest with the politically dominant, left-wing, downtown elite. The Fords raise real working-class concerns, such as poor transit service outside of downtown. They build their following through direct contact with, and casework on behalf of, constituencies traditionally ignored by Toronto's political class. This has allowed the Fords to mobilize electoral support for what is a fairly typical fiscally-conservative agenda of reducing and privatizing city services and cutting property taxes.

Populism is also the favoured politics of many a social movement. The Tea Party, Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), Occupy, and environmentalists have much more in common than is often acknowledged. Within Left circles, much of what has been written about and discussed regarding populism concerns itself with analyzing how it is used by the Right, supposing it could be used better by the Left. We feel that the time has come to forge an understanding of populist methods and intentions that goes beyond its talking points and gets to its underlying politics. The following is our working definition of populism:

1. A way of talking and a method of organizing used by a leader, or leadership, to opportunistically increase their following among a certain group of people.

Our definition specifically does not reference the mass population, but rather a predetermined group of people. Populists only ever speak to a certain particular constituency, not a vague, indivisible mass. For example, “Ford Nation” is deliberately meant to be the residents of the inner suburbs of Toronto. This is not contained to “Big Populists” such as the Fords. Petit-populists abound, as well – especially among the Left. The key here is not the quantity of those being engaged, but the quality of the engagement. This shouldn’t be confused with cults of personality, which are more up-front about their authoritarianism. The bait-and-switch with populists is that rather than taking orders, you’re supposedly just following your heart, only to find yourself manipulated.

2. A method of arguing for solutions that ignores the complexity and subtleties of problems in favour of simplicity, if not willful inaccuracy; evoking feelings of fear, anger, love and hope in order to manipulate or pander to one’s constituency.

How many times have leftists opportunistically railed against “greedy bankers” or “corporate rule” rather than undertaking a careful investigation and strategic intervention into the intricate set of social relations that give rise to class struggle?

3. A proven strategy to increase numbers of followers, but one which produces a passive and politically weak following.

Populist leaders of leftist movements, whether a singular charismatic figure, an NGO, or a core of committed activists, either consciously or unwittingly pacify their base by stringing them along in a series of mobilizations and calls to action, which appeal to the state to redress their issue of the day. This produces a base comprised of individuals that, when substantively engaged directly on an individual basis, often present a level of incoherence and contradiction that can only

be borne of an acute ignorance of their own supposed political orientation.

4. A strategy that substitutes superficial commonalities for more relevant shared material conditions.

Cultural similarities such as nationality, dress, composure, vocabulary, and music override income, employment, health, education, and physical safety as the basis for coming together. Populist movements are therefore always cross-class endeavors. On the radical left, our small-scale populism has us hemmed in with little to no presence beyond university campuses and subcultural radical scenes (punk, alternative lifestyles) where academic obscurantism and cliquishness abound. The educational events we organize, the propaganda we distribute, and the Internet articles, blogs, and Facebook posts we write are more apt to appeal to the people we hang out with on the weekends than to our neighbours or co-workers. The self-styled radical activists and intellectuals among us cultivate tiny followings and bases of support within their social circles, with only a pretense of building independent organizations of the class.

Our populism has produced a contemporary Left that has practically abandoned the terrain of class struggle, while feverishly working to maintain the illusion of engagement within it. We play at *movement building* and *mobilization*, call for *solidarity* and *social justice*, and mimic *direct action*. In a relentless blitz of protest organizing, public statements, social media campaigns, and internal engagements, we shroud ourselves in a fog of self-involvement. To the extent that we build any base within the class, it is tiny, inward-looking, and passive.

Populism has taken hold of us. We reproduce a deep-seated authoritarianism embedded within our politics. Authoritarianism so thoroughly enmeshed in our practices that it has become difficult for us to distinguish; it stands at odds with the very core of anarchist communist politics. Unless we begin to examine the folly of our conduct and refrain from habitually ingratiating ourselves to a demobilized base, even the best analysis is of no consequence. Until we shed ourselves

of manipulative practices, we will continue to flounder amidst the decomposition of our class and the growing reactionary influence upon it. Until we drop the radical posturing, we will fall short of the task of revolutionaries – to organize working-class power. Until then, we are little more than organizers of *protest*.

This article will attempt to point out the dangers of populism manifested in three different areas of struggle. All three struggles will be further explored by our comrades in the pages that follow. For our part, we will concern ourselves with the Left's particularly hazardous fixation on populism, and how it hinders revolutionaries' prospects for contributing to these struggles. On the ecological front, we insist on abandoning one-off mobilizations and millenarian fear mongering. We call for struggle against reactionary movements that take hold within our class and demand that we evict ourselves from the house of liberalism in order to make war on enemies. And, finally, in contesting the police, we consider the possible end of the Copwatch era and stress the need for resistance to police brutality to go beyond reactive anger and become rooted in organizations that can defend territory. In issuing these warnings and suggestions, we hope to contribute to a reorientation to better organize for working-class power.

Marching On as We Poison the Well

The sky is falling as the seas rise and our ship sinks. But don't worry – important steps are being made. Environmental justicers just need more support and we can save this dying planet. There's little more sophistication to common leftist environmental rhetoric than that of a door-to-door canvasser. About as much participatory struggle is offered, as well. The change they seek is a change of habit, or better yet, a change of political parties. We need to join their mobilizations to save the planet and stop those (apparently) in favour of killing it. Lawn signs in favour of windmills, mobilizations of hundreds of thousands for stricter emissions controls, solar panels on parking meters, better fuel economy for public transit vehicles – all of these developments have the *appearance* of change. As revolutionaries, however, we find it difficult to identify any

significant changes, and we refuse to pass on the due diligence that is required to truly tackle the issue. We can't bank on only the appearance of change, otherwise we run the risk of continuing to set ourselves back, while foolishly thinking we are progressing.

In anticipation of the September 2014 UN Climate Summit in New York city, a global call to action was made by 350.org to stop climate change. The resulting People's Climate Marches, organized not only in New York, but other cities around the world, were endorsed by fifteen hundred organizations – including unions, schools, and churches, as well as hundreds of NGOs. On September 21st, 2014, the day of the march, over three hundred thousand participants gathered in New York City. Although the number of marchers was significant, the march itself was nothing more than a large-scale version of any typical activist and NGO-led *mobilization*. Local activists replicated the event on a smaller scale in their respective areas, and for the foreseeable future, it left the climate, those that live in the climate, and those that profit from environmental devastation, largely unaffected.

With its simplistic “it's now or never” or “all or nothing” millenarianism, the lead up to this “historic” march was off on a galloping populist pace. With its calls for everyone to change everything, it cast its widest net in order to catch... whatever. The mobilizers played on people's fears, rather than telling them the truth: that climate change is real, and humans will need to adapt and make revolutionary changes, not to *avert* it, but in order to *deal* with it. Climate change is in fact here – as are we. It can't be “stopped,” but we can still take measures to limit its further devastation. Vague statements like “an invitation to change everything” also don't mean much, nor do they point the way to any concrete or direct actions. In fact, these sorts of statements demonstrate that the mobilizers have no trust in working-class people's abilities to think for ourselves and create our own solutions to these problems. We need only to show up, but not to be consulted or organized with, as the environmental activist “specialists” already have the solutions. All they need are unthinking bodies to swell the demonstration's numbers. This approach, of course, fails to achieve the nuanced conversation on environmentalism within the working class that is sorely required for real change to happen. The “base”

that is created in this fashion, thus, will always be politically weak, while perhaps numerically large. Without the hard truth being presented, the lack of understanding of what is at stake is unavoidable. The end result, regardless, is that it becomes glaringly evident that this form of mobilization, and its populism, produces no independent or effective struggles relating to the growing environmental crisis.

Closer to home, in west Toronto, a “secret uranium factory” was discovered by environmental activists in the fall of 2012. Word was spread, town halls were called, residents were organized, and demands to close the GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy Canada facility were made. All of this sounds like successful working-class organizing. In a residential neighbourhood, an industrial conglomerate operated a secret processing plant that posed lethal threats to all those in the surrounding area. Hundreds of neighbours were informed by environmental activists that the local water, soil, and air were potentially contaminated and that were a train to derail from the tracks next to the factory a cloud of lethal radiation could be unleashed on an unsuspecting and unprepared city. They were warned of potential birth defects and developmental impacts on their children. In the area surrounding the local elementary school an agitational propaganda campaign of spray-painting “nuclear holocaust” was taken up. Justifiably outraged, local residents organized to have the GE Hitachi factory shut down. Taking matters further, residents of this west end Toronto neighbourhood attempted to build links with Indigenous communities engaged in their own struggles against uranium extraction.

Here’s the rub – practically all of the claims and insinuations of the environmental crusaders that parachuted into that neighbourhood were false. There was zero evidence of local contamination, the uranium in question was un-enriched (not highly radioactive), and the factory had been operating for over fifty years at the same location with no correlating health impacts reported by local residents.

Regardless, the crusade against this potential nuclear holocaust kept chugging along and mobilized a significant number of residents of the neighbourhood, if only for a time. It did so by capturing and playing to people’s fears of past-nuclear disasters – going so far as to explicitly invoke Fukushima and

Chernobyl. These “organizers” goals may have been met (the factory continues to operate and pass safety inspections and soil testing, though there was some pretty decent local coverage of the key organizers) but only through deliberate manipulation.

Fool me once. Lying to people in order to get a better photo-op is strategically unwise in the immediate term. In the long term, after repeated kicks at the-sky-is-falling can, people don’t just stop taking you seriously, they start to hate you. They may even start to listen to anyone else that hates you, as well. This is the brand of fire populists play with. It shouldn’t just be viewed as anathema to core principles of what it means to organize within the working class. It should be viewed as potentially suicidal.

They Reap What We Sow

Only one thing could have broken our movement – if our enemies had understood its principle and from the first day had smashed the nucleus of our movement with extreme brutality. There you go – a Hitler quote right off the hop. Happy?

Much of the Left sees a fascist in every cop, conservative politician, and reactionary militant. For some this is transparent hyperbole, but for others an unassailable truth. And why not? If one wishes to marshal the full potential of outrage, what better way than to evoke the most vilest name in history? If one wishes to portray a struggle as an epic confrontation between the forces of good and evil, well, go ahead and “Hitler” it right up. So what if it makes little sense, or fails to hold up to scrutiny? It’s all in the game. Trouble is, two can play it.

We had our kick at the (equality/free speech/anti-racist/anti-sexist/anti-violence/multicultural/secular) can. Now, it seems, it’s the other team’s turn. We’re confronted by an interrelated rightward shift of “movements” that lurked on the sidelines of ours and studied us. They now emulate our rhetorical claims to righteous victimhood and our vague allusions to the justice of our cause. Like us, they obscure the matter at hand with a veneer of vague “isms,” while rallying forces *behind* them, rather than *with* them.

When the barricades go up (dutifully supplied by the state) we volley all the liberal objections in our arsenal at our enemies only to be met in kind. The vague (and occasionally incoherent) charges of intolerance, violence, prejudice, and dangerousness we levy against the Islamophobes, MRAs, and anti-Native organizers are neutralized with a simple counter-accusation of “YOU ARE!” We are engaged in a spiraling, intractable war of semantics over which of us is the rightful standard bearer of the peaceable liberal.

Trouble is we aren’t liberals. At least we aren’t supposed to be. When we are at our most honest, as revolutionaries, we have it in us to be principled, and at times brilliant, in our articulation of what it is we oppose, why, and what it is that we strive for. It’s when we find ourselves in the terrain of struggle that honesty escapes us. This is, often times, a calculated dishonesty. There’s a lack of trust that pervades the Left – not in ourselves, but in everyone else. A mentality that the size of a mobilization is the measure of struggle and that the size of *our* mobilizations are inversely proportional to the degree of our revolutionary honesty. The first evaluation is false and the second evaluation is, therefore, irrelevant.

This mentality presents itself as pathology most when we confront those enemies “among us” in the class who are mobilizing against “us” using the same tried and true rhetorical methods that we’ve been cultivating for political generations. We don’t *find* ourselves in the position of defending bourgeois virtues of nonviolence, free expression, and democracy. We *put* ourselves in that position by concealing our struggle for power and communism. Fearing that no one will listen to us otherwise, we grope around for a palatable pitch. We put in play politics that can’t support the weight of their own contradictions (those of liberal democracy and revolutionary communism) and are therefore destined to collapse. When we leave itinerant reactionary populists to pick up the rubble that remains and cobble together their own political edifice, how do we not conclude that we are the architects of our own undoing? Honestly. This is not simply a fear of recuperation. The concern is that we are furnishing a political environment we will soon be evicted from. One in which reactionaries will feel more than comfortable putting their feet up and making a home for themselves.

You Are Cordially Invited to an Eviction Party

It's only a matter of time before we're evicted from our claims of victimhood, demands for our rights of protected speech, and our positions as champions of secular enlightenment. We don't propose fighting for our right to continue to inhabit this space. We should welcome the eviction and, with proletarian abandon, trash the place on our way out. We propose moving on. Salt the fields and poison the wells of populism. We propose war with enemies. We don't simply carry a new world in our hearts, rather, we carry it on our backs as we proclaim it clearly and unequivocally in our words to our class and take on organizing in order that we may all grasp it with our fists.

On the Justice of Slitting Bearded Necks

When we square off against MRAs specifically, or misogyny generally, we should leave debates of "sexism" and statistical inequality to the liberal depths from whence they came. We should be honest with others and true to our more private discussions when we enter the fray. Leave behind the wordsmithing that reduces our politics to a pale reduction of its honest form. Ground struggles against patriarchy in our organizing of any front – because that's what feminists do. Deliberately build our strength, wage battles, weaken and defeat misogynists, and make no excuses for that – because that's what revolutionaries do. Let misogynists' claims of victimization ring true. *We should* silence them. *We should* run them off. They *should* be afraid. We should wage war on MRAs publicly and effectively, while not wavering from our position that defeating patriarchy is a victory for humanity, and that all those that stand with patriarchy stand opposed to humanity – and us.

Nous Sommes Confus

The repugnance and brutality of a secularism that comfortably thrives at the heart of Christendom can't possibly continue to be ignored by any revolutionaries. Nor can the facile, tacit

support of religious reactionaries be seen as any rectification. Any game where the players have to pick between team Hitchens and team Galloway (or any of their farm teams) is a game that no revolutionary can win.

2015 began, for the Left, with the attack on the Charlie Hebdo office and the following increase of attacks on Muslims in France. The incoherence of progressive and radical rhetoric was thrown into stark relief as we attempted to reconcile the supposed impasse that pits “enlightened values” against segments of the working class brutalized by white supremacy and Islamophobia. Revulsion at the attack was met with anti-imperialist denunciation. Battle lines were drawn and the indignation was let loose with an abandon few others but leftists are capable of. To what end? When enlightened principle faced off against an attempted exorcism of the Left’s racist demons, revolutionary politics were left in the lurch. The unstoppable force of “anti-racism” collided with the immovable object of “free speech” and - as the idiomatic paradox implies - the outcome was incomprehensibly vague. Mobilizing sentiment behind these ideas became the priority, and reactionaries on both sides responded enthusiastically. Why we cling so dearly to these vagueries is a question that we must take stock of and rectify.

Settling Accounts

Whether it’s the “Two Row Wampum,” “The Dish With One Spoon,” class interest, or all of the above that guides our solidarity with Indigenous struggle, our analysis should be comprehensible as something more substantial than a meme, or a flag. We should be compelled by more than mere sentiments of guilt, shame, or admiration. It should be taken as incontrovertible that the Indigenous people on this land are those that are poised today to be those most opposed to the interests of the Canadian ruling class and its state. It should also be understood that some of the most potent (while still somewhat latent) opposition to Indigenous fighters will come from a Canadian population galvanized by their own ready-made sentiments of fear, indignation, and pride, and replete with their own flags and memes. It’s unlikely that in a balance

of forces, “our” sentimentality will win out over “theirs,” if and when the question is called. This is anticipatable and unnecessary. There are real class interests for “settlers” to ally with Indigenous communities and territories engaged in conflict with the ruling class of Canada. We need to be clear on these, lest we perpetuate an approach to “the Indigenous question” far more suitable to antagonism than solidarity with Indigenous struggle.

Police: Pox Populi

Not since the events that followed Rodney King’s beating at the hands of fifteen LAPD officers have things “kicked off” to such a degree across the United States in response to the brutality of its police. For some it may be difficult to appreciate the significance of “the first ever viral video,” which clearly showed cops taking turns, as one after another truncheoned an unarmed Black man. It was 1992, and the real outcome of the “War on Drugs” was becoming impossible to ignore for an ever-growing number of people. The rapidly expanding police force and prison population stood congruent with, and not opposed to the spiralling violence again taking hold of the deindustrialized urban centres of the United States. The urban unrest of the 1960’s had been historically attributed to militant action in service of the “Civil Rights” movement (read: Black liberation). Back in the early 1990s, it seemed quite likely that the US was poised on the brink of a new era of civil unrest. Yet unlike before, this unrest would not be in defence of liberatory momentum, but rather, in response to the decades-long all-out assault on the working class, generally, and the urban Black working class, particularly. Enter into this simmering cauldron of potential “rupture” the voices of all those that sought to lead their people to the promised land, yet again. This was twenty-three years ago. It would be a stretch to claim any concrete gains for the working class in its struggle against the police since, despite the galvanization of sentiments of objection broadly, and the reinvigorated militancy and consciousness of the Black working class specifically.

While it’s true to say the events of Los Angeles in 1992 were catalytic for many – gang members organized peace summits, prisoners familiarized themselves with the struggles

of those that came before them, Copwatches were started formally and informally across the country, and the Prison-Industrial-Complex, as a growing phenomena, accompanied a generalized understanding of the police-as-enemy, again being articulated. Yet no breakthroughs can be claimed, despite the opportunities available.

We have every reason, twenty-three years later, to claim opportunities for breakthrough are again before us – though it’s far from a given. It can be said that the murders of Oscar Grant in Oakland and Trayvon Martin in a Miami suburb had each contributed to a stewing resentment giving way to localized resistance. But Ferguson seemed to be a watershed moment that was then compounded by the callously indifferent way in which Officer Daniel Pantaleo murdered an unarmed and peaceable Eric Garner – on camera. If Mr. King’s beating at the hands of the LAPD ushered in the era of Copwatch, does this mean that Eric Garner’s murder at the hands of the NYPD brings it to a close? While recordings of the brutality of police can still provide a catalytic spark for popular outrage, the idea that they are in any way a preventative measure should have been dispensed with as we watched Eric Garner having the life slowly choked from him by an officer who knew that his murder was being documented.

Police beatings and murders are common occurrences; the phenomenon of those beatings and murders producing a groundswell of resistance is far rarer; that resistance spreading out and sustaining itself, even more so. The resistance to police violence and state abuse that swelled in Ferguson, Missouri has given birth to new memes and slogans, sure, but more importantly it’s stirred the conscience and objections of hundreds of thousands of people across the continent and moved them to act. The *how* has been attributed to all the new communication methods and social networking technologies available to us today. Fine. The *why* is not that <insert cop’s name> murdered <insert Black youth’s name> but rather that the people in Ferguson most targeted by its police force were the ones that fought back. It was different than the staged protests everyone had become so accustomed to, and they, rightly, took notice. The *how* of the resistance has very much to do with the refusal of militants and residents in Ferguson to allow others to speak for them (while actually speaking at them). They took

matters in their own hands and inspired thousands of others to do likewise.

When Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson were run out of town, they didn't leave behind them a power vacuum. In the absence (or following the removal) of self-appointed leaders, the power and intelligence of those they wished to lead came to the fore. Tactics diversified, fronts of struggle opened up, attacks were met with resistance, and every person inspired by the actions of those in Ferguson could imagine carrying them out themselves. Many did. Across the United States actions were taken up to give voice to those who objected to the role of the police. As activity spread, it was not a process of repetition giving way to stagnation, but solidarity paving the way for innovation. Thousands blockaded major roadways, took workplace action, organized walk-outs of their schools, and blocked access to major retail locations on the country's busiest shopping days.

Success in struggles against police requires organization. Successful organizations require that their memberships be comprised of those impacted by police violence. These should be givens for any revolutionaries. What often goes unaddressed are the ways in which we enforce a division between these organizations and the resistance they are supposed to be facilitating. The organizations we construct are those that craft the rhetoric and analysis relevant to the resistance others carry out. "Revolutionary" organizations evaluate the conditions for struggle from a remove, while "community" organizations support (read: intervene on) the masses with workshops aimed at cognitive and behavioural remedies for privilege and oppression. Meanwhile, their chosen audience remains unmoved, either intellectually or physically.

This is no spontaneitist screed against organization, but a demand that we reconceive the role of organizations as something beyond the purview of those that think what they have to say to others is so important that they need institutions to do so. Organizations that can effectively respond to the scourge of police need be accountable and responsive to the will of those up to the task. Our current populist affliction is of no service to that end. And in many ways, our reactive hit-and-miss ambulance chasing mentality, at times in which police violence even moderately captures the attention of

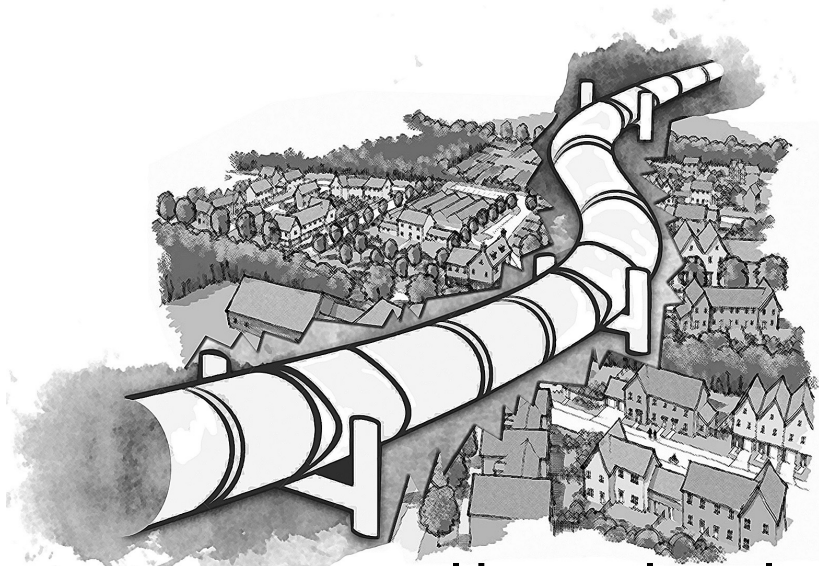
a broader segment of the class, acts as an interloping placeholder that obstructs, rather than contributes to, the building of organizations by those most in need of them.

If we wish to avoid another twenty-three year hibernation period for struggles against policing, we need be wary of our tendency to stymie the building of real organizations that can contest territory with the police. Overcoming the tendency to speak for and to “the resistance” is crucial for us to be able to contribute to the building of the organizations of counter-power best suited to combating the police. If not – we can, at the very least, afford the working class the courtesy of not standing in its way as it takes up that organizing itself.

Moving Forward

In our opening volley for *Mortar Volume Three*, we have tried to identify the Left’s default orientation towards the inherently authoritarian politics of populism, and the dangers therein. We want to be clear. We are in no way opposed to appealing to people’s anger, hopes, and fears in our organizing. On the contrary, not doing so will mean we fail to make the basic human connection required to agitate our neighbours and co-workers, and encourage their self-organization. We are for direct organizing within the class on all fronts to improve our lives and increase our power.

The hazards of populism lie, not in engaging with the passion evoked by the disparity between what the working class has and what it wants, but in its latent or explicit authoritarianism. We must shed ourselves of the bred-in-the-bone methods that capture those passions while corralling people into dead-end pathways that prioritize the most numerous or “militant” mobilization over the most powerful organizing. In doing so, we aim to demonstrate how self-organized working-class action can defeat and cast into irrelevancy even the most energetic displays of populist movements.



Active Corrosion: Building Working-class Opposition to Pipelines

Two Toronto Members, Two Kitchener-Waterloo Members

Pipelines transport approximately 95% of Canada’s crude oil and natural gas, and are crucial to the viability of the petroleum industry. New pipeline construction is essential to the distribution of oil to other markets and in the profitability of an increased rate of oil extraction. This makes pipelines a linchpin in the struggle against climate change, not because of the act of construction or the transport of oil itself, but because of the increase in oil extraction that will occur throughout Canada if they are built. As the petroleum industry makes considerations about their growth, they trouble only one thing: can they build more pipelines? The industry’s predicted expansion is entirely dependent on whether or not pipeline projects will go forward, a process called “market diversification”. In *The Decade Ahead: Labour Market Outlook to 2022 for Canada’s Oil and Gas Industry*, a report put out jointly by the Canadian government and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, a lack of community support is identified as the main impediment to pipeline construction.

They seek to engage community stakeholders and strengthen their “relationships with Aboriginal communities,” as this is “key to the sustainable growth of this sector.” Of course, increased profitability and not environmental stability is the “sustainability” desired here.

In 2016 construction is slated to begin on the Energy East Pipeline: 4600 km of new and converted pipeline stretching from Hardisty, Alberta to Saint John, New Brunswick moving 1.1 million barrels of oil daily. Workers are being trained to complete this work by their union, United Association, with financial support from TransCanada and the Energy East Pipeline Project team. Training facilities are located in Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Sarnia, Montreal, Miramichi, and Dartmouth. The challenge faced by capital is to “gain the social license to expand and operate.” Our challenge is to shut them down.

Despite global capitalism’s complex market structure, resource industries have key strategic vulnerabilities. While it’s possible to offshore manufacturing plants, the same is not true for mines or oil patches. Mainstream economic and political academics (fulfilling the intellectual needs of capitalism) understand this strategic vulnerability and the study of geopolitics is founded on it. An often-unrecognized facet of this reality is that the point of production is not the only weak point. The success of port blockades, as well as the strikes of truck drivers, longshoremen, baggage handlers and pilots, and railway workers prove that global capitalism’s supposed strength—the replaceability of any source for parts, materials, resources, or commodities flowing down the chain—also introduces serious weakness. Obstructing the transportation of goods could be as effective as shutting down production at the source.

Unlike the tar sands, Energy East and other projects are still mostly unrealized and require a significant investment of labour hours and capital to make fact. In particular, the sort of labour required for pipeline construction is fairly specific and draws on small, readily-employed and well-paid labour pools. Hindering the supply of labour to pipeline projects is, therefore, one of the potentially more effective, yet largely untested methods of opposing pipelines and by extension the entire tar sands megaproject.

The past decade has given rise to a number of environmental struggles centred around the alarming growth of Canadian oil and gas production and the construction of pipelines essential to the industry's heady and environmentally unacceptable goal of tripling tar sands production by 2030. Waged at local, regional, and national levels, these often intertwining struggles have varied in orientation and effectiveness. While anti-pipeline organizing at large has certainly led to pressure on policymakers to delay approval of these projects, political will at the highest levels of Canadian governance is firmly in support of their eventual construction. An environmental assessment here, a slap-on-the-wrist fine there, perhaps. But flat out denial of all tar sands pipeline projects remains impossible under the existing political framework, notwithstanding which party is in office.

Many activists and organizers have rightly determined that targeting pipeline construction is a key strategy to prevent the expansion of the tar sands industries. Much attention has deservedly been focused on First Nations situated directly on pipeline routes, who have made clear their principled and vigorous refusal to allow pipeline construction on their lands. Additionally, anti-pipeline activists have pointed out how pipeline resistance is a way for people to fight the tar sands in their own localities, protect shared water and soil commons, and join the overarching movement against climate change.

The tar sands are as much the oil fields of Athabasca, as they are its geographically expansive distribution network of critical infrastructure. Critical infrastructure that is susceptible to blockage and interruption. In this case the flow of capital is likely more viable than targeting the point of production. Unlike Enbridge's Line 9, Energy East will require a significant amount of pipeline construction or conversion in Ontario and Quebec. To help legitimize their project, TransCanada seeks to recruit local workers to build the pipeline, which fits well with their pioneer-esque, nation-building propaganda. If completed, Energy East will be the largest pipeline on the continent. It is being pushed by Canadian politicians and sits only a few rubber stamps away from being approved.

The growing prominence of anti-pipeline activism draws together the more radical remnants of Canada's environmental movement as well as a growing network of Indigenous

solidarity activists. Anti-pipeline activism has become a hip and radical alternative to tired liberal environmentalist consumer campaigns and the vague rhetoric of “Native rights” in favour of at least moral support for Indigenous land claims and land defense. At the same time and as discussed above, it does offer the promise of strategic intervention against the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and the Canadian state’s wholesale support and underwriting of this effort. Further, it has become a radical imperative to oppose pipelines given the current state of the climate crisis.

Unfortunately, the efforts of anti-pipeline activists have so far largely resulted in failure, having done little to nothing to stop or even meaningfully delay pipeline development. While awareness of the issue is at an all time high, the projects are continuing largely unrestrained. Believing that the building of working-class self-organization is a crucial component in the fight against capitalism, and therefore the ecological destruction and injustice it necessarily creates, we identify and analyse the shortcomings of existing anti-pipeline activism. Further, we then outline a possible alternative strategy for confronting environmentally destructive industries in Ontario.

We propose that to have a successful ecological movement revolutionaries need to reorient our strategy and focus on building well-rounded locally-based organizations of the working class that have the power to contest destructive policies brought on by capitalists and the state. In other words, it is our view that environmental activism on its own is a non-starter that will fail unless interwoven within a broader emancipatory, revolutionary politics.

I. Towards Meaningful Solidarity and Joint Struggle

The extraction economy at the heart of the Canadian colonial state simultaneously robs Indigenous people of their traditional territories and the resources within them while ensuring the most severe health and environmental impacts are visited first and foremost on Indigenous communities. Indigenous territorial claims and way of life are an impediment to the Canadian ruling class’s accumulation of wealth; outright resistance by Indigenous communities is a powerful external

threat to the ongoing stability of the entire economic system of Canada. That being said, the economic system of Canada is still capitalism, and capitalism thrives on instability - to a point. Capitalism is a system that survives on crisis; the question is always only whether this is the final crisis. Instability that doesn't produce destruction breeds innovation within capitalism, and innovation often gives rise to further consolidation and new eras of stability. Simply put, it is often the case that what hasn't killed capitalism has made it stronger. If the counter-forces to the Canadian ruling class are not sufficient, the working class loses more than its chains. Revolutionary support of Indigenous struggles is not only a moral imperative but a class imperative.

Non-Indigenous members of the working class, especially in southern Ontario, must explore alternatives to the now-common patterns of behaviour in "Indigenous solidarity activism." For instance, the commonly expressed desire (less frequently acted upon) to join Indigenous blockades, contribute money or basic labour to supporting a geographically distant community whose struggles they are largely unfamiliar with, or most commonly, joining solidarity marches alongside "outraged" NDP members and other assorted liberals, which amount to lobbying and government pressure tactics with a radical veneer.

Instead we argue that anarchists and radical environmental organizers need to build organizations in their own neighborhoods that are able to construct their own blockades. If the climate crisis and the genocide of Indigenous people in Canada is as dire as we all claim (spoiler: it is), we must all act to subvert, repurpose, or render defunct all capitalist and state infrastructure that contributes to the Canadian colonial project.

The best way for non-indigenous members of the working class to support Indigenous struggles isn't to peel potatoes at a barricade or send out tweets in solidarity. It's to build resistance within the non-Indigenous working class rooted in our own communities; resistance that is firmly grounded, widespread, and capable of contributing to bringing the national economy to a halt.

We can't abandon Indigenous people in remote areas as the only concrete sites of resistance to environmentally

harmful projects like the tar sands and its attendant pipelines. No one can dispute the legitimacy of land defenders like those at the Unist'ot'en blockade, and we fully support their efforts to stop pipeline intrusion on their territory. However, the best form for that support to take is for those of us living in the urbanized south of Canada to build up our capacity to make our own blockades throughout this economy. We're proposing multiple fronts, not a siege mentality.

II. The Lay of the Land

In researching the position of leftist groups for this article, we were greeted with a bevy of environmental solutions for both a capitalist and a post-capitalist world. We are told to replace furnaces with solar panels; close factories and provide those workers with jobs of equivalent pay and content; voluntarily “simplify” our lives while dismantling capitalism; and nationalize the pipelines, to name a few. These remedies betray a significant focus on consumption, and arguments over guilt, innocence, or absolution through our lifestyles with little time spent discussing production and how to address workers’ participation in environmental destruction. There are the assertions of Earth First!-types, as expressed by the organization’s co-founder Dave Foreman that it is “the bumpkin proletariat so celebrated in Wobbly lore who holds the most violent and destructive attitudes towards the natural world (and toward those who would defend it).” In contrast, there is the commitment of the Wobblies’, otherwise known as the Industrial Workers of the World, Environmental Unionism Caucus to strategize about, “how to organize workers in resource extraction industries with a high impacts [sic] on the environment”, which lacks a broader vision of addressing industries which cannot exist in their current form or at all, if we are to prevent crisis.

Both of these sides, however crudely expressed here, left us wanting for their lack of specificity, clarity, and dynamism. In discussions about the culpability of workers in environmental destruction or crisis, we found ourselves sliding between the two dichotomous tropes existing in their purest forms within primitivist and workerist tendencies: they are the evil or noble workers, class traitors or economic draftees.

Aside from the obvious oversimplification, these views shed light on a particularly troubling environmentalist orientation to workers that denies their agency.

Inherent to the solutions put forward by environmentalists, both reformist and revolutionary, is that on the job, working-class people will remain powerless. While it is explained, for instance, that the factory should be closed and the workers should be given another job or that a post-capitalist environmentally-friendly world has already been figured out right down to your new biogas toilet, there are no illusions of collective decision-making. The glut of knowledge and skill in the hands and minds of working-class people throughout the world will remain unacknowledged. It is, at best, a liberal framework of action where your only input is your purchasing power or the ability of your physical presence at a rally to bolster another's lobbying efforts. It is, at worst, an authoritarian and technocratic vision that leaves the position of the worker unchanged as an interchangeable cog in the overall system of society.

Both environmentalism in its current form and the climate change-denialist counter-narrative to it depend on the supposed gullibility of working-class people. The working class are presented with disprovable narratives from both capital and environmentalists: either everything is under control or it is the end of the world—again. The limited traction of Chicken Little cries-to-action that involve nothing more than a signed petition or a march through New York to appeal to the United Nations' sensibilities belies the liberal environmentalists' assumption that the regular working-class person doesn't care about the environment. We don't care about our air, our water, our climate or our future. Ordinary people are portrayed as either stupid ("It's too abstract") or weak ("they love their cars") and refuge is taken in misanthropy: even if the masses don't do something about the Earth, the environmental activists can. For this article, we will choose a different starting point: people are not as naïve as environmentalists would have us believe. Perhaps people object to being pawns for a useless and self-aggrandizing movement. As we engage with the politics of ecological struggle, we must move away from disempowerment and the false dichotomy of the economic draftee or the class traitor, and move towards analysis rooted in reality.

Reality?

The picture is a compelling one: with few options for survival, poor young men from the East Coast take jobs out west to support their families. No other viable future open to them, tossed up on the seas of global economic and ecological forces, they land on Alberta's tarry shores. We have sad news for the workerists looking for the guilt-free worker: this sad tale does not appear to be based in fact. In other words, there is no economic draft in Canada and the Canadian working class are not eternal victims. People who work on the tar sands or the pipeline are primarily doing so because it is a way to make more money and they see no reason not to. Those who make high wages on pipelines or oil fields would be making high wages elsewhere as well.

The recruitment of new, inexperienced hires to work on pipelines is near non-existent. When one author of this article enquired about getting a job on the Energy East Pipeline they were informed that only certified journeymen who have completed their five-year apprenticeship are able to apply for, let alone get, a job. This anecdote provides some insight regarding who is actually eligible to participate in the construction of the pipeline. The skill and experience that qualifies one for this job does the same for many other, also well-compensated positions.

The Energy East Pipeline is expected to employ over 1,000 people per year for planning and building the Pipeline during its construction phase. After construction, it predicts 900 permanent jobs for maintenance. Predominantly male, these workers currently make above the provincial average. Concerned regarding the aging of their existing workforce, marching imminently towards retirement, TransCanada has been investing in schools and training centres to guarantee the availability of replacements. Whether or not individual pipefitters work on pipelines, they are highly employable and will have good jobs. As our demographic study shows, they don't have much to lose by refusing to work on tar sands pipelines as they will be easily employed in another sector in the same trade. Luckily for us, organizing among workers to encourage refusal to build pipelines does not imply a choice on their part between working to expand the tar sands or unemployment.

Demographics

In Canada, the petroleum and other resource industries are highly concerned with increasing aging-out of skilled workers in crucial trades, such as welding. This scarcity has given welders and other tradespeople an advantage in the labour market, helping to preserve their craft unions and inflating their wages. Research done by the Petroleum and Mining Industry Human Resources Councils of Canada indicates that while *average* wages at the Athabasca Tar Sands are relatively high, this represents a handful of highly paid certified tradespeople who are overwhelmingly outnumbered by much lower-waged workers including truck drivers and machine operators, occupations which are paid only slightly above the provincial and national averages.

This disparity highlights a serious demographic difference between the two groups; for example, while no occupation at the tar sands even remotely approaches gender parity, the “unskilled” occupations do have a greater proportion of women than the “skilled” ones. The proportion of Indigenous people working in these “unskilled” occupations is far above the Canadian national average; the proportion of immigrants is much lower. These trends are reflected in the “skilled” trades as well, but these trades conform with national averages to a greater degree. It could be hypothesized that a greater proportion of the “unskilled” workforce is local, and reflective of the demographics of the area, with 10% of the population of Fort McMurray being Indigenous, and with many reserves in the surrounding area; however, this has not been demonstrated.

Extraction industries are committing large amounts of resources to recruitment and training for younger trades workers, and in some cases are specifically targeting Indigenous people for recruitment. This paves the way for a potential wave of recruitment into these industries of a more diverse group of young Canadian workers, especially as employment prospects for other forms of post-secondary training and education seem to decline.

In order that we could premise our ideas on reality, instead of a politically-convenient “just so” story, we researched the population demographics of tar sands workers, as well as

those involved in pipeline construction and maintenance. The main community in Wood Buffalo, Alberta is the city of Fort McMurray. It is dominated by the petrochemical industry and, as of 2012, out of a population of just over 100,000, around 40,000 are non-permanent residents. In 2001, its total population was only just above 40,000, so in ten years its population has close to tripled. A direct result of the continued expansion of the Athabasca tar sands, we infer that much of the new local population is economically connected to the tar sands projects and have few social ties to the area. The population is approximately 80% white, 10% Aboriginal (an almost even split between Métis and First Nations), and 10% “other” (with South Asians as the only non-Aboriginal racial minority with over a thousand people). Almost 85% of residents identified English as their first language, while only 3% identified French as theirs. Only a few other minority languages break 1%, but these notably include Cree, Spanish, and Arabic.

Demographic research found an obvious split between “skilled” and “unskilled” workers. Workers with “skills” included pipefitters and millwrights with a trade school education. Workers without “skills”—machine operators and truck drivers for instance—with only their bodies and time to offer for sale, were much more numerous, more likely to be female, and unlikely to have anything above a high school diploma, if that. Compared to the Canadian average, Indigenous people are over-represented and immigrants are underrepresented, particularly in the “unskilled” sectors. As for wages, skilled workers make above the Albertan average, while somewhat surprisingly the unskilled workers’ wages are comparable to the Albertan average wage.

III. Organize the Recruits

When organizing workers in environmentally harmful industries is proposed, the name of Judi Bari is necessarily bandied around. Aside from holding some questionable beliefs about femininity, communion with the Earth, and the scientific method, Bari was a dedicated organizer who seems to have been on the right track. She proposed that environmentalists work with the lumber workers and tried to agitate them

against their employers. She argued that the largest threat to the jobs of the lumber workers' was not environmentalists, but their employers, who would necessarily lay off workers when the clearcut was complete. Most significantly, she argued for community-based struggle over the nomadic nature of Earth First!. Generally we are friendly to all of this. In hindsight however, the issue was not that she was wrong but that she and others had arguably waited until too late in to the struggle for the redwood to lay the groundwork that was necessary for victory. Her arguments were unclear, her strategy was not well-formulated and her organizing was not able to come to fruition before she was singled out and targeted for repression.

In February 2015, US oil workers went on strike for the first time since 1982. This strike included over 5,000 United Steelworkers members who walked out of a chemical plant, a cogeneration complex and eleven refineries, together accounting for 13% of the United States' fuel refinement capacity. This strike has been framed by "green" groups and unionists as a prime opportunity to engage the state, and oil refinery workers, with an environmental agenda. Statements made by from those doing picket-line support have identified this as a chance to engage in "green syndicalism." Though they are not inherently wrong about the possibly catalytic nature of strikes, and the importance they can play in consolidating struggle from a pre-existing movement, providing picket-line support in this context shows a lack of insight regarding the state of their own movement. This opportunistic, magpie-like approach to organizing, which brings to mind "ambulance chasing," is reactive rather than strategic, and gives few opportunities for the critical work of building long-term organizational structures.

The disappointing truth is that the groundwork has not been laid to take advantage of this opportunity. Long-term organizing cannot be faked and without this foundation, picket-line support for these workers is not just a well-intentioned, harmless or pointless demonstration of abstract solidarity; it is politically questionable. In essence, it involves well-meaning outsiders entering into a conflict between the workers and their bosses with their own agenda—an agenda that the workers have no immediate reason to support—and that they are not prepared to discuss and decide upon. In

this strike, environmentalist support, if it has any effect, only serves to make environmentally harmful jobs more appealing without successfully directing the conversation towards the utility of the job itself. All too often the Left will place itself in these “no-win” situations by organizing too little and too late, such as by trying to organize communities around imminent pipeline projects, giving an impossibly narrow window in which to organize successfully, and no time to build power. A contrast would be revolutionaries organizing communities before imminent threats appear, which would prepare working-class communities for larger battles over regionalized environmental destruction and pollution.

A principled environmentalist approach to workers in these industries is not for them to make the industry more “sustainable,” but to organize for its abolition, or at least something more substantial than better PR. To work towards this challenging goal, there must be broad support from organized neighbourhoods, as well as a cultural shift caused by organizing in recruitment halls, colleges, universities, and all other appropriate spaces, such that the workers at the point of production are the last pin to drop. Thus, though we would agree that moments like this are crucial points for intervention, revolutionaries’ lack of preparation makes it just another missed opportunity.

The workers who are essential to fossil fuel production are predominantly skilled trades people. They have gone through years of schooling, training and apprenticeships to get to a point where they are of use to companies like TransCanada. Though these fossil fuel projects are advertised as something that will benefit many through the creation of jobs, they hire relatively small numbers of highly specialized workers. Organizing against recruitment or participating in counter-recruitment is a relatively untested idea in the arena of environmental struggle, possibly because, as we previously pointed out, the environmental movement has tended to demonize these workers rather than work with them. What we know is that these skilled workers spend a lot of time in schools and training facilities: engineers in universities and plumbers, pipefitters and welders in colleges and trade schools. This is a potentially opportune time for intervention. There is a relatively long period of time in which to engage with them

and for them to switch trajectories and to acquire employment elsewhere. In making this decision, workers will not likely find themselves unemployed, but nevertheless a lot is being asked of them—certainly more than the environmentalists are asking of themselves. How is it that we propose to reach these workers? Surely picketing or flyering sites of recruitment or education is not enough.

While we refute the fallacy of identifying employment in these industries as being tantamount to an economic draft, the ways in which these industries secure employees does share qualities with the ways in which the military recruits. They function through partnerships with educational institutions, including high schools, colleges, trade schools and union halls. Though these locations are physically available to us, whether or not we see these spaces as politically available to us is up for debate. The question is whether we can position ourselves, as leftists, within educational institutions outside of humanities and social science programs. Do we have the ability to put forward an environmentalism that caters to trade schools and not graduate-level environmental studies?

For guidance, we look to the only substantial examples of counter-recruitment we could find: military counter-recruitment in the United States. Military counter-recruitment in the early to mid 2000s predominantly took the form of lobbying municipal levels of government to mandate that equal access be given to counter or anti-recruitment in high schools or colleges. This tactic was taken because it is federally mandated that the military have access to these educational spaces. In fact, No Child Left Behind legislation mandates that student tests, which apparently identify students who are of use or likely to join the armed forces, be shared with recruitment agencies. Anti-recruitment entails anti-war organizers or former military going into schools and making the pitch that the armed forces are lying. They provide a more accurate view of what war is like while identifying the misdeeds of recruiters.

The relative absence of counter-recruitment or recruit organizing in comparison to the prevalence of anti-war mobilizations can likely be blamed on similar tropes as those assigned to the worker in the environmentally-harmful job: either they are murderous traitors to the working class or

pitiful destitute small town boys who have been hoodwinked into being cannon fodder for imperialism. The existence of these tropes in either context is largely irrelevant at low points of conflict; they are not apparently a problem, as they are only rhetorical in nature. However, at times of heightened imperialist aggression or the expansion of resource extraction or transport, they become detrimental to our ability to wage struggles and something that must be overcome. This was the case with a noteworthy experiment in anti-war organizing: Vietnam War coffeehouses and GI newspapers.

The Vietnam War coffeehouses began in 1967 as civilian-run off-base spaces of counterculture. Initially designed with a semi-bohemian culture in mind and with the goal of turning new recruits before they became effective killing machines, coffeehouse organizers soon discovered problems with their plan. The hippie-esque aesthetic of the spaces, though designed to attract the most organizable, tended to attract instead GIs who were becoming interested in the dope scene, and not necessarily in organizing. Second, their strategy of focusing on new recruits ignored the realities of those they were trying to organize with: basic training involved high levels of isolation, including from other GIs. Further, it was experience in service itself that tended to produce dissent. The flexible nature of the project, however, did allow these civilian leftists to adapt the project to the needs of the GIs on the bases near them.

A critical point in the coffeehouse projects was when they abandoned their orientation to cultural alienation and consciously set out to do direct political organizing. Only then did coffeehouses become an off-base meeting point for GIs; it was their anti-brass atmosphere, not bohemian culture that kept GIs around long enough to read anti-war papers and to be introduced to leftist ideas. Many had been so shaken by their experiences fighting overseas that they actively sought a new framework for understanding the world. The most common next-step for action in these spaces was the creation of GI newspapers, frequently produced with the support of civilian leftists. Hundreds of GIs worked to create these papers, thousands more distributed them on-base and tens of thousands read their content. Despite the conflicts occurring overseas and on-base, the war continued and people sought out a way to achieve higher levels of struggle. This began

to take the form of base wide actions that led to significant consequences for the GIs involved. With the general failure of off-base actions, struggle then turned to localized unit-based organizing in their barracks.

The forms of GI organizing discussed here were predominantly run by and directed at white working-class GIs despite the high percentage of working-class Black and Latino men who served. Radicalized white GIs focused on the near non-stop production of agitational propaganda in order to reach their not-yet-radicalized fellow white GIs. To contrast, racialized GIs were more likely to take part in direct confrontations, work refusals, and fighting back against riot controls because they were generally more politically developed. Thus, they were more likely to participate in collective actions occurring around them without requiring remedial agitational propaganda. This racial dynamic of resistance and politicization within the American Armed Forces should come as no surprise as it existed within a context of colonized and racialized working-class people within the United States already joining the fray of uprisings and rebellions taking place across the world. The movements of struggle Stateside had already done much to prepare racialized GIs for resistance within and against the American Armed Forces. What those resistance movements also imbued in them was a healthy understanding of the violent and dangerous role white Americans can play in suppressing movements of class struggle. It took little more than an indication that the edifice of class collaboration between white GIs and the American ruling class was unstable for racialized GIs to join the fight in earnest. This is not in any way to imply that radicalized white GIs lead the way for GI resistance in the Vietnam war. Racialized GIs were essentially waiting for their white comrades to get their shit together so that the full force of white supremacist countermeasures to resistance wouldn't have all of them shot in the back.

The lessons we draw from these organizing experiences are that, with assistance, vet and GI newspapers led to political development. Those that were successful and interesting were such because they endeavoured to engage, intervene, and assist organizing with GIs as actual people. The civilians involved examined and familiarized themselves with whom they were actually organizing. This all took place within a context of

broad, global resistance to the US' actions in southeast Asia. When they began their struggle, the context was vaguely similar to that of environmental struggle today. There was not unanimity over Vietnam, as there is not over climate change or the importance of ecology-based struggle. At the same time, outside of capital, there is seemingly not broad support for oil companies, just tacit acceptance.

Within the broader struggles against the Vietnam War, there was a willingness on the part of organizers to go beyond the usual tropes. This is required in environmentalism as well. As it stands, environmental activists have something to say to politicians, to consumers and even to corporations but they seemingly have nothing to say to the people who are employed in these industries. It is a glaring hole in environmental strategy that betrays a bourgeois understanding; again the worker lacks agency. Though environmental activists are happy to state that they would rather use workers for installing solar panels than processing fossil fuels, they are unwilling to engage the worker in those decisions.

An understanding of the uneven political development of GIs in Vietnam along predominantly racial demarcations is not an insignificant matter to our considerations of pipeline resistance. The context in which Canada's extractive economy – and resistance to it – operates is that of colonialism. Anti-colonial resistance is a centuries old tradition of Indigenous life. The matter before non-Indigenous revolutionaries is not one of supporting Indigenous political development and struggle but of catching the non-Indigenous working class up on that development and waging its own struggle against the Canadian ruling class. The non-Indigenous working class poses more of a threat to Indigenous land defenders than it does to the ruling class in clashes between the two. This is true whether we are talking about the oil fields of Athabasca, pipeline routes of northern Ontario and Quebec or the streets of Caledonia. This truth today should not be left to stand tomorrow by any non-Indigenous revolutionary. The task before non-Indigenous revolutionaries is to bring the non-Indigenous working class into direct conflict with the Canadian ruling class and into solidarity with the Indigenous communities that continue their struggle against our mutual class enemies.

We don't claim to have a quick solution to a problematic

orientation that has developed for decades within the Left but here is our starting point: the place where workers most strongly feel the effects of environmental destruction is in their neighbourhoods. Impacts may manifest as tailing ponds, skyrocketing heating bills, water shut-off plans like those in Detroit and now Baltimore, or water restrictions to which industry is exempt, as in California. These are issues against which the working class can and must organize. Our goal then is that workers become environmental organizers in their own right so that this understanding can be carried over into their workplaces.

IV. Organize the Neighbourhood

A favoured strategy of the environmental movement has been “building awareness,” particularly within the sphere of reform. The concept of awareness would make sense if ignorance was the problem and not informed reaction. To “build awareness,” the first step entails visibility and supposed “presence” rather than action, and reaction is characterized as being based in ignorance rather than genuinely contradictory interests. This does not distinguish between the opposed interests of the classes and, moreover, is not conscious of how capitalism creates unequal degrees of environmentally-caused suffering (whether through intense disasters or slow decline), such as the virtual inevitability of localized pollution having a greater effect on working-class communities.

There is no environmental struggle with greater stakes than climate change, yet environmentalists have proven unable to motivate significant numbers of ordinary workers in North America to take effective action. This fault lies both with the attitudes toward the workers, and the attitudes toward organization and action. The failure of “building awareness” is arguably a contributing factor to the environmentalist turn to “green capitalism” and an explicit orientation toward venture capital, demonstrated by the appearance of schools of thought such as the “Bright Greens.” Implicit in this is a rejection of the working class (whose labour power causes polluting industry to function) as a political actor rather than a consumptive

economic one.

The reality is, however, that ecological disaster is not just possible, but inevitable, for the Canadian working class, a working class which is intensely subjected to propaganda which denies global warming or argues in favour of “green jobs” and weak reforms rather than serious change; it is a working class which will be spectacularly unprepared both to understand and to materially endure disaster when it comes. What is needed, then, is a different kind of “awareness” based around neighbourhood organization and the idea that workers can band together to improve their situation. Environmentalism, then, is simply good sense.

It also calls for a new kind of action, rarely tried in the environmental movement: genuine collective action from organized neighbourhoods which have informed themselves and made a collective decision to intervene in a situation, rather than informal activist cells or dictates from large NGOs. Rather than abstract talk about a “new social movement” (echoing the New Left obsession with national campaigns and single-issue movements) or affinity groups, this would represent autonomy and communitarianism, not a “social movement” guided by the velvet-gloved fist of NGOs where those who object to the set narrative are jeered at by well-trained media commentators.

Nearly every left-liberal journalist’s, academic’s, or activist’s prescription for what to do about climate change hinges on an ill-defined hope for a social movement capable of effectively confronting the combined powers of state and industry. The loudest voices in this milieu, from Chris Hedges to Naomi Klein, have made variations of the claim that “only social movements can save us now.” Certainly, there’s a kernel of truth here; it’s impossible to conceive of a way out of this mess that does not rely on mass movements to a certain extent. At the same time, this follows the usual liberal pattern of an ideological or moral battle for hearts and minds of policymakers and the “general public,” rather than acknowledging the total lack of interest capitalists have in solving the problems they have caused. Additionally, the populist appeal to “the public” to do something about climate change seems to always follow the dead-end narratives of elections, lobbying, and “citizen action,” rather than the broader fight waged by truly emancipatory politics; neither will a mass movement capable

of actually implementing the “alternatives” these writers are so fond of hinting at just sprout up from nowhere.

On the other side of the coin, anarchists more sympathetic to insurgency will advocate for small groups of people to monkey-wrench ecologically harmful industry. These clandestine affinity group proponents may argue that only a few committed people are required to damage a pipeline project enough to stop it. This tactical short-sightedness goes beyond the fact that actions such as these can trigger broad sentiment supporting the state pushing back against “violent” anarchists and anti-pipeline struggles, generally. It’s also simply not true. A primary industrial infrastructure project that crosses a gargantuan area of land with multiple international financial stakeholders would not be waylaid by the “propaganda of the deed” of rootless environmental radical playing asymmetrical warrior. This is not a debate about “true anarchist principles” or about whether you can blow up a social relationship. This is simply about tactical efficacy. It is far more effective for revolutionaries and environmental radicals to build organizations that can give working-class people agency in determining their lives. The building of these organizations is done through immediate struggle – which could include opposition to pipeline construction – while not losing sight of the long game. When these organizations unite with others of similar intention to wage struggles together, we will have something worthy of being referred to as a “movement.” While it is imperative for current financial interests in the Canadian fossil fuel industry that pipelines be built, it doesn’t mean the clock is ticking on the defeat of the working class and that at hour of pipeline completion the fight is lost. This frantic, apocalyptic thinking clouds the mind and makes us prone to self-involved lashing out and not the self-sacrificing and deliberate organizing our class’ situation requires.

Where would these movements come from? Any workplace struggle that has a chance of succeeding relies upon deep support from the communities where the workers live. On the other hand, community struggles often falter when they are unable to exert any real pressure on the powerful entities harming their common interests. Clearly, any successful approach to organizing in neighbourhoods directly or indirectly threatened must recognize and root its

politics in the interwoven nature between workplaces and their surrounding communities.

Obviously, neighbourhoods which are presently situated along pipeline routes or near dangerous resource development projects are those with the most apparent material interest in opposing these developments. However, these groups cannot bear the weight of such a difficult struggle alone. Far too much solidarity activism in support of Indigenous communities and blockades rests on passive support from afar. While this moral support is all well and good, it does little to support these communities and their struggles. At the same time, while these neighbourhoods may have use for bodies on the line when their situation reaches a crisis point, it doesn't do that much good for urban activists to travel up north and sit on the sidelines. What we propose as a strategic imperative to this type of solidarity work involves a much longer, more arduous approach rooted in the neighbourhoods where we presently live and work. This is difficult, but a worthwhile and necessary foundation for building towards a revolutionary situation in Canada, however unlikely it may seem. In other words, we are talking about organizing to win.

An important first step is to move away from the reactive stance most of the Left is currently mired in. Individuals and groups who are seriously committed to revolution as well as environmentalism should avail themselves of the multiple proactive strategies of organizing in their neighbourhoods which could provide a strong basis for future environmental action, as opposed to the normal leftist approach of crisis mobilization. Engaging in environmental organizing as an aspect or result of building these stronger communities and organizations means making the same case to workers for taking action on the environment as for taking action against landlords or bosses—that it is in their collective material interest. This appeal must also be interwoven with a broader plan towards social and economic empowerment.

What does an organized neighbourhood look like, and how do we differentiate mobilization from organization? Common activist modes of behaviour involve primarily one-sided conversations, a battle of ideas, and “converting” people to a particular way of thinking, then, if successful, to get them to sign onto your specific issue or cause. We would contrast

this mobilization pattern with an organizing pattern, which we centre on the establishment of democratic spaces to make decisions and take collective action. Effective decision-making and action strengthen the organization and neighbourhood and, ultimately, the neighbourhood organization is more capable of enforcing its decisions and building its power. Environmental activism tends to skip these steps, steps which we believe are prerequisites to effectively contending with environmental issues, and which also contextualize environmentalism within a broader struggle toward revolution, rather than treating it as a standalone set of ideas in the style of the New Left. It also provides an opportunity for environmentalism to contribute to a popular understanding of, and opposition to, capitalism, and to build that understanding among the people who are uniquely positioned to end capitalism: the working class as a class.

When we write about neighbourhood organization, we don't mean independent and isolated neighbourhoods or a sort of socialism-in-one-neighborhood. We envision federated neighborhoods that work together on issues that could span large geographical areas. We aim to build neighborhood organizations that are independent and directly democratic. A starting point that could build common struggles between neighborhoods would be ecological issues, and they could further work together in struggles against, for example, police violence.

Moreover, it is our imperative to build environmentally-conscious working-class power in southern Ontario, both because this is where we stand and because to do otherwise would mean leaving small, remote communities to fight these battles on their own, against the might of Canadian and global capital. There are few other effective ways for us to engage in environmental struggle outside of merely acting as allies or riding someone else's bandwagon. The current pattern of environmental struggle largely follows the pattern of high-profile, high-energy, high-risk blockades and protest sites. These function as focal points for both the state and the activist Left, which flock to them. This activist attention is dubiously helpful at best. At any rate, these blockades indicate decisive action taken by strong communities. Yet, even these communities cannot stand against capital on their own. What

is needed is connected struggles, both rural and urban, which are more difficult to suppress and which build a true sense of common cause against a common foe.

V. Conclusion

Many members of Common Cause, and certainly the members of this writing group, began to explore revolutionary politics because of our interest in environmental defense. A few of us even joined this organization because of our immense dissatisfaction with the environmentally-focused organizing that we had struggled to make potent for years. One thing that we learned was that, while participating in environmental organizing, we must ensure that we have not developed the same orientation to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous working-class people as the oil companies. Working-class people are not stakeholders from whom we must gain enough tacit support that we can achieve our predetermined goals.

Given the stakes of unmitigated and irreversible climate change, and the power of state and capital to firmly oppose efforts to improve our collective lot, the only strategic way forward lies in organizing among the working class. What is urgently needed is a wholesale effort to build working-class organizations that are capable of presenting concrete opposition to these projects. We have tried to outline here a viable and enactable vision of environmental struggle which is rooted in working-class organizing. This must necessarily be a vision founded in practicality and the need to launch the most effective attacks possible, rather than relying on moralistic arguments.

Throughout this article, we've tried to make the case that the current state of anti-pipeline and environmentalist politics is at an impasse, and that in order to seriously change the situation in Canada, activists struggling on this terrain must pivot towards organizing among the working class at a local level. For all the talk of "Chicken Littles" in this article, it is right to be genuinely concerned about the disturbing emissions trajectory the world is on and the unprecedented scale of human misery and environmental collapse that will follow. Moreover, the chasm between the emissions cuts that

science tells us are needed and the rapacious growth of state-abetted fossil fuel industries shows us that the entire rotten edifice of the global economy is at odds with a liveable future for all. However, it is patently clear that with its current strategy and composition, the overall movement against the tar sands and for climate justice in Canada is bound to fail.

We wish to see the recomposition of a bold and capable working class in Canada with a clear understanding of its general interests regarding the environment and the trashing of the commons as a function of capitalism. We wish to see communities capable of standing up to pipeline companies and their allies in government, confident that their resistance will be echoed throughout the country. We wish to see Indigenous blockades strengthened and supported not only in words, but in strong, disruptive action throughout the economy.

But wishes don't amount to much. And though we spilled a lot of ink trying to think of some ways forward, the fact is most of the organizing we discussed is theoretical and untried. Further, it promises to be a fraught and difficult process. That said, if you consider yourself a revolutionary, isn't this approach more palatable than writing your objections to the National Energy Board, clicking "like" on the Unist'ot'en Action Camp page, or milling around with a bunch of liberals carrying a sad, inflatable pipeline?

There is still time to start the challenging work of organizing. While times will no doubt be harder in the future due to climate change, there is no sign of a coming apocalypse, especially for those of us in southern Ontario. Pipelines are intimately tied to the structure of the Canadian economy and the expansion of the tar sands but if we lose the battle against Energy East that does not mean that we should give up. Capitalism will find new ways to grow and we will find ourselves participating in new struggles. Powerful working-class organizations are part of a long-term strategy to win real and revolutionary gains, and will take years of hard work. However, with 2015 set to be another record-breaking year in the crescendo towards runaway climate change, and a number of Indigenous struggles like the Unist'ot'en blockade set to come to a head, there's no time like the present.



Combating the Reactionary Forces of Liberalism

One Hamilton Member, Two Toronto Members, Two Former Members

To be honest, this is not the article that we set out to write months ago. Our original intention was to take the three most potent reactionary tendencies that we see percolating under the surface of Canadian working-class culture: an emboldened, backward-looking misogyny, a domestically jingoistic nationalism intransigently opposed to anti-colonial struggle, and a supposedly enlightened secularism that only thinly conceals a deep seated racism – dissect them, and prescribe treatment. Relying on recent and more historical struggles against reaction and backwardness within our class, we intended to help light the way forward by contributing to a deeper understanding of what it is that we are up against, and how it is that we will defeat it. This did not come to pass.

Instead, what we have for you is less a treatment regimen for what ails the working class (and, by extension, the Left), and more of a diagnostic report of three salient examples of reactionary tendencies attacking its composition

and consciousness: men’s rights activists (MRAs), anti-Native sentiment, and Islamophobia. We intend to take up how to mount a counter-offensive in a later article. It is imperative that multiple counter-offensives target these three reactionary tendencies and “movements” and defeat them.

In taking on the work of better understanding the political underpinnings of our adversaries, it gradually became clear that we are not faced with the forces of reaction our political forebears struggled against. Further, in our colonial, North American state of affairs, we cannot uncritically adopt strategies and analysis from our anti-fascist contemporaries in Europe without recognizing major differences in historical and political context. Our enemies today are not the neo-fascist boogey men we make them out to be; they are liberals – through and through. Make no mistake, we are not claiming that this political alignment makes them less of a threat to the interests of the working class. In fact, they may present *more* of a threat, in that we (the Left) continue to misread them as we fail to mount an effective response. These reactionary currents destabilize the working class by attacking its more marginalized segments, opposing working-class interests and struggles, and shifting liberatory politics even further into the realm of the liberal.

In order to formulate a salient strategy of dealing with these threats, we need to first understand who and what it is that we are up against. We determined that we were unable to accomplish both of these tasks in a single article. Instead, we chose to put the horse before the cart, for a change. So, please, join us as we examine the reactionary forces of liberalism, and as you read, think on how best it is that we will extinguish them.

What are Reactionary Ideas? What are Reactionary Tendencies and Movements?

Reactionary *ideas*, broadly defined, are political beliefs that develop in response to social change and which seek a reversal of said change – usually in the form of a return to some idealized past. Often, reactionary ideas take root among socially dominant demographics (such as white men) in response to the struggles of oppressed or otherwise marginalized groups.

More often than not, this phenomenon is associated with conservative, or right-wing political currents. This is, however, not always the case. For example, Stalinism and primitivism are two reactionary ideologies with roots in the Left.

In this article we speak mostly of reactionary *tendencies*. By this, we mean a loose collection of reactionary ideas, public forums, small organized groups, and other elements that have not yet coalesced into a full-scale reactionary *movement*. In this article, we describe working-class anti-Native sentiment, MRAs, and Islamophobia as tendencies, because they have not yet given rise to mass social movements to the extent that, for example, the US Christian Right or the global Wahhabist movement have. The difference between a tendency and a movement can be understood as the degree of organization, influence, and unity of purpose and action among the different reactionary forces present.

Reactionary tendencies are mass phenomena, engaging and mobilizing significant numbers of the working class. It is this fact, above all others, that makes them so dangerous; they present anarchists with the challenge of taking on a mass movement. Mass reactionary movements can be, and often are, led or directed by the ruling class. But they can also be autonomous from, and in direct conflict with the ruling class, forcing anarchists into what is sometimes described as a “three-way fight.”

What is at Stake?

Reactionary tendencies present a clear danger to anarchists, and a significant challenge to our ability to build class power. In a worst-case scenario, these tendencies could rapidly take on a mass movement character, forcing us into a three-way fight for which we are currently ill prepared. To be clear, this would be a fight which would take place on our streets, workplaces, and campuses, and our enemies would be made up of neighbours, co-workers and classmates. This is what it means to be in a three-way fight with the ruling class and a mass reactionary movement. Even if this scenario doesn't come to pass, and today's reactionary tendencies fail to crystallise into a mass movement (something which cannot be assumed), they nonetheless spread and reinforce divisions within the class –

divisions that must be contended with if we are to build up working-class power.

Reactionary tendencies are currently on the rise across the globe. Some – such as far-right nationalist parties in Europe, the global Wahhabist movement, and the constellation of forces grouped under the Tea Party and Christian Right in the United States – have already established themselves as full-blown reactionary movements. Within this international context, we believe that the potential exists for the current cesspool of reactionary tendencies in Canada to consolidate, or otherwise develop into one or more mass reactionary movements. We feel it's important to try and understand the dynamics driving this development, in order to help determine what role anarchist communists can play in the building of an effective response. We may already be in a race against time.

Anti-Native Reaction, Men's Rights and Islamophobia: Reactionary Tendencies in Our Backyard

We've chosen these three festering reactionary tendencies because they appear to us as the most pressing at the moment. We readily acknowledge that other reactionary tendencies exist within the Canadian working class, and that the specific tendencies we are looking at here overlap with, and are part of broader systems of oppression such as white supremacy, imperialism/colonialism and hetero-patriarchy. But anti-Native reaction, MRAs and Islamophobia appear to us as to be the most dynamic, and the most likely sources (separately, or in combination) from which a reactionary social movement might emerge in our backyard, and so these are what we will be looking at.

I. Anti-Native Reaction: Unfinished Business

Anti-Native reaction, or hatred of Indigenous peoples is, of course, one of the founding pillars of the Canadian settler state. White supremacy – the ideology of the racial and cultural superiority of Europeans, historically manifested through genocide and colonialism – remains the dominant paradigm

through which the Canadian working class views the country's Indigenous population. The common racist tropes that have developed over four hundred years among settler farmers and workers are familiar to anyone who has ever had a conversation on the subject, and we do not need to restate them here. To this day, they continue to provide mass ideological justification for the colonial project of appropriating (or holding onto) and exploiting Indigenous lands, while pushing their inhabitants to the brink of cultural extinction.

But today, for the first time in decades, Indigenous resistance is reaching a scale and strength that is once again challenging the Canadian colonial project. This resistance is fueled by several concurrent factors: a powerful cultural revival especially among Indigenous youth (many being the first generation with some distance from the genocidal residential schools), the high growth rate of Indigenous populations (approaching fifty percent in Saskatchewan), a multiplication of militant land reclamations and defense actions, a growing re-establishment, or re-assertion of self-government by various means (for example the autonomous revival of the traditional Six Nations government) and to some extent, growing awareness and support among non-Indigenous people (especially among environmentalists and activists in general) for anti-colonial struggle. We don't want to paint too rosy a picture; Indigenous revolutionaries and organizers face many challenges – not least of which being their own Indigenous colonial administrators, and petty bourgeois parasites. But the past decades have witnessed a steadily increasing pace of Indigenous self-organization and resistance, having reached a level that has not been seen for over a century. And all signs indicate that Idle No More was just one step in the growth and consolidation of this burgeoning movement.

At the same time, under the guidance of the Harper government, the Canadian ruling class is pursuing an accumulation strategy centred around an incredibly aggressive approach to resource extraction. This is epitomized by the Alberta tar sands, but the same process is taking place across the country. The Ontario and Québec governments' plans to massively expand mining in their northern territories (known as the "Ring of Fire" and "Plan Nord" respectively), the ecologically devastating pipeline projects planned or in

construction from the coast of British Columbia through to the Maritimes, and the increasingly aggressive maneuvering by the Canadian state to secure disputed Arctic territories for resource companies, are all part of this aggressive push by Canadian capital. All of this is happening within a context of growing Indigenous resistance, so it is not surprising that we are seeing an increasingly intense clash between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples defending their lands and culture.

In a colonial nation such as Canada, the combination of an Indigenous cultural and political revival with an intensification of conflict between Indigenous peoples and the state is likely to generate a more aggressive, or active, anti-Native reaction among the non-Indigenous working class. We would argue that this is indeed what is already happening, and increasingly likely to happen.

By “more active,” we mean a reaction that goes beyond the “normal” levels of passive political support shown by the majority of working-class Canadians for the colonial project; something more than just morally supporting, or turning a blind eye to the colonial maneuvers of the Canadian state and capital *from afar*; something beyond simply partaking in the myriad everyday ways in which residents of a colonial state commit violence against a colonized people. What we mean is the growth of more emboldened anti-Native political sentiment, and the spread of organized groups who demand a more aggressive colonial project, and are willing to actualize this demand independent of, or even in spite of, the state. This is a generalization, but we might say that as Indigenous resistance continues to approach levels not seen since before the consolidation of the Canadian state, we may also be approaching a return of anti-Native forces that look more like the private settler-farmer militias of old than the bigoted passive voter, or online troll of today.

Does this seem too extreme a conclusion? We think not, and for a potential warning of things to come, we point to the so-called “Caledonia Crisis”: a wave of Indigenous resistance and non-Indigenous reaction that began in February 2006, in response to a housing development project, which was being constructed in flagrant disregard of an unresolved land claim. By October, over a thousand local residents were marching

in the streets as part of a so-called “March for Freedom,” demanding swift state intervention. Playing the role of peaceful white victims, an anti-Native crusader from Richmond Hill named Gary McHale and his supporters in Caledonia focused their anger at the supposedly “Native-pandering” Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and their apparent inability to enforce “law and order” in a town shaken by the spectre of Indigenous terrorism. Employing liberal rhetoric calling for “equal treatment by the law” and “equal rights,” McHale’s organizing in Caledonia was a direct reaction to the resistance undertaken by the Haudenosaunee people of the Six Nations on the Grand River against the continuing theft of their lands.

On April 20, 2006, about five months before the March for Freedom, one hundred OPP officers violently raided a land reclamation encampment at the Douglas Creek Estates, which was established as the central site of Six Nations struggle against the developers. In a fashion not quite resembling the police favouritism alleged by McHale and his supporters, officers descended on the site, violently attacking members of the encampment with pepper spray and tasers, and placing many under arrest. The resurgence of Six Nations struggle following these raids saw an escalation in tactics in the form of highway roadblocks, and a consistent determination from Six Nations resisters to defend lands under the threat of colonial theft. It is in this context that McHale and his supporters began to make the plea for heavier policing to bring “law and order” and “equality before the law” down upon the heads of defiant Six Nations residents.

Even before McHale entered the picture, local reactions to the Six Nations land defenders, while mixed, were channeled through the business-led Caledonian Citizens Alliance (CCA), which mobilized thousands of locals and neighbouring supporters to oppose the land reclamation. Seizing on these tensions, McHale, through his web-based project, Caledonia Wake-Up Call (CWUC), and his provincial organization, Canadian Advocates for Charter Equality (CANACE), joined up with other prominent reactionary figures in order to mobilize opposition against Six Nations struggles and the reclamation in Caledonia. This wave of anti-Native organizing crested in July of 2009, with the formation of the Caledonia Militia (later re-branded as the Caledonia Peacekeepers), which prides itself

on performing citizen's arrests on Six Nations land defenders. Employing a discourse that merges the racist paranoia of the War on Terror, colonial depictions of the "savage Indian," and liberal claims of white victimhood under a "two-tier justice system" that discriminates against non-Indigenous Canadians, McHale and his counterparts managed to gain a following that is worth serious attention. The fact that, in 2008, McHale tied for votes with a candidate from the New Democratic Party (NDP) when running as an independent candidate in the Haldimand-Norfolk region is further indication of the significant local support for his anti-Native political line. The implication for us, as revolutionaries, is that there is a real potential for the anti-Native reactionary tendency in our class to develop into a mass anti-Indigenous reactionary movement as the clash between Indigenous resistance and the Canadian state heats up.

What is at Stake?

The (re)emergence of a mass social movement anchored around anti-Native reaction would increase working-class support for the more brutal and violent aspects of colonialism, for more state repression of Indigenous, anarchist and other anti-capitalist resistance (happening before our eyes with Bill C-51), and for a more aggressive, ecologically destructive resource extraction accumulation strategy. On the other hand, if anti-Native tendencies can be countered, and support for Indigenous resistance increased among the working class, this will make it harder for the state to crack down, thereby providing more room for the anti-colonial, and ecological struggles to grow. As anarchists, we have every interest in seeing Indigenous resistance to the Canadian state and capital continue to grow. Anti-colonial resistance already provides a radical pole for other struggles to gravitate towards; if it continues to gain traction, it is likely to pull these other struggles in a more militant, revolutionary direction. While the outcome of anti-colonial struggles depend, first and foremost, on the organization and commitment of their Indigenous participants, all revolutionaries have a vested interest in helping to see them succeed. For non-Indigenous revolutionaries, a particularly important task is countering the anti-Native tendency among

the non-Indigenous working class.

Making the Case Without Resorting to Liberalism

The question is how, exactly, to best go about doing this. Admittedly, Common Cause members do not yet have much experience directly working to counter anti-Native tendencies in our class – though our members do have a fair amount of experience organizing against other reactionary tendencies. From our discussions on the subject so far, we have concluded that we are skeptical of the “ally” model common among Indigenous solidarity activists, primarily because it is oriented away from building broad working-class support for Indigenous struggles. Instead, when Common Cause members have discussed how we should support Indigenous resistance, we have focused on the question of how we can build active political support for Indigenous struggles in the working class. More specifically, we have asked the question of how we can convince our neighbours that it is in their interest to see Indigenous resistance succeed. We are still in the early stages of developing our thoughts on this question, but two political arguments have been put forward with some tentative support in the organization. First, locally, in southern Ontario, we see much in Haudenosaunee political thought that is both revolutionary and, we believe, appealing to our neighbours and the wider working class. In practice, this will require convincing our friends and neighbours to turn their back on the benefits of siding with the colonial project, in return for aligning with Indigenous resistance in a project of mutual liberation from capitalism and the state. Despite the daunting challenges inherent to this task, it is crucial work to incorporate into mass organizing, because – and this is the second point that we tentatively agree on – given the balance of power, Indigenous struggles cannot ultimately succeed against the Canadian state, despite their impressive scope and militancy, without significant support from an organized, revolutionary working class. Neither friends organized into ally activist groups, nor liberal apologies for past wrongs that lay out the multicultural welcome mat while brushing over revolutionary Indigenous aims, will suffice. The revolutionary aims of the most militant Indigenous resistance must be recognized fully,

and clearly presented as such to our class – not dressed up in liberal and solely moralistic terms. This will mean moving beyond the self-validating framework of the Indigenous ally and towards an organizing approach that actively and seriously seeks to achieve adequate levels of support among the non-Indigenous working class.

II. Islamophobia: White Supremacy’s Leading Edge

Over the past forty years, xenophobia and racism within the Canadian working class have been tempered by the official state policy of multiculturalism, anti-racist movements, and large-scale immigration from post-colonial and neo-colonial states. Despite this, xenophobic and racist tendencies continue to hold the potential to galvanize a mass reactionary force in the working class. We’d be foolish to think otherwise. While successive decades of anti-racist struggles and equity-seeking reforms have helped shape official state policy and working-class sentiment, white supremacy remains very much intact. Today, we would argue that Islamophobia – a less-than-ideal phrase to describe western anti-Muslim sentiment – is the leading expression of the timeless Canadian tradition of working-class racism.

Liberal Imperialism Abroad

Western states, including Canada, have fueled Islamophobia through their military responses to the ongoing resistance of people in the majority-Muslim world. Canada has been engaged for over a decade in sustained military conflict with majority-Muslim populations that refuse the position assigned to them by Western imperialism. But unlike past imperialist episodes, the state has relied less on the assertion of the superiority of the “white race” and its Christian civilization (though this remains an undercurrent) and instead wields the values of liberalism to build ideological support for foreign wars. Military campaigns against religious extremism, justified in the name of women’s rights, and other liberal-democratic freedoms – this is the imperialist ideology of the post-1960s era. The ruling class, having survived and beaten back the

movements of the 1960s, have now appropriated their rhetoric in order to help shore up working-class support at home for its wars abroad. This ideological strategy is made more palatable by the fact that some of the most organized and well-funded forces of anti-imperialist resistance are made up of reactionary authoritarians (led by the Wahhabist movement above all). The brutal actions of groups like the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram are justifiably revolting to the consciences of working-class people – not just in western countries such as Canada, but globally. This righteous opposition to the spread of Wahhabist fascism, is then co-opted by the state and channeled into Islamophobia, and increased support for imperialism.

Liberal Racism at Home

The liberal rhetoric marshaled towards battling external “barbarians” gives rise to an “internal” expression, in the form of Islamophobia (and other racist, xenophobic ideas) disguised as, and fueled by a vigorous defence of secular liberal values. The so-called “reasonable accommodations” and “Charter of Values” political ploys in Québec, along with the federal *Barbaric Cultural Practices Act*, have been portrayed by their supporters as necessary defences of liberal values against religious and cultural minorities – most of all Muslims. Ultimately, these laws are nothing more than cynical manoeuvres by political parties designed to consolidate the more reactionary sections of their electoral bases without losing the larger, more moderate sections who (it is hoped) will support reactionary ideas when presented in liberal form.

In Québec, the Parti Québécois (PQ) tried to use the *Charter of Values* to recoup the white working-class Québécois voters that it had lost to new challengers from its right, such as the Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ) and the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ). The PQ hoped that by positioning itself as the defenders of liberal feminism and the separation of church and state, in a way that clearly identified Muslims, Sikhs and Jews as “the problem,” it could rebuild its traditional coalition of right-wing and liberal/left-wing nationalist voters. While the PQ failed to win the election on this platform and the Charter was never passed, their experiment actually consolidated a consensus among the main parties that a growing unease

with Muslim immigration exists among Québécois voters, and that this sentiment ought to be opportunistically stoked and incorporated into their own respective electoral strategies.

The strategy of Québec's provincial parties has been mirrored by the federal Conservatives. The racist *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act* and a much stricter immigration policy together form the core of this strategy. Under the Harper administration, more immigrants are being accepted into Canada per year than under any previous government – the majority of whom are coming from the Global South. Even refugee numbers have remained steady, at roughly twelve thousand per year. So how do we square an expansive (if more ruthless) immigration policy with reactionary racist legislation?

Harper and his gang are motivated above all by neoliberal ideology, and a desire to undo the perceived damage done to their country by the ruling-class politics they identify most with Pierre Trudeau and his followers – including what they perceive as a culturally-relativist multiculturalism. The Reform/Alliance/Conservative Party gained a significant electoral base for its politics by riding a wave of reactionary resentment, “the white hot anger” with the ruling-class status quo. Then-leader of the Reform Party, Preston Manning, believed that this was a necessary strategy to build the base needed for a new aspiring ruling-class faction. The *Barbaric Cultural Practices Act* is a bone being tossed to this traditional base. It is a good example of the new liberal racism in action, designed to have a certain ring in the ears of the Conservative Party's “white hot angry” working-class base – a stroke that rings out: “we know... and we are keeping those people out, or at least forcing them to change their barbaric ways, and we will not be intimidated by the liberal media, academics, NGOs and activists. We are with you, fellow white Christian Canadians!”

At the same time, federal immigration policy has been revamped and geared towards bringing in, and gaining the support of immigrants who the Harper faction hope to attract to their own brand of social conservative, neoliberal politics. By all accounts, they have had a great deal of success building an electoral base among the over two million new Canadians who have migrated to the country during Harper's time in office so far. The Conservatives have accomplished this by

recruiting upwardly-mobile “economic” (as opposed to family reunification) immigrants from the developing world’s new middle classes, appealing to the social conservative values of some groups, and diversifying their party apparatus.

Upon closer examination, it’s clear that the *Barbaric Cultural Practices Act* has been purposefully designed so as to avoid affecting the Conservative Party’s fragile immigrant base. First of all, it doesn’t add new legal prohibitions that don’t already exist on the books. Second, the number of people materially affected by it will be very small. Third, many immigrants are also quite opposed to the practices that the legislation singles out (such as forced marriage, and honor killings), and view them as unwelcome reactionary vestiges of the places that they have worked so hard to leave behind. Immigrant communities are not internally homogeneous, and many differences and prejudices exist between groups. This legislation plays on existing internal dynamics and cultural divisions in a manner that is unlikely to have much of a negative impact on Conservative efforts to build their suburban immigrant base. After all, given the current state of Canada’s electoral system, they only need around thirty five per cent of the vote in a single riding to win. And as of April 2015, they are polling at around this figure in the Greater Toronto Area, and even a bit higher in ridings in Mississauga and Brampton that are heavily populated by immigrant voters. Their strategy seems to be working.

Within this context, the approximately two per cent of Canadians who identify as Muslims provide a convenient and expendable punching bag. Harper can afford to appear culturally insensitive, or even aggressive towards certain groups at times, so long as the overall message remains: “work hard, accept certain core Canadian values and you will have a job, model minority status, a house in the suburbs, and the freedom to take your kids to hockey, cricket, or soccer, and church, mosque or temple.” Those who have bought into the multicultural, middle-class deal are not going to be too bothered if some among them are given worse treatment (be they Muslims, refugees, undocumented workers, or the larger immigrant working poor). At least this is how things appear at the moment.

This chameleon-like quality of Islamophobia makes it

an appealing ideology for political parties. It allows them to play to different, and often contradictory electoral bases at the same time. It provides an effective basis for national political messaging that conveys different meanings to the various components of a diverse electoral base, while nonetheless providing an overall unifying ideological framework. It is a strategy well-adapted to a terrain shaped deeply by the significant but incomplete advances of past social movements, including global anti-colonial struggles. These days, overt white supremacy and xenophobia will result in the marginalization of political parties in Canada, in large part by costing them the support of key electoral districts among the now vast and still rapidly expanding immigrant working class. But key organized groupings of the ruling class (like the PQ and the federal Conservatives) also have important bases that are increasingly open to a more forceful push of white supremacist ideas. Islamophobia weaves these contradictory conditions into what is, for now, a workable electoral base-building strategy.

What is at Stake?

One potential outcome of this current dynamic could be a homegrown Tea Party phenomenon, replete with its own Canadian characteristics. The combination of officially-sanctioned racism, militarism and Islamophobia, within a context of economic crisis and war, could very well give rise to such a movement. In this hypothetical situation, the reactionary ideas stoked and encouraged by the ruling class could give rise to a forceful reactionary base that is no longer content to simply follow the leadership of Harper and company on questions of immigration and assimilation. In fact, we have already seen this happen in Québec, where a loud, angry, racist and xenophobic base has taken root – one that is not content to remain loyal to any political party, but which instead pushes all of them further to the right.

Left Responses: The Dead Ends of Cultural Relativism and Racist Secularism/Feminism

How should the Left react in this situation? Here the fight

around the *Québec Charter of Values* is informative. In that particular episode we saw the Left act in two ways, both of which amount to political dead ends. A large part of the Québec Left supported the Charter in the name of defending liberal values, such as the separation of church and state, and equality between men and women. This part of the Left, including leading Québec feminist activists and organizations, saw itself as refusing to accept cultural relativism and taking a principled stand in support of liberal values that it believed ought to be universal – or at least, ought to be the norm in Québec, regardless of one’s cultural or religious background.

Another leftist response to the Charter, especially evident in discussions outside of Québec, tended to take a postmodernist, culturally relativist approach. According to this line of thinking, any questioning of cultural and religious practices of oppressed minorities is unacceptable, as it only serves to promote xenophobia, Islamophobia and imperialism. The principled response to the Charter, then, is to defend the rights of minorities to practice their cultures and religions, not only free from state intervention, but also free from any intervention whatsoever, from any part of society – including those leftists asserting the supremacy of liberal secular values. Often this was an argument that could be heard in the silence of its proponents when confronted by the question of what to do about patriarchal violence within targeted minority communities.

In our opinion, both of these approaches are politically bankrupt. The culturally relativist approach sheepishly abandons core leftist principles, such as feminism, for fear of provoking accusations of racism. In a confused manner, some principles are elevated above others, depending on the context. But a principled approach demands that core values be held equally, always. It means not making ethical trade-offs between our core principles out of fear of being personally attacked by other leftists, and charged with holding “privileged” views. Those who cower to this form of reductive politics leave feminists from communities targeted by Islamophobia and liberal racism out in the lurch. They give the Right the opportunity to paint the Left as spineless, elitist apologists for an “anything goes” anti-racism or pro-immigration politics – an orientation that appears to give exactly two shits about

liberal democratic values, and by extension, the majority of Canadians who hold them. This pushes large segments of the population to look to the Right as the defenders of working-class values and interests, including, for example, working-class LGBTQ members, who have their own reasons to fear the homophobia of certain conservative religious and cultural groups.

But the “more principled” leftist response also has a fatal weakness. The problem is not in asserting the defence of certain core principles, such as gender equality, against an unprincipled dead-end cultural relativism; the Left ought to be unapologetic in its espousal of certain core principles as universal – in the sense that we consider principles such as gender equality to be non-negotiable, and that we desire to see them spread and take hold across the global working class. We should call bullshit on shouts of racism that stem from criticizing objectively oppressive practices. We should have no tolerance for hierarchy and oppression in any and all communities, no matter what cultural or religious justifications are used to prop them up.

The problem is that this part of the Left reproduced broader social dynamics of white supremacy and national oppression by failing to take the lead from feminists and leftists from the actual communities targeted by the Charter. While the cultural relativists silenced these same voices out of fear that any critique of subjugated cultural/religious groups would send cries of racism their way, the pro-Charter Left silenced these voices by, at best, seeing those facing oppression inside their communities as helpless victims in need of rescue by white feminists and liberals (using intrusive state legislation, no less). At worst, these groups were presented as complicit in their own oppression, and therefore a threat to liberal values and the freedoms of others. You can be a principled leftist at the level of theory and still engage in racism at the level of practice – and this is exactly what the pro-Charter Left did. In doing so, they entered into a coalition with right-wing reactionaries, a move that will not end well for them, or us.

A Principled Left Response

An alternative to these two flawed approaches was led by

leftists and liberals from within the communities targeted by the Charter, with the support of the better part of the ally-left (which included much of the anarchist movement in Québec). Their opposition to the Charter looked a lot different than that of the cultural relativists; it asserted that patriarchal oppression within subjugated cultural communities is, for one, real, and two, is best fought (and being fought already) by members of those communities themselves. State intervention fueled by widespread Islamophobia actually hurts those fighting patriarchal oppression within these communities, by increasing Muslim women's dependence on male partners and family members. For example, the Charter would have made it harder for Muslim women who wear the hijab to find paid work, and thereby establish social networks outside the family. In short, you don't fight one form of oppression by increasing another. What is needed is a principled, anti-racist, feminist Left whose practice is based around the concepts of solidarity, mutual support, autonomy, and the self-organization of the oppressed. There should be no room on the Left for either a cultural relativism that wants to "protect" oppressed groups by shielding them from valid criticism and internal resistance, nor for a racist secular feminism that sees a need to "defend" liberal or left principles in order to "protect" members of an oppressed group "for their own good."

III. Men's Rights Activism

The examination of MRAs as a tendency which is actively organizing to perpetuate patriarchal social relations began in *Mortar Volume Two (Taking Account of our Politics: An Anarchist Perspective on Contending with Sexual Violence)*. Here we take it up again, with an eye to the role that this tendency might play in the development of a mass reactionary movement.

What is it?

In the late 1960s, social and political advances attributed to the struggles of the Women's Liberation Movement led to the creation of a parallel Men's Movement. This vaguely progressive, yet inadequate movement saw men attempt to

analyze their experiences with patriarchy using a feminist lens. Unfortunately, the effort yielded paltry results, as both progressive and revolutionary men found little incentive to participate in long-term anti-patriarchy organizing with feminists. This failure produced a void that was filled by the initial manifestation of a reactionary movement against feminism. Men whose personal comfort and success often rested on the unpaid domestic work of women began to characterize feminists as threatening and selfish, because they felt their own problems, real or imaged, had gone unaddressed. The reaction to this perceived affront was the creation of a Men's Rights Movement.

The current manifestation of MRAs, and their much larger base of allies and sympathizers, take positions on a panoramic range of issues including health care, family law, fathers' rights, war, education, gender roles, gender identity, sexual orientation, the workplace, domestic violence, criminal law, prisons, abortion, rape, dating, and sex.

Gender Peace and the Disposable Male

Warren Farrell's 1993 best-selling book, *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex* was seminal to the development of MRAs into their contemporary tendency, as it popularized the idea that it is men, not women, who are disadvantaged, oppressed and "disposable." Farrell, a former board member for the National Organization of Women, took a sharp turn to the right in the late 1970s over the issue of child custody, where reforms had been made which sought to equalize the legal framework of divorce.

In *The Myth of Male Power*, Farrell makes the argument that as individuals, men are seen as less socially valuable than women. Relying heavily on cherry-picked statistics to highlight many areas of life in which men objectively experience more risk to their personal safety and restrictions to their freedoms, Farrell's reasoning is appealing to some; it is undeniable, for instance, that men compose the majority of prisoners, soldiers, and victims of workplace injuries. Foreshadowing the popularization of the then-nascent (and still scientifically-controversial) field of evolutionary psychology, Farrell conjectured that this fact was an evolutionary imperative that

had derived from women's role as child-bearers, which made them more valuable, in an evolutionary sense. Because a man can inseminate multiple women in a short timespan, whereas women must complete a nine month long pregnancy and all the risks of childbirth before they can conceive another child, the evolutionary argument follows that an individual man's body is a more rational sacrifice when faced with the prospect outside danger.

Karen Straughan, Contributing Editor at *A Voice for Men*, advances this theory in a video blog entitled *Feminism and the Disposable Male*. Straughan posits that a sort of informal social contract was formerly in place, whereby men would accept these necessary conditions in exchange for more social power. However, she claims that feminism has disrupted this purported gender peace by allowing women access to social power (in the form of jobs, money, celebrity, etc.), while doing nothing to ameliorate the enhanced exposure to danger faced by men. "[M]en don't even get our admiration anymore," she concludes. "All they get in return is to hear about what assholes they are. Is there any wonder why they're starting to get pissed off?"

Straughan elaborates on this broken arrangement in order to mourn the death of what she sees as an imagined "golden age" of gender peace, and to call on MRAs to reverse this process of male emasculation and victimization. Yet there is little MRAs can do to stop this trend – particularly if they continue to misidentify the source of their own declining living standards and social standing. The "grand bargain" between capitalism and sexism, whereby working-class men, by virtue of their sacrifices as the family provider, received, along with domination over women, higher wages than women, is being eroded by more profitable economic arrangements. Capitalism commodifies all people, and under this economic order anyone can be made disposable.

Six of One

It is well documented that the Fascist regimes of twentieth century Europe gained their initial base by exploiting mass anxieties of economic and social decline, and redirecting socialist and syndicalist programs towards right-wing

nationalist ends. Since WWII, the Left has been on a perpetual look-out for any reconstitution of neo-fascist movements. In a number of countries situated within the economic peripheries of the European Union, this has indeed come to pass. However we must contend that in English-speaking North America, the issues that might otherwise have led to working-class support of neo-fascism have instead been taken up by a variety of reactionary tendencies that are liberal at their heart.

Contributing editor for *Harper's* and *Rolling Stone*, and observer of right-wing movements Jeff Sharlet notes that many of the grievances that MRAs complain about are consistent with those of "late stage American capitalism" but, because liberal rhetoric is so easily and readily available to them, there is no reason to reach this far in their analysis.

Irreproachable concepts like equality, human rights, tolerance, and nonviolence are mobilized as patronizing, easily-digested substitutes for liberation. MRAs express considerable concern for issues that are also of central importance to revolutionary leftists. Prisons, war and workplace conditions are common topics of conversation. But instead of questioning the social utility of prisons, MRAs demand to know why incarceration isn't more equitable; likewise, little reflection is given to why the state requires such a steady stream of dead men's bodies, both civilian and in uniform. MRAs must be facing an epidemic of repetitive strain injuries from all the blogs that they've written on the economic troubles facing men today. And these problems are certainly real, given the rampant and ongoing capitalist restructuring, which continues to leave fewer and fewer working-class men able to support themselves and their families. Growing levels of unemployment, as MRAs rightly point out, cast a massive blow to the feelings of self-worth of men conditioned under patriarchy to feel that earning a wage is their primary responsibility. Yet instead of questioning the actual source of their economic trouble, capitalism, or the idea that each family unit is responsible for themselves, these people, in a stunning "correlation indicates causation" error (which the many "skeptics" who are sympathetic towards this movement should be ashamed of) blame a social movement whose militant and revolutionary tendencies actually seek to address these problems.

Do not mistake this for us saying that MRAs are actually

misguided, would-be revolutionaries. They are, for the most part, unrepentant misogynists and class traitors who deserve to be treated as such. However, their striking use of liberal vocabulary is appealing to individual men (and women) who observe problems in their lives, and are in search of answers in the form of analysis and solutions. And once drawn in, their patriarchal impulses are strengthened and honed. MRAs are significant, not so much for their ideas in and of themselves, but for the seamless way in which they adapt their rhetoric to liberal ideology.

Power is still conceived in terms of domination over others, rather than as the capacity to make changes that benefit everyone. Women are disproportionately employed in precarious jobs, and presently take home only sixty-nine cents for every dollar a man makes in Ontario. Sexism fuels consumerist exploitation, and vice versa. MRAs will never offer an honest answer for young working-class men worrying about how they are going to make it – just as liberal mainstream feminism will never offer a viable means for liberation to working-class women.

Half a Dozen of the Other

The MRA movement is, at its heart, a liberal tendency that willfully misunderstands collective aspects of feminism and the quest for liberation. “Women make less money than men,” says feminism, but “I am unemployed, and make no money” says the MRA—who probably wouldn’t take a minimum wage casual position as grocery store cashier or after-hours office cleaner if it were offered to him, preferring instead to wait for the cushy IT job he was trained for. The movement also assumes that there is not enough to go around: not enough economic resources, not enough children, not enough emotional well-being, and that advances made by women as a whole must somehow detract from men.

Men’s rights activism is reactionary to the core. It offers its followers simplistic answers and a clear target for all that ails them. Its goal is to undermine progress and recoup the dismantling of patriarchal structures. Its praxis, while dishonest and misogynist, is attractive to men unsure of themselves and their future in these precarious times. Deliberate or not,

MRAs have a developing relationship of mutuality with the political and religious right, despite the liberal nature of their vocabulary and strategy.

What is at Stake?

So far in North America, the mainstream political involvement of MRAs has been just about non-existent. Some of the MRAs' loudest voices, like *A Voice for Men* founder Paul Elam, insist that politicians will never have a voice in their movement. There are hints of a change, however. For example the Canadian Centre for Men and Families, which is located in Toronto and opened its doors in 2014, has moved men's rights activism away from the university and the electronic sphere, and onto "Main Street," so to speak.

In the US, MRAs know that they can count on traditional conservative political actors to keep a slightly more publicly presentable anti-feminist agenda moving. For example, the Utah state legislature is presently debating definitions of rape, and considering for the record if engaging in sex with an unconscious individual constitutes rape. Definitions of rape and debates over what constitutes consent are a central issue for MRAs. Many MRAs want marital rape laws overturned, as they claim these laws violate the marriage contract that gives men the right to sex on demand from their spouse. They have support in Virginia, where a legislator claims that spousal rape is impossible, and that laws criminalizing it would unfairly damage men's reputations if their accusations made it to court. Regarding men's rights to abortions, a few US states already have pending legislation that would require written, notarized consent from the "father of the unborn child" before an abortion could be performed or induced.

Related to the issue of fatherhood and masculinity, the recent attention raised by the Black Lives Matter movement to the racist praxis of the North American law enforcement and criminal justice systems has racism apologists on the defensive. MRAs have chimed in by claiming that racism is not the issue. Some point to feminized school environments and the lack of "father figures" in Black households as the issue. World renowned neurosurgeon and conservative US presidential hopeful Dr. Ben Carson specifically charges feminists with

removing male mentors from the formation process of boys at home and at schools. He maintains that young Black men are not learning to be subservient to authority, and thus neither are they able to exercise proper male authority. This, says the doctor, leads to criminal behaviour and to trouble with the police and this has nothing to do with racism. It “has to do with the women’s lib movement.” So the doctor’s diagnosis promotes an agenda that the MRAs strongly support, but won’t ever advance themselves via their misogynist tirades.

While Canada lacks a mass movement similar in nature and scope to the US Christian Right, the arguments put forward by MRAs have found a strong echo-chamber on the Internet, and often overlap with those of other reactionary tendencies, such as “New Atheists” and other secular Islamophobes. Their effective and innovative use of widely-held liberal values to manipulate feelings of male victimization pose a significant threat. This threat, while already acute, would be particularly dire should MRAs ever merge with other reactionary tendencies, thereby helping to instill a mass reactionary movement with a vitriolic and dehumanizing hatred of women.

Towards a Response

For anarchists, MRAs certainly present a point of contention – whether this comes in the form of individual misogynist attitudes sabotaging a group’s mass organizing efforts, or, when the need arises for anarchists to help defend against orchestrated hate campaigns. There might indeed be times when direct, physical confrontations with MRAs are in order. Of course those organizing more confrontational actions should do so with an understanding that MRAs make political hay by playing the, “see how these feminists oppress us” card. Shutting down or interfering with an MRA event can be an occasion for them to build support on a university campus – but then, so can a forum held without opposition. The important thing is that direct confrontational tactics should encourage others opposed to MRAs to confront them as well.

In organizing alongside neighbours on issues such as tenancy, worker justice, and police violence, one can see signs of a feminism that is rooted in the best of what feminism means. When a woman leads her fellow tenants in organizing

against a slumlord, and they mount a successful rent strike, one sees people equipped to take on other oppressive men and patriarchal institutions as well. These actions, and others like them build confidence and a sense of power for those who participate. They point towards a rejuvenated militant feminism that can stand up to capitalist and patriarchal exploitative practices. As we've shown, MRAs will never offer an honest answer for the anxieties of young working-class men. This leaves us with organizers, activists and scholars like bell hooks, who to paraphrase, suggests that the struggle to end sexist oppression will succeed only by organizing with a commitment to bringing about a new social order by means of a social revolution. All that gets in the way of this must be contended with.

IV. Conclusion

And there you have it: what we hope will be taken as our contribution to better understanding what it is that we have standing in front of us. We hope it will be taken well, because it isn't just an era of austerity, environmental decline, and a capitalist regime that intensifies its domestic and international military offensives on the working class that we struggle against. The forces of reaction and division have bled from within liberal concepts and "discourse" and have prepared the ground for dynamic movements to emerge from sectors of the working class, to the detriment of the class as a whole. Revolutionary class struggle is both an inter- and intra-class struggle. For our class to struggle *for* itself it must also simultaneously struggle *with* itself.

Antonio Gramsci is a dead Italian communist. Among his more "utilized" (read: referenced) concepts is that of the "war of position" and the "war of maneuver". Essentially, the war of position is that in which revolutionaries pursue greater influence within the class in a slow and deliberate way, whereas the war of maneuver is that in which outright conflict takes place, usually in the form of clashing with the state for power. These are understood to be sequential affairs: first (position) and only after - the second (maneuver). When it comes to reactionary movements, our "war of position" doesn't

precede our “war of maneuver”. In fact, there is no distinction between the two when confronting the long germinating reactionary tendencies within the working class as they give rise to movements of class treason.

Despite the fact that it shouldn’t — it still surprised us to admit that those best “positioned” to out “maneuver” the Left are not updating their “commies to kill list” between shaving their heads and polishing their jackboots. They’re lecturing people on tolerance, free speech, and equality under the law between claims of oppression and tirades of hatred for all things Left. This is neither a laughing matter, nor an underwhelming adversary. The stakes are high and the already stacked odds will only compound against us as long as we refuse to take stock of the facts before us.

These are not discreet tendencies. Islamophobes, MRAs, and anti-Native reactionaries attack the class as a whole. With their movements’ growth, working-class solidarity erodes as working-class people are attacked by others within the class on liberal principle. No working-class organizing can hope for success under conditions wherein these tendencies aren’t countered with simultaneous maneuver and position by revolutionaries. No counter-offensive can hope for success when it holds to conceptions of its adversary that are more morally convenient than politically accurate.

Our class enemies can’t be defeated by a fist fight any more than they can by an introspective privilege check. They can, however, be defeated by the informed and deliberate organizing by the working class towards its own emancipation. This is what class war means. It has many fronts that require equal attention. To not meet the enemy today in the interest of “positioning” will only mean we will be outflanked by reactionary tendencies tomorrow. What successful struggle against class treason should look like and how the working class can organize itself to carry it out is not for any one article to answer. Here we have only briefly offered a few points of strategy upon which to develop more fully a dynamic, multi-pronged approach. But make no mistake — this organizing needs to happen, we intend to be there, it needs to be as honest, principled and merciless as possible, and it needs to win.



Canadian Bacon: Opposing Policing and State Power

One Toronto Member, One Hamilton Member, One Former Member

The past year has witnessed the emergence of a popular movement whose scale and intensity has surprised radicals and social conservatives alike, and which has provoked shock waves of reaction in the ranks of police agencies across North America. In the wake of the protests that erupted in Ferguson, Missouri, and subsequently spread to dozens of major American cities, there has been a corresponding increase in public awareness of police violence and its relationship to racial dynamics in Canada. Anti-police sentiment is on the rise.

When flagship liberal publications like *Rolling Stone* are publishing articles envisioning a world without cops, and tens of thousands of first-time demonstrators are taking to the streets across the continent to protest police violence and demand racial equality, something is definitely in the air. These are exciting times for anarchists, and all those who have long viewed

the police as the violent goon squad of a white supremacist, capitalist state. But public perceptions are a fickle thing, and mobilizations themselves will not address systemic racism or police violence any more than much larger demonstrations were able to stop the Iraq War. While it is important for anarchists and other anti-authoritarian revolutionaries to actively participate in this developing movement for police accountability, we also need to consistently and emphatically push for a long-term organizing strategy with abolition as its goal.

Significant numbers of anarchists in Canada tend to either pay lip service to community organizing, or else dismiss it as an inherently liberal, reformist, or even authoritarian affair. This latter sentiment often dovetails with a counterposing tendency towards building an insular “anarchist community,” often conceived of as an island of radical politics separate from the rest of the working class. Anarchists such as Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin and Joel Olson have cited similar dynamics in the United States, and have noted that despite anarchists’ ostensible, yet often rhetorical solidarity with racialized victims of police terror, this is a big reason why our ranks tend to be filled with white, middle-class twenty-somethings. This inward focus also reinforces a delusional understanding of our relative significance, both as agents of social ruptures and as primary targets of state repression.

The 2008 Canadian Forces field manual on *Counterinsurgency Operations* lists five possible forms that an insurgency can take, noting that “[t]he most potentially dangerous... is that of an anarchist group which sets out to eliminate all political structures and the social fabric associated with them.” Yet while it is oddly validating to be appraised in such terms by the military tacticians of the Canadian state, a subsequent comment pointing to anarchism’s current lack of public support should clarify that it is the *potential* of anarchist ideas, strategies, and tactics becoming the leading force behind a popular uprising that they find threatening. The truth is that despite significant advances made over the past decade, materially and organizationally, anarchists remain a marginal political force in North America, outside of pockets of Québec and Mexico. If we are serious about taking on capitalism and the state, more anarchists need to start seeking out and

making strategic alliances with groups and individuals already organizing against their most visible excesses, in order to help push these struggles to their logical conclusions.

Any effective organizing strategy depends on a sober assessment of local material conditions. In Canada, public perceptions about police are heavily influenced by their institutional equivalents in the United States. While there exist numerous social, cultural, economic, and geopolitical similarities between the two countries, and while it could be argued that police forces ultimately fulfill the same role everywhere, understanding national distinctions is nonetheless an important task for revolutionaries here in Canada. Even within the United States itself, militants in Ferguson reacting to the murder of Michael Brown operated within a radically different context than those who took to the streets in New York to protest the murder of Eric Garner; the same could be said, to a lesser extent, about the protesters in Oakland and Los Angeles. These distinctions are based on a host of local factors, such as a specific region's history, culture, class composition, urban geography, political terrain, and of course, the brutality and tactical competence of its local police force. With this in mind, this article seeks to make a modest contribution to understanding our context here in Canada, particularly in the areas of southern Ontario in which our members live and organize.

I. Understanding the Canadian Context

On November 24, 2014, a grand jury in Ferguson ruled against indicting Darren Wilson, a white police officer, for the murder of Michael Brown, an eighteen year old Black youth. In the weeks and months that followed, a flood of articles were published comparing racial dynamics in the United States and Canada. While many were sanctimonious fluff pieces, mindlessly praising Canada as a bastion of cultural diversity and racial tolerance, a number of more progressive commentators used the opportunity to point to systemic anti-Indigenous racism as a national corollary to anti-Black racism in the United States. Others used the spotlight cast on racial divisions in Missouri to note that Black people are harassed

and killed by police at disproportionate rates in Toronto, as well. While these efforts to shed light on the existence of structural inequality and deep-seated racism in Canada were often well-intentioned and factual, they also tended to reinforce the myth of multiculturalism that lies at the heart of the modern Canadian national identity, while obscuring the specific manner in which the Canadian state has been shaped by white supremacy in the interests of its ruling class.

If we conceive of the state, using Max Weber's popular definition, as a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force, then deepening our understanding of the Canadian state means looking at the historical process by which this monopoly was established. Central to this history is, of course, the development of the police as a primary institution endowed with the responsibility for effecting state-consolidating violence. But also of crucial importance is the manner in which this legitimacy was established, and how it's maintained. With this in mind, we will begin by examining the historical development of the Canadian state, before moving onto a more detailed examination of its police.

Building on Different Foundations: Primitive Accumulation¹ in the US and Canada

Everywhere that capitalism has developed, it has done so by violently imposing a national system of gendered, class, and race-based social relations, sanctified by a legal regime of private land ownership and property rights. The specific character of these social relationships is dynamic, and shaped by a history of struggle. In the United States, capitalism was built on the stolen labour of millions of enslaved Africans, violently subjugated into the nation's vast southern plantation system of forced agricultural production. The roots of Canada's particular

1. Primitive accumulation is a Marxist term that refers to an initial phase of capital accumulation, whereby the conditions are created for the further spread of capitalist social relations. Contemporary Marxist theorist David Harvey (citing Rosa Luxemburg) has argued that this process is not simply a historical transitional stage to capitalism, but remains a vital component of capital accumulation today (notable examples being the privatization of public services and infrastructure, the commodification of natural resources, and the patenting of genes), and that a more descriptive term for the phenomenon is "accumulation by dispossession".

brand of resource extraction-based capitalism, on the other hand, are to be found in the transatlantic fur trade, which was based on the mass exploitation of Indigenous knowledge and labour. This Canadian system of primitive accumulation was first instituted in the early seventeenth century by French merchant-traders operating out of early settlements along the St. Lawrence river, in modern-day Québec and New Brunswick. Following the arrival of the British, this trade gradually came to be dominated by the monolithic Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).

Both groups of European settlers were largely dependent on Indigenous trappers and hunters for animal pelts, and so they formed relationships and alliances with various opposing tribes in order to maintain their share of this lucrative market. Each had an interest in limiting the size of their respective settlements, in order to maintain the surrounding territories as a sort of expansive hunting/trapping grounds. This policy caused significant tensions between the European colonial powers and their respective settler populations, particularly the British colonists, who were constantly seeking to expand their settlements, often sparking conflict with surrounding Indigenous nations. In 1676, this tension was a leading cause of Bacon's Rebellion, an uprising in the Virginia colonies carried out by a combined force of European settlers, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans. In the aftermath of this failed rebellion, slavery was officially codified into a racially-based caste system; from then on, even the poorest European descendents were granted a privileged legal and social status over their African counterparts, in order to help ensure that the two races would never join forces again.

In 1763, following its victory in the globe-spanning Seven Years War, Britain acquired the colonies of New France, in exchange for agreeing to return France's more lucrative Caribbean colonies, Martinique and Guadeloupe. After this treatise was concluded, England's King George III issued a Royal Proclamation aimed at consolidating Britain's North American colonies, and putting a halt on their rapid westward expansion. This proclamation, which recognized Indigenous title over all lands not yet ceded via a formal treaty process, laid the legal basis for future Indigenous land claims in Canada, and set the clock ticking on the American Revolution.

Confederation and its Discontents

The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.

John A. MacDonald (1887)

A century later, alarmed by developments in the American Civil War and repeated incursions into its remaining North American colonies by Irish Republicans, Britain hastily granted Canada its independence through the *British North American Act* of 1867. The new Canadian state was structured as a federated parliamentary democracy, initially composed of four provinces: Ontario, Québec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. In order to stave off the prospects of annexation by the United States, Canada's political elite turned their immediate attention to consolidating those North American territories still under the nominal jurisdiction of the British Crown and its commercial agent, the HBC.

However, legal issues soon arose following the establishment of the province of Manitoba in 1870, as it was determined that there was no legal basis for land ownership under existing British common law; in fact, the individual practice of buying or selling land outside of the previously-established colonial borders had been explicitly outlawed by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. In an attempt to close this legal loophole, and to facilitate increased European settlement of what is now central and western Canada, the federal government began renewed treaty negotiations with local Indigenous nations, even as it continued to incorporate new provinces, such as British Columbia, into its nationalist project.

The result was eleven numbered treaties, outlining the legal rationale for the territorial integration of the modern Canadian state. Signed over a period of six years, the first seven of these treaties revoked Indigenous title over massive swathes of land in modern-day Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The remaining four treaties, signed over the years 1899-1921, covered pockets of British Columbia, northern

Ontario and Alberta, and the majority of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. These treaties also identify, through their absence, large tracts of land that were never legally ceded by their original inhabitants — including much of modern-day British Columbia.

These numbered treaties, beyond being simple land-grabs, were part of a broader genocidal campaign of assimilation that sought to “civilize” Indigenous populations and transform them into proper British subjects. This practice of forced civilization, officially in place since 1830, was inherited by the federal government at confederation. The 1857 *Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Province* had been an earlier attempt by the colonial government of Upper and Lower Canada to enfranchise Indigenous adults by offering them a Christian, or European name and their own plot of land. To the frustration of colonial administrators and Christian missionaries alike, by 1863 not a single individual had been voluntarily enfranchised under this legislation.

The new Canadian government’s solution to the failed policy of voluntary assimilation was swift and brutal. First came the *Indian Act* of 1869, which established a national system of Indian Reserves and replaced traditional systems of Indigenous self-governance with an elected Band Council system; second came a campaign of mass starvation, aimed at weakening the wills of those tribes who refused to cede title over their lands and move onto a system of reserves; third came the national Residential Schools system, a horrific institution of mass religious and cultural indoctrination that set out to “kill the Indian in the child.”

The Canadian Residential Schools system operated for over a century, from 1884 until the last school was closed, in 1996. During this period, generations of Indigenous children faced rampant and severe physical, psychological, and sexual abuse at the hands of Catholic and Anglican priests. Thousands of others died, as a result of poor conditions and lack of proper medical attention. The resulting intergenerational trauma has contributed to disproportionate levels of horizontal and domestic violence, increased economic and social marginalization, and significantly higher rates of substance abuse and suicide among Indigenous communities. These

factors, in turn, reinforce a racist narrative that places Indigenous lives at increased risk of dehumanizing violence from police, and contributes to a climate of official indifference towards the unresolved murders of Indigenous women.

Racialization of Immigration: Business as Usual

There are continual attempts by undesirables of alien and impoverished nationalities to enter Canada, but these attempts will be checked as much as possible at their source.

Canadian Immigration Official (1923)

In 1971, Pierre Elliot Trudeau announced multiculturalism as an official policy of the Canadian federal government. This decision emerged out of recommendations made by the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, a commission tasked with helping to ease tensions between Canada's "two founding races" (French and British) in the wake of Québec's Silent Revolution. Trudeau's decisions to move beyond biculturalism towards an embrace of multiculturalism effectively placed the rights of all Canadians to speak their own language, and to practice religious and cultural customs of their choosing under the paternalistic protection of an officially bilingual, English/French state. This principle was enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* ten years later, and further cemented into law by the *Multiculturalism Act* of 1988.

For decades now, multiculturalism has been both a steadily-increasing demographic reality, and a defining political characteristic of Canada's national identity. Toronto, Canada's most populous metropolis, is regularly cited as one of the most multicultural cities in the world. According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, 48.6 per cent of the city's 2.6 million residents are immigrants (71.7 per cent of whom immigrated from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean²), while Canada's national figure sits at 22 per

2. Despite the fact that in Canada, the two concepts often overlap, it is nonetheless important to distinguish between immigration and racialization. In 2011, Toronto

cent – the highest among G8 countries. The widely-accepted perception of Canada as a welcoming home for immigrants and refugees is a contributing factor in its own particular brand of nationalism, and a smug, largely unfounded point of distinction from the United States. So-called “Canadian values” rest on a bedrock of progressive secularism, universal health care, and a grossly inflated sense of moral superiority on the world stage. This latter sentiment persists, despite the destructive role that Canadian corporations play in the Global South, the government’s persistent efforts to sabotage international conventions aimed at reducing global carbon emissions, and its traditional position as a junior partner of Anglo-American imperialism – all of which are major factors fueling global patterns of displacement and migration.

Canada’s ostensible celebration of ethnic and cultural diversity also functions as an ideological cover for its long history of exclusionary immigration policies. Understanding the implications of this racist legacy is crucial for understanding the structural operation of white supremacy in contemporary Canadian society, which is intimately linked to notions of citizenship and the more precarious, racialized “Other.”

In the United States, slavery provided the grotesque scaffolding upon which an entire system of racialized class relations was built. The lack of a Canadian equivalent to the southern plantation system doesn’t reflect a more enlightened attitude towards the inherent equality of Europeans and Africans on the part of Canada’s colonial forebearers, so much as it points to different histories of economic and political development. While state-funded television spots proudly play up Canada’s role as the final destination of slaves escaping the United States via the Underground Railroad, there are no similar television spots celebrating the collusion between Canada’s colonial masters and Confederate forces during the American Civil War, the sordid history of racial segregation and neglect

had 1,264,395 racialized residents (or “visible minorities”), which works out to approximately 49% of the population. 1,252,210 of its residents were immigrants (or 48.6% of the total population); 897,920 of these immigrants came from Asia, Africa, or the Americas (minus the United States). Using these less-than-ideal categories (given that nationality does not always correspond with race), it could be projected that racialized immigrants comprised approximately 71.1% of total immigrants and 34.8% of the total population. (*2011 National Household Survey*, Statistics Canada)

experienced by residents of Africville, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, or the disproportionate levels of police violence that continue to afflict Black residents of suburban Toronto neighbourhoods such as Jane and Finch, Malvern, and Jamestown.

The absence of a large population of enslaved Africans meant that the early development of race in Canada, as a social construction based on material power relations, was rooted in other social divisions, such as those found between the country's Indigenous population and European settlers, French and English colonists, Catholics and Protestants, and "Aryans" and "Asiatics." As the most heavily racialized ethnic group to settle in Canada in significant numbers prior to the twentieth century, Chinese immigrants were viewed with hostility and suspicion, refused the right to vote, and systematically denied the opportunity for cultural assimilation. Chinese Canadians were forced to live in segregated neighbourhoods and encampments, and ruthlessly exploited by mining and railroad companies, who forced them to do the most dangerous and physically demanding jobs, for the least pay. They also faced racist violence from their white working-class counterparts, who accused them of stealing white jobs and undercutting wages. Following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, in 1885, federal politicians began to curb Chinese immigration through an escalating series of head taxes, before all but banning it through the *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923.

It wasn't until 1967, one hundred years after Confederation, and less than five years before adopting an official policy of multiculturalism, that Canada finally opened its borders to large-scale immigration from the Global South. The so-called "Points System" was motivated by the need to expand Canada's domestic workforce in the face of a precipitous decline in European immigration. Amidst the changing geopolitical landscape of the 1960s, Canada's immigration policy had also begun to come under fire from increasing numbers of newly-independent states, many of whose governments had taken power following the success of formal decolonization struggles. Since the establishment of the Points System, immigration from countries in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean has been a leading factor in Canada's overall population growth. Accordingly, most racialized Canadians

are first or second generation immigrants, the vast majority of whom live in the suburbs of Greater Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Racialized, working-class youth from these neighbourhoods are much more likely to live in substandard housing, attend underfunded schools, be discriminated against by prospective landlords and employers, and face the highest rates of horizontal violence—all while being harassed, beaten, murdered, and imprisoned by police at grossly disproportionate rates.

As Canada's national security interests have become further integrated with those of the United States, both through the increased globalization of capitalism and the broader security framework of the War on Terror, this has led to increased scrutiny and harassment of immigrant communities from regions of the world targeted by western imperialism. Under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, recent years have seen a tightening of Canadian immigration guidelines, a sharp rise in immigrant detention, a militarization of immigration enforcement agents, and sweeping increases to the federal government's ability to deport permanent residents, and even immigrants with Canadian citizenship. This restructuring of Canada's immigration regime has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in Temporary Foreign Workers programs, which provide corporations, agribusinesses and individual wealthy households with a seemingly endless pool of hyper-precarious workers, who are required to pay taxes that fund public services that they are not permitted to use.

II. To Serve and Protect Whom?: The Development of the Police

The history of policing, as it exists in its modern institutional form, is intrinsically linked to the development of industrial capitalism and the consolidation of state power that began to occur in the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth century. The spread of capitalist social relations, and the rapid growth of urbanization required that one segment of the working class be tasked with maintaining the compliance of the whole. Just as the development of capitalism faced unique obstacles and

local conditions in different parts of the world, so too was the development of police shaped by local conditions.

The job of the police has always been to maintain the “rule of law” through the targeted application of violence. The laws that they are tasked with enforcing are drafted by politicians to secure the political interests of the ruling class, who are able to influence the structural operation of power in society through their financial control over, and direct representation within the political class, and through the skillful manipulation of social divisions to manage public opinion. For years, successive waves of class struggle have dramatically altered the political framework tied to the maintenance of social control. From the city watch and mounted riflemen of yesteryear, to today’s community liaison officers and militarized tactical squads, the police have adapted accordingly.

Slavery and the Genesis of American Policing

If we insist on viewing the police as crime-fighters, profiling can only be seen as a mistake, a persistent disaster. But if we suspend or surrender this noble view of police work, and look instead at the actual consequences of what the cops do, profiling makes a certain kind of sense; it follows a sinister logic. Racial profiling is not about crime at all; it’s about controlling people of colour.

Kristian Williams - *Our Enemies in Blue*

The history of policing in the United States is one of the assertion and maintenance of a regime of social control anchored in the cross-class alliance of white supremacy. During its early colonial period, the United States inherited an informal system of sheriffs and town watches from England, and within the colonies, this system developed in a manner that was adaptively contextual. In his excellent account of the history of American policing, *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America*, author Kristian Williams argues that the earliest iteration of the police, as an institution characterized by internal cohesion and popular legitimacy, developed in southern states in order to defend slavery. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth

century, slave patrols represented the security arm of property owners and eventually the state, by capturing runaways and preventing gatherings, and revolts by both free and enslaved Blacks.

Increased urbanization in the late eighteenth century presented new challenges for the local political elite, which led to the creation of a more cohesive system of city guards. Unlike individualized watchmen, city guards patrolled as a unit, and were granted increased authority. These measures were aimed both at imposing Protestant moral values on newly proletarianized whites, as well as maintaining control over higher concentrations of slaves and freed Black labourers. In 1785, in Charleston, South Carolina, the longstanding town watch, which had “defended” the town against fires, Indians, Black gatherings, and vagrants, amalgamated with a volunteer slave patrol organized by the local militia, thereby creating the Charleston Guard and Watch. Williams argues that this point represents the first example of a modern police force, which he characterizes as an institution that is publicly controlled, authorized to use force, possesses an internal chain of command, and whose members wear identifiable uniforms.

The suppression and control of Black populations has remained a lodestar of the policing project in the United States ever since. Following the American Civil War, the economic necessity of such a strategy developed more of a political character, as the state sought to control Black communities that, despite being granted formal emancipation, were nonetheless denied equal social and legal standing with their white counterparts. From the post-Civil War Reconstruction period until the political reforms of the Civil Rights era, southern white supremacist militias such as the Ku Klux Klan operated with the passive support, and often active participation, of local and state police. This tidy arrangement represented a continuation of the slave patrol function of policing, and ensured police forces could perform “racially neutral” law enforcement duties, while leaving the more overtly violent terrorism of white supremacy to the Klan.

Police partnerships with extremist white supremacist organizations such as the Klan persevere, but have become intentionally obscured over the years, as overt racism has become less publicly acceptable. The largely cosmetic nature

of this shift is most starkly evidenced by the shocking number of Black citizens who continue to be murdered at the hands of white police officers, who then seek to justify their use of lethal force as a necessary and defensive measure, despite its often clearly aggressive and racist character.

Engines of Oppression: The Toronto Police Services

The authority legally invested in these men, their habitual intercourse with the lower classes, the impression that they possess the ear of their employers, the favouritism they may be enabled to suggest, the petty and indirect tyranny they may be permitted to exercise, all combine to degrade a force of this nature into formidable engines of oppression.

United Province of Canada Commission Report (1841)

Canada's municipal police forces, like their counterparts in the United States, grew out of an informal system of citizen patrols imported from England. These civilian watch services performed basic duties during evening hours, often limited to keeping an eye out for trouble, and informing others of any crimes or attacks that they witnessed taking place.

In 1834, Toronto became the first major city in North America to adopt a modern police force. At its founding, the Toronto Police Services (TPS) was composed of five paid constables, appointed by the city's mayor and aldermen. For the first decades of its existence, the TPS functioned as a notoriously corrupt appendage of the local political establishment, upon whose patronage they depended for their jobs. Its ranks were largely drawn from the Orange Order, a not-so-secret society of conservative Irish Protestants that made no effort to hide its sectarian rivalry with the city's Catholic residents. This unapologetic sectarianism was an aggravating factor in the Circus Riots of 1855, in which members of the TPS refused to intervene to break up a massive brawl between a travelling troupe of circus clowns and a local brigade of firefighters and their supporters—many of whom also happened to be Orangemen. The resulting public outcry led the incoming mayor

to fire the entire police force and introduce a new regulatory oversight body. After a study of other North American police forces, the Boston Police Department was chosen as the model for implementing a series of structural reforms.

As part of this shake-up, former British Army Captain William Stratton Prince was appointed as Toronto's new Chief Constable. Prince immediately began to impose a strict military discipline on his men, and sought to stamp out the force's culture of endemic corruption, which he saw as an undue hindrance to its public legitimacy. Under Prince's fourteen year tenure as Chief, the TPS became Canada's first intelligence security agency, operating a network of spies that monitored the activities of Fenian cells operating out of Buffalo, New York City, Detroit, and Chicago.

As the city of Toronto continued to grow over the following decades, so too did the size of its police force, and the scale of their responsibilities. The swelling ranks of the "dangerous classes" necessitated an increased focus on what Helen Boritch has described as "class control" policing. This meant breaking strikes, when necessary, but also a heavy emphasis on offences carried out against the "public order," such as vagrancy, public drunkenness, and prostitution, which were (and are) almost exclusively committed by poorer sections of the working class. As part of a more expansive understanding of "public order" that foreshadowed later advancements in community policing, during these years the TPS was also tasked with running a variety of social services, such as ambulances, homeless shelters, and even a child protection service, which served as an early forerunner to today's Children's Aid Society. The TPS also enforced Sabbath and Public Order Bylaws, and were responsible for regulating a host of small businesses, such as taxi drivers, laundry-operators and street vendors. In order to help ensure their upstanding moral character and loyalty to their bourgeois pay-masters, officers were forbidden from living in working-class neighbourhoods, or consorting with poor people during their off hours.

During the interwar period, fears of anarchist and communist subversion, stoked by the Russian Revolution abroad and increased labour unrest at home, provided the impetus for a renewed focus on domestic intelligence gathering and a more targeted system of political repression. Toronto's "Red

Squads” kept a particularly close watch on organizing efforts taking place within immigrant communities from Central and Eastern Europe, and on well-known anarchists such as Emma Goldman, an intermittent resident of the city from 1927, until her death in 1940.

Successive waves of amalgamation to the city of Toronto have swallowed up other smaller municipal police forces, and today the TPS is the third largest police force in Canada, with 5,800 officers spread across seventeen numbered divisions and a range of specialized departments and task forces. They are supported by 2,500 civilian employees, an untold number of volunteers, and a bloated annual operating budget of over \$1 billion.

The RCMP

One of the most enduring Canadian cultural stereotypes is the red-clad, mild-mannered “Mountie,” popularized by fictional characters such as Dudley Do-Right, of *Rocky and Bullwinkle* fame, and Benton Fraser of *Due South*. It should come as no surprise that the actual history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is considerably more brutal than these pop culture depictions might suggest, as it is intimately linked with the colonial expansion of the Canadian state.

The RCMP’s roots lie in the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), a paramilitary police force modelled after the Royal Irish Constabulary, and staffed by horse-mounted riflemen drawn from cavalry divisions of the British Army. The NWMP was created by parliamentary decree in 1873, for the explicit purpose of extending the rule of law to Canada’s restive Northwest Territories (a huge expanse of land that included the northern regions of modern-day Ontario and Québec, as well the entirety of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta), which the federal government had recently purchased from the HBC.

As part of its mandate to tame Canada’s wild west, in 1885 the NWMP assisted in putting down the North-Western Rebellion, launched by a Métis force led by Louis Riel, and a parallel force of insurgent Cree and Assiniboine warriors. The resulting victory paved the way for the completion of

the Canadian Pacific Railway, which consolidated Canada's territorial continuity, linking the country's eastern and western population centres and facilitating the further settlement of the Prairies. The NWMP was deployed to the Yukon in 1895, to establish order and collect customs duties from prospectors drawn to the region by the Klondike Gold Rush. In 1905 it was granted jurisdiction over the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and in 1912 over the territories annexed into the province of Manitoba.

Though its formative role in Canadian history was its contribution to colonial nation-building, the NWMP also served more traditional policing functions, a notable example being when it was called in to violently suppress the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. In 1920, it was merged with the Dominion Police, a federal agency tasked with maintaining Canada's earliest forensic and criminal databases, and with protecting sensitive public works, such as government buildings, crucial national infrastructure, and royal navy yards. The result of this merger was the RCMP.

As Canada's primary federal policing agency, the RCMP is sometimes roughly understood as a national equivalent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States. A more accurate description, however, would be to say that it has served, at various times in its history, as a combination of the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Secret Service, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and various state, highway, and local police departments. Today, the RCMP operates a national network of nearly 30,000 officers and civilian employees, and serves as the primary police force for 180 municipalities, 184 Indigenous communities, all three northern territories, and eight of Canada's ten provinces (with the notable exception of Ontario and Québec).

The OPP/SQ

Rounding things off, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) are the provincial police departments for Ontario and Québec, two provinces that contain a combined 62

per cent of Canada's total population. Both police forces have jurisdiction over hundreds of small towns and municipalities, and thousands of kilometres of highway. The OPP, through the Aboriginal Policing Bureau, serves as the primary police force in nineteen Indigenous communities, and provides logistical support and training to First Nations Police Services in eleven Indigenous reserves. Both provincial departments are often the first responders to highway blockades, and as such have been responsible for escalating tense standoffs with Mohawk warriors in Oka, Québec, in 1990, and members of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy in Caledonia, Ontario in 2006.

The Shift to Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency is those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.

US Army Field Manual - Counterinsurgency Operations (FMI 3-07-21)

Near the end of the 1970s, after a decade of industrial turmoil, capitalism began to restructure itself, both economically and socially. Neoliberalism, with its attendant relocation of formerly high-paying manufacturing jobs to low-wage regions, and steady erosion of social welfare provisions, has severely diminished working-class living standards in North America. As they have retreated from their traditional role as service providers, governments have steadily reoriented their focus towards managing domestic unrest. By trading the carrot for the stick, the social welfare state has redefined itself as the modern security state.

The institution of policing has always been an evolving experiment, and under neoliberalism it has taken on a new dimension. Faced with an influx of popular and often militant social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, western elites began to come up with new strategies aimed at containing political dissent and ensuring sustained social stability. Domestic counterinsurgency models were developed, drawing heavily

upon the British Army's experiences in Northern Ireland, and British, American, and French efforts to quell anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist insurgencies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These new strategies expanded on some of the more covert and intelligence-driven domestic policing methods that had been developed by the now defunct Red Squads in decades prior.

The 1970s were a decade characterized by public distrust in government bodies. This tension was exacerbated by the exposure of the fact that illegal tactics were being routinely employed by state security forces in their efforts to crush dissent. In 1976, the so-called Church Committee, a United States' Senate review of national intelligence practices, sought to ease public concerns following the release of a leaked dossier related to the FBI's infamous COINTELPRO program. The following year In Canada, the McDonald Commission completed a similar investigation into the practices of the RCMP's counterintelligence agency, after it was determined that they had illegally spied on Québécois separatists, and had gone so far as to burn down a barn intended as a meeting place between members of the Black Panthers and the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). As a result of the commission's findings, the RCMP's intelligence wing was disbanded, and restructured into the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). In the years that have followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many of the practices that were once considered illegal, and which when exposed, caused legitimate public outrage, have been formally adopted into the legal framework of policing, in the name of fighting terrorism. Moreover, in the decades since the 1970s a massive shift in the allocation of public resources towards state security, technological advancements and resulting strategic and tactical innovations in counterinsurgency have dramatically refined the face of modern policing.

Bringing the War Home: The Militarization of Police

Responding to the intense social and political upheaval of the 1960s, the Los Angeles Police Department introduced a new, heavily militarized task force known as Special Weapons and

Tactics (SWAT) team, the first of many subsequent tactical paramilitary police forces, collectively classified as Police Paramilitary Units (PPU). These units blur the lines between policing and traditional warfare, by allowing the state to bring military equipment and tactics to bear on domestic law enforcement situations. The application of paramilitary techniques to situations that have previously been handled by traditional policing practices signifies an important component of the normalization of militarized law enforcement. As one component of a broader counterinsurgency framework, the role of these agencies is to crush armed, or otherwise dangerous combatants through the targeted application of overwhelming force.

Although they are not nearly as normalized into the framework of traditional policing as their American counterparts, most Canadian police forces have developed their own PPUs, and deploy them in response to situations that pose a high risk to officer safety, or when a strong show of force is required to crush a challenge to state authority, or to the smooth functioning of capitalism. These units are embedded within municipal police departments, such as the TPS's Emergency Task Force (ETF) or the Hamilton Police Service's Emergency Response Unit (ERU), as well as in their provincial and federal equivalents such as the OPP and RCMP, which are each outfitted with Emergency Response Teams (ERT). These elite units are composed of small teams of heavily trained officers, comprised of a squad leader, several sharpshooters, and agents trained in a combination of surveillance, hostage negotiation, tactical entry and frontal assault techniques. In October 2013, the RCMP deployed an ERT in a pre-dawn raid aimed at dismantling a Mi'kmaq-led anti-fracking blockade in Elsipogtog First Nation, located near the town of Rexton, New Brunswick. A leaked copy of an RCMP report on the raid indicated that the operation was planned using intelligence gathered through the use of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), equipped with infrared and thermal recognition systems.

Front-line municipal police officers are also finding themselves increasingly equipped with military grade hardware. In 2013, as part of a "pilot project," three divisions of the TPS were issued C8 carbines, which are compact assault rifles designed for urban combat. These included 51 Division,

located in the city's downtown east, where long-time residents are contending with intense and ongoing gentrification efforts; 43 Division, which covers an area of south-eastern Scarborough associated with several recent high-profile, gang-related shootings; and 31 Division, a notoriously brutal department that occupies the heavily racialized working-class neighbourhood of Jane and Finch. In addition to new guns, municipal police departments are also being equipped with armored military vehicles, either acquired second-hand from the Canadian Forces, or purchased directly from private military contractors. This practice has not yet assumed the scale seen in recent years in the United States, where seemingly every small town police department has acquired its own second-hand armored personnel carrier, left over from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it is a growing trend, with police forces from Vancouver, British Columbia to New Glasgow, Nova Scotia unveiling their own Tactical Armored Vehicles (TAVs) in recent years. Many of them have never been used, and it is uncertain what practical purpose they would even serve, outside the context of a full-fledged civil war.

And military hardware isn't all that is being imported from the War on Terror. In February 2015, news broke of a warehouse in Chicago's west side that has been repurposed into a domestic black site, where suspected criminals are denied recourse to legal representation and subjected to "enhanced" interrogation techniques. Unlike a precinct, suspects in this facility aren't booked, and face a militaristic environment said to house military-style vehicles, interrogation cells, and cages. It can be assumed that sites like these will become a normalized destination for those eventually charged under Illinois' amped up *Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act*, which has been enhanced to give police the legal authority to round up Chicago's gang members *en masse*. The principles of the RICO Act, originally implemented in 1970 to help fight organized crime, provide an effective political tool to criminalize and break down any organization or group that poses a serious organized threat to the stability of the state. In Canada, the RCMP enforces regulations that are cumulatively similar to the RICO Act, but which tend to fall under the classification of criminal conspiracy charges.

In January, 2015, following widespread and sustained

protests against the police murder of Eric Garner, and the apparent revenge killing of two police officers, New York Police Commissioner William Bratton unveiled a new Strategic Response Group (SRG), a specially-trained unit of officers tasked with counterterrorism and the policing of large-scale protests — a practice he termed “disorder policing.” While Bratton’s casual conflation of anti-police demonstrations with terrorism, and his announcement that these officers would be equipped with automatic weapons represent a particularly chilling development, specialized crowd control units such as this are not uncommon in North America, and this trajectory towards militarization is only poised to continue.

In Canada, the police departments of every sizeable city are equipped with riot gear, and often contain crowd control and public order units with specialized training in crowd psychology, martial arts, pain compliance, and the use of non-lethal weapons. The Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM), Montreal’s municipal police force, has developed, over the years, into a North American leader in protest policing. It has acquired this unique expertise, in part, through its relatively frequent exposure to militant black bloc tactics, and its willingness to experiment with different forms of crowd dispersal and mass arrests. The SPVM has been known to use the city’s annual March 15th protests (held each year on the International Day Against Police Brutality) as an opportunity to train other Canadian municipal police forces in riot suppression tactics.

Community Policing: To Protect and Sever

As we’ve noted, one of the ways that the state maintains its legitimacy is by crushing threats to its rule through the targeted application of overwhelming force. Yet a far more insidious, and arguably more effective application of these principles can be found in the spread of community policing, a complementary strategy focused on developing stronger ties between police and the communities that they occupy. This approach offers a contrast to aggressive paramilitary style policing, yet remains part of the same project.

In Toronto, a focus on “community mobilization” has

been a core principle of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) program, unveiled in 2006, after residents of the city were shaken by a spate of gun-related violence that killed fifty-two people over a one year period. This program was expanded, in 2007, into the Provincial Anti-Violence Integration Strategy (PAVIS), which provides provincial funding to seventeen regional community policing initiatives, such as the Addressing Crime Trends In Our Neighbourhoods (ACTION) Team in Hamilton, and the Taking Action on Guns and Gangs (TAGG) project in Greater Sudbury. While these initiatives have often been championed for their success in decreasing rates of violent crime, there is little evidence to back up such claims. What is beyond dispute, is the fact that they represent a new level of police penetration into the everyday lives of racialized youth, specifically, and “priority neighbourhoods” more generally.

Bogus community meetings, citizen surveys, after-school basketball programs for “at-risk” youth, and quaint “Coffee with a Cop” programs designed to portray police as good-natured neighbours make it feasible to gather useful intelligence on a targeted community, while establishing and maintaining relationships with its individual members. Sympathetic citizens and community organizations can then be more relied upon to share information with police, and to turn to them to resolve conflicts. This sophisticated approach to repression enhances police power by allowing them to work *through* community agencies, as well as *over* them, with the ultimate aim of maintaining social control.

In a February, 2015 article published in *the Intercept*, investigative journalists Murtaza Hussain, Coan Courier, and Jana Winter broke a story on a program being run by the United States National Counterterrorism Centre, which aims to spot early warning signs of youth radicalization. A leaked thirty-six-page report, entitled *Countering Violent Extremism: A Guide for Practitioners and Analysts* included a survey and accompanying rating system that police, teachers and social workers can use in order to help determine an individual child’s “susceptibility to engage in violent extremism.” The report also included suggested interventions that parents could be encouraged to take in order to halt their children’s path towards further radicalization. In Canada, the state

broadcaster CBC has run a number of programs and articles on youth radicalization, citing the spectre of young Muslim men travelling to Syria to fight with the so-called Islamic State as a justification for calls for a more invasive regime of community policing. As with other calls to expand state powers, these appeals are currently aimed at exploiting Canadians' racist fears of Islamic terrorism. Once adopted, these tactics will be applied to any group of so-called "extremists" that the state deems a threat.

Community policing initiatives often work alongside efforts by municipal politicians and developers to gentrify neighbourhoods, by effectively seizing on fears over crime and safety. In Toronto, Police Community Liaison Committees regularly issue recommendations to evict undesirable tenants, as the "community stakeholders" chosen to sit on these committees are almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of local business and property owners. These committees also regularly champion policing initiatives and community partnerships aimed at cracking down on "quality of life" crimes, such as graffiti, trespassing, vagrancy, prostitution, and drug dealing, which in turn provides a mandate for an increasingly heavy-handed police presence. The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), which manages the city's diminishing public housing stock, often works directly with the TPS to evict tenants. In 2005, following a series of raids in the heavily racialized neighbourhood of Jamestown-Rexdale, TCHC punitively evicted the families of many of the arrested youth before their trials even began. While this is a specific example, the process is quite commonplace.

In 2008, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) began assigning full-time, armed police officers, or "school resource officers" as they are euphemistically called, to dozens of Toronto high schools. This initiative was inspired by a report on school violence prepared by Toronto lawyer Julian Falconer, who has since then, ironically, built himself a career representing the families of individuals killed by police. The following year, a sixteen year old student at Northern Secondary School, located in the neighbourhood of Jane and Finch, was approached and questioned by the school resource officer, who had seen him lingering in the hallway and thought that he looked suspicious. The teen responded by mockingly referring to the cop as

“Bacon.” The officer then proceeded to physically assault the teen, after his demands for identification went unheeded. To top things off, the student was charged with assaulting a police officer while resisting arrest. Programs similar to this one have been implemented in other major Canadian cities, such as Edmonton, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. While these programs often attempt to justify themselves with rhetoric about crime prevention, and the social worth of building positive relationships between police and at-risk youth, the reality is that they represent yet another violent incursion of the state into racialized working-class communities.

With the rise in already high transit fare prices and a new proof of payment system being rolled out this year, the TPS have restored special constable powers to the enforcement agents of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). TTC Special Constables have more policing authority than regular fare inspection officers, and come equipped with handcuffs, batons, and pepper foam. A rather violent altercation recorded in January of 2015 between a passenger and constable at Union Station, and subsequently uploaded to YouTube, is already under investigation by the TPS, and is sure to be one of many, as simple disputes get blown out of proportion by volatile transit security enforcement agents.

The development of community policing is not confined to the neighbourhood, but has extended throughout the broader economy, as well. According to a 2007 report by economists Samuel Bowles and Arjun Jayadev, a whopping 25 per cent of the American workforce is employed in “guard labor,” meaning that their primary economic function isn’t to produce value, but rather to help protect wealth, manage other workers, or otherwise smooth the process of capital accumulation. When describing exactly what jobs constitute guard labour, Bowles and Jayadev include obvious examples such as police officers, soldiers, prison guards, private security, and court staff, as well as all those employed in other positions within the military and prison-industrial-complexes, secret shoppers, quality assurance monitors, supervisors, and managers. They also include unemployed and imprisoned members of the working class, whose primary economic function, they reason, is to maintain worker discipline by way of offering a negative incentive. When the somewhat dubious inclusion of

the latter two categories is factored out, the rate falls from one in four workers to one in five, which is still a staggering figure. Furthermore, this percentage would be significantly increased if the category was expanded to include other workers who may be compelled to work with the police as part of their job description, such as nurses, cab drivers, retail workers, and teachers. While no similar figures exist for Canada, the point remains that under late capitalism, the responsibility for policing the working class is increasingly falling on its own members.

Anticipating Resistance: Intelligence-led Policing

The never-ending crisis of the War on Terror has presented western governments with a self-perpetuating justification for increasing the state's domestic security capacities. Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien passed the *Canadian Anti-Terrorism Act*, which massively expanded the Canadian state's powers of surveillance and detention and legally sanctified the practice of extraordinary rendition and the use of secret trials. This was followed by a vast overhaul of Canada's immigration and border security framework, including the creation of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) in 2003.

If anything, the pace of these reforms has only sped up under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. Ever the opportunist, Harper has repeatedly exploited public shock and outrage over terrorist acts to cynically pursue his agenda of speeding along Canada's transformation into a heavily militarized petro-state. On April 19, 2013, in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombing, Conservative lawmakers put forward a motion to fast-track the *Combating Terrorism Act*, which was then hurriedly approved and passed into law. On October 23, 2014 the day after the murder of Canadian Forces Corporal Nathan Cirillo by a lone gunman in Ottawa, Harper gave a speech pledging to further expand Canadian intelligence agencies' power of surveillance and detention. In January 2015, he made good on this pledge by introducing the *Anti-terrorism Act*, more commonly known as Bill C-51. The current vague phrasing of this bill will, if and when it is passed, grant CSIS,

Canada's federal intelligence agency, the legal authority to "enter any place or open or obtain access to any thing... to copy or obtain any document... to install, maintain or remove any thing... [and] do any other thing that is reasonably necessary to take those measures." This incredibly broad language essentially gives CSIS agents unlimited legal authority to do anything they want, to any and all individuals who they remotely suspect may cause "interference with the capability of the Government of Canada in relation to...the economic or financial stability of Canada...[or] interference with critical infrastructure." The language in this proposed bill echoes that found in a RCMP report leaked in February of 2015, warning that "violent anti-petroleum extremists" pose a "criminal threat" to Canada's national oil and gas sector. It is clear that Bill C-51 is less about protecting Canada from Islamic terrorism than it is about giving the state more power to crush resistance to planned pipeline projects, such as the ecologically disastrous Trans-Pacific Pipeline, which is currently on a collision course with the dug-in Indigenous land defenders of the Unist'ot'en Camp, located on unceded Wet'sewet'en territory, in central British Columbia.

Thanks to Edward Snowden, we now know that signals intelligence agencies like the National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States, and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) in Canada intercept and store absolutely all electronic communications that travel across the Internet and cellphone towers, and that this massive, endlessly growing pile of data is stored and accessible from centralized databases for years after it's been collected. The implications of this fact are staggering, and frankly, difficult to wrap one's head around.

And federal agencies are not the only entities collecting intelligence on us. Facebook and Google are both multi-billion dollar companies, precisely because they collect obscene amounts of data from millions of users every day, which they then sell to advertising firms and routinely hand over to law enforcement agencies upon request. A June 2014 transparency report released by telecommunications giant Rogers Canada revealed that during the previous year, approximately 175,000 warrantless requests for customer data had been made by Canadian federal agencies, such as the RCMP, CSIS, and CBSA.

Municipal police forces also readily admit to using publicly available digital data, such as social media activity, and internet traffic, as part of their intelligence gathering efforts. This practice is a small part of a strategy known as “predictive policing,” which has, over the past several years, quietly revolutionized the way that many police departments make strategic decisions, such as planning the allocation and deployment of staff and resources, and drafting neighbourhood-specific crime reduction strategies. Predictive Policing techniques focus on the identification of *potential* criminal activity, in a practice foreseen by a sadly prescient Philip K Dick, over a half century ago. At the first Predictive Policing Conference, held in Los Angeles in 2009, spokespeople from various private security tech firms preached to assembled representatives of police departments from across North America on the benefits of integrating “business intelligence and business analytics” into their traditional policing framework. Special emphasis was placed on the crime fighting potential of implementing cutting edge practices such as advanced data mining, geospatial prediction and social media analysis. For a price, police departments can purchase a wide variety of software solutions, ranging from basic number crunching and analytics programs, to sophisticated crime forecasting models based on complicated mathematical algorithms that can help organize and interpret intelligence as it’s gathered in real time.

IV. Fighting Back

The state’s capacity to spy on, disrupt, discredit, arrest, and if need be, murder anyone that it wants is absolutely terrifying. If you consider yourself a revolutionary and the police don’t scare you, then you’re either posturing or deluding yourself. We may laugh at the idea of the hapless, bumbling cop, but what many officers lack in critical thought, they more than make up for in discipline. This also happens to be a trait that many anarchists in this part of the world severely lack.

Aside from the vast array of military hardware at their disposal, paid for and supplied by the fruits of our labour, police carry a promise of protection that legitimizes their entire

institution, no matter how abusive its individual members may sometimes act. Police promise to protect the working class from itself. To protect those who have little, from those who have even less. And the fact that, sometimes, they do just that, serves as an effective cover for their ultimate political function, which is to protect those who have a lot.

It's true that the police are incredibly powerful. But our communities are also a great source of power, which when collectively grasped and wielded, can be even stronger than theirs. This power is evidenced by their relentless efforts to harness and redirect it to their own ends. The role of revolutionaries should be to help spread an awareness of the potential of working-class dual power, and to participate in building it. As the military strategists of social peace are well aware, class struggle is not a zero sum game, but a gruelling war of position. Waging this war effectively requires a serious commitment to organizing that strengthens the social fabric of our communities, and which seeks to popularize a reflective, common sense understanding that the police are our enemies.

Countering Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency strategies were developed in conflict zones, in which occupying armies were called upon to police a restive, foreign population. During the post-WWII era of formal decolonization, and in the more recent military campaigns of the War on Terror, the practice of counterinsurgency has been premised around imposing and then propping up a government that, while often unpopular, can ultimately be counted on to act in the interests of imperialist, transnational capital. Practically, this means simultaneously helping to establish the popular legitimacy of a client regime, while suppressing armed opposition through the use of overwhelming firepower, and withdrawing military forces as soon as they are no longer needed. History has shown that this process often doesn't work very well. People generally don't take kindly to the idea of being ruled by a puppet whose legitimacy stems from the presence of a foreign army that bombs and kills their friends, families and neighbours. The longer an occupation goes on,

the more people are willing to drop everything and sacrifice their lives to fight against it.

These troublesome dynamics apply far less to domestic counterinsurgency operations. By and large, police officers are not seen by most people as the footsoldiers of an occupying army, but as fellow community members, and as the real-world versions of characters from their favourite television shows. As representatives of the state, police are imbued with all the legitimacy of a democratically elected government, and a political and cultural tradition that goes back hundreds of years. The truth of the matter, however, is that nations aren't real, and the cop on your block isn't McNulty from *the Wire*, but an armed agent of a class that sees national borders as barriers to investment.

As this article has attempted to demonstrate, contemporary policing is a mutually-reinforcing balance of overwhelming force, on the one hand, and an insidious fostering of misguided community trust, on the other. Decisions on exactly which approach to take in a given situation are informed by intelligence gathered by an invisible, yet omnipresent web of surveillance, with capacities heretofore undreamed of at any other time in human history. This situation is similar to the tried and tested "good cop/bad cop" routine, where agents take turns interrogating a suspect before retreating behind a one-sided mirror to collectively discuss how they want to proceed. Those organizing against police should be aware of this dynamic, and should seek to engage situations strategically.

Community policing is an attempt to build and maintain popular legitimacy. It follows, then, that anti-police organizing should aim to disrupt and discredit community policing efforts, and help reframe police forces as an occupying army, which, particularly in Indigenous and racialized communities, they are. White revolutionaries, in particular, have a responsibility to confront community policing initiatives, as they are often tacitly or explicitly rooted in the unspoken or coded language of white supremacy. A refusal to make strategic use of the unearned privileges and social capital granted by skin colour is not only a squandered opportunity, but a betrayal to one's class.

Precisely because they hold the advantage of overwhelming force, it is important to avoid giving police the

opportunity to use that force without consequence. Militancy is a collective phenomenon, and so while organizing, it's important to avoid tactics that will unduly injure or alienate large groups of people who might otherwise be supportive of your aims. This is not to say that violence has no role in struggle, or that anarchists should only act in accordance with the moral norms of dominant society, but that there's a difference between violence that increases collective militancy, and violence that makes it easier for the state to isolate us. An asymmetrical response to state violence, which takes a measured approach to escalation is often the most effective way of increasing the level of militancy of all participants.

Lastly, we should cultivate and spread a collective practice of security culture, not just among insular anarchist circles, but as a part of all our organizing efforts. Mass surveillance is premised on the universal expectation of constant convenience and instant-gratification fostered by living in a touch-button society. It's unnervingly common for people who consider themselves serious revolutionaries to fall victim to this trap. It's not that we shouldn't use facebook, or shouldn't own cellphones, but that we should at least try to understand how the state gathers intelligence, and attempt to make this process more difficult for them. Despite a vague understanding that the government runs mass surveillance programs, people who openly self-identify as an ideological enemy of that very same government, somehow seem to be constantly unsure as to whether or not they are being surveilled. You are. We all are. The state "taps" our phones, because they "tap" all phones, all the time. Operate under the assumption that every email you send will be read by a signals intelligence analyst at the CSE, or the NSA, or any other number of foreign intelligence services, because if you're actively involved in organizing, or if you become active at any point in the future, it will be. There is no way to completely avoid the watchful eye of the state and do effective organizing at the same time, but there are certainly practical steps that can be taken to make their job more difficult, and they should be followed in a systematic and disciplined manner by anarchists, integrated into the culture of organizations, and spread throughout the working class more generally.

Organizing Towards Dual Power

Whenever anarchists talk about a world without police, we are immediately and inevitably confronted by questions about how we propose to resolve conflicts without them. These concerns are as prevalent as they are valid. They point to the need to further delegitimize the police as an institution, on the one hand, and empower communities on the other. This is not simply a matter of theory, but of theory being put into practice. The continuing appeal of police, even among the communities that they brutalize, arises from entirely legitimate demands for justice and security. People want to live in communities that aren't plagued by rampant horizontal violence, with parks that we can let our kids play in without fear of hypodermic needles, and where mutually agreed-upon standards of basic decency are enforced.

It is not enough to simply advocate for the abolition of police and prisons, and then point vaguely to historical examples where cops have been replaced by armed self defense committees. The suggestion that we leave the dispensing of justice to groups of armed individuals is, to put it mildly, not exactly an appealing proposition to people who already deal with the reality of gang warfare in their neighbourhood. Besides, history has shown that when an armed faction of a popular movement, such as the Black Panther Party (BPP) or the Irish Republican Army (IRA), have decided to take it upon themselves to resolve interpersonal conflicts without the broader participation of the community, the results have been disastrous.

More important than stockpiling arms, a strategy of building community-based systems of working-class dual power requires collectively identifying community standards and definitions of justice. This is the guiding principle behind restorative justice, a framework of conflict resolution that focuses on healing and reconciliation between two or more parties through reaching a mutual understanding of what occurred, what contributed to it happening, how the community as a whole is impacted, and how, if necessary, restitution should be allocated.

Restorative justice differs widely from state judicial systems, not only because of its emphasis on collective healing

over individual punishment, and restitution over retribution, but also because it seeks to resolve conflicts directly within the communities where they occur. This contrasts to what radical criminologist Nils Christie calls the “theft of conflict” perpetrated by specialists who not only deny the involved parties their right to confront one another directly and, if possible, come to some sort of resolution, but also deny the community a participatory role in deciding what constitutes the “law of the land.” This is something that top-down attempts at implementing restorative justice frameworks in Canada or the United States can never achieve. Whether through the so-called Aboriginal Sentencing provisions established by the *R v. Gladue* Supreme Court ruling, or the John Howard Society working with juvenile offenders through a diversion program, the state’s primary concern is the management of conflict, not its resolution. Although individual judges may choose to apply “alternative justice” principles into their sentencing provisions, at no point does the state relinquish the authority to define what is just and what is not, what is right and what is wrong.

Despite their broad participatory potential, emphasis on collective healing and utility for defining social norms and values outside an imposed state framework, community defence forces, and restorative justice, as revolutionary alternatives to the police and the court system, are still hamstrung by a number of serious shortcomings in common sense. Three fundamental misconceptions surrounding conflict resolution, which are particularly prevalent among some advocates of restorative justice, are:

1. All conflicts can be resolved
2. The voluntary, consensual participation of both parties is a must
3. Violence, even in extreme situations, is unacceptable

Not all conflicts can be resolved. Some we are forced to live with, and others are dealt with as best as imperfect people in a broken society can manage. The process of healing is solely the right of the victim(s), and should not be conditioned upon the equal participation and continued emotional well-being of perpetrators. Forgive and forget is just as much of a backward Judeo-Christian concept as punishment for the

sake of punishment. Likewise, without either an implicit or explicit threat of ostracization or violence, restorative justice simply does not work, because there is nothing to ensure that the transgressor will consent to the process. The vast majority of successful accounts of restorative justice in North America have occurred by way of court-ordered diversion programs, meaning that an assurance of imprisonment was held over the heads of perpetrators if they did not comply. Within a community-led restorative justice framework, some form of coercive mechanism, imbued with the authority of broader community legitimacy, is required.

Autonomous, community-led alternatives to the police and the courts are still a long way off. In order to function with any significant level of social legitimacy, systems of dual power require a degree of social cohesion and a level of popular distrust in official state institutions that is largely foreign to the experiences of those living in modern day Canadian cities. Particularly within an urban context, extra-judicial systems for conflict resolution and community defence have historically tended to grow out of a power vacuum, in which high levels of insecurity exist side-by-side with an absence of state authority. With the possible exception of several remote Indigenous communities, these conditions don't exist in Canada. On the contrary, the authority of the state is often most keenly felt in the very same neighbourhoods that face the highest levels of horizontal violence.

These are serious problems, and we shouldn't pretend that we have the answers. Yet it stands to reason that our efforts to evict the cops from our communities will only be successful to the extent that they are accompanied by a competing framework of community self-defence and conflict resolution that regular people choose to participate in. In other words, a prefigurative approach to abolishing the police means that we have to actually start building alternatives.

Building a Culture of Working-class Resistance

Some of the most iconic and inspiring images of popular resistance come from riots and insurrectional moments which, to outside observers, appear on televisions and computer

screens as spontaneous reactions to a singularly egregious incident of police brutality. Yet for every anti-police riot that grabs the media's attention, there are countless daily acts of oppression and defiance that may not make the news, but which all play a contributing role in kicking things off. Rather than morbidly waiting around for the police to kill someone before springing into action, anarchists and anti-authoritarian revolutionaries who want to see more anti-police uprisings should seize every opportunity to exploit the daily social tensions that produce them. This means actively participating in building a culture of opposition and hostility to police that permeates all aspects of working-class life.

Organizing against the police can, and should be incorporated into community struggles around housing, and against the violent gentrification of our neighbourhoods. Police Community Liaison Committees should be systematically infiltrated, and business and property owners who zealously collaborate with police to push out poor and racialized neighbourhood residents should be made to understand that this practice is unacceptable. Community meetings of parents and teachers should be organized, and campaigns should be launched demanding that police be removed from public schools. Building committees and neighbourhood watch programs should be organized, and militants should make the case that neighbours not collaborate with police and immigration enforcement officials. Raising this demand should open space for building a more expansive definition of collaboration that includes any activity that increases social divisions, and allows the police to justify its presence in the community.

Our principled opposition to police should spill into our workplaces, as well. Anarchists should be talking to our co-workers about police on smoke breaks, and in the lunch room. Retail workers should organize with their co-workers to demand that their store enact a "no-chase" policy, or barring that, for an informal agreement among staff that nobody calls security on shoplifters, because nobody should have to bear the responsibility of someone getting arrested and potentially going to jail, just for stealing from the boss.

Finally, anarchists should also actively participate in organizations that focus exclusively on combating police

violence in ways that go beyond organizing one-off rallies and demonstrations. In Toronto, a number of anarchists, including several members of Common Cause, are active within the Network for the Elimination of Police Violence (NEPV), an organization that conducts community outreach and education on a variety of topics related to policing, and which provides material support and assistance to grassroots anti-policing initiatives based in the city's most marginalized neighbourhoods. While its methodology for community organizing, and internal political education program is still a work in progress, NEPV has witnessed significant growth and development over the past year, and its model is one with potential to spread to other cities across southern Ontario, and beyond.



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