This zine explores the conspiracy case that came out of the G20 summit in Toronto, Canada in 2010. It examines the role anarchists played in organizing resistance to the G20 and the ways in which the State responded to this activity. It can help sharpen our understanding of how States use surveillance, infiltration, and the legal system itself to prevent people from acting.

No Trace Project / No trace, no case. A collection of tools to help anarchists and other rebels **understand** the capabilities of their enemies, **undermine** surveillance efforts, and ultimately **act** without getting caught.

Depending on your context, possession of certain documents may be criminalized or attract unwanted attention. Be careful about what zines you print and where you store them.

Toronto G20 Main Conspiracy Group

The Charges and How They Came To Be

prisons themselves as sites of struggle.[39] The story of anarchists facing repression and prison has been told many times, and our experiences are not so extraordinary. Prison is now a daily reality for us more than it was before, and we are also better at getting through it, individually and collectively. Our reflections are shared in the spirit of revolutionary solidarity with those imprisoned, looking towards the continuation of the struggles they are imprisoned for.

We want to encourage other radicals in Southern Ontario to discuss the issues raised in this article, in small groups of friends and at large public events. We hope you will be inspired to reflect and write your ideas as we continue on new and old trajectories of struggle. The mobilizations against the G20 and the repression that followed have been deeply significant for many of us in this region, and the process of distilling lessons from it and applying them to our lives is likely to be a long one. Let's look towards the ways that our experiences can make us stronger, individually and collectively, so we are better equipped to confront capitalism.

[39] For more information about supporting prisoners of the G20 and other political prisoners, see the website of the Guelph Anarchist Black Cross.[a]

[a] https://guelphabc.noblogs.org

Toronto G20 Main Conspiracy Group: The Charges and How They Came To Be

Original text in English

2012

sproutdistro.com/catalog/zines/security/toronto-g20-conspiracy

Layout

No Trace Project

notrace.how/resources/#toronto-g20

the most empowering perspective. It risks contributing to the TV cop show narrative in which the police are some sort of force of nature with unlimited resources that can shut you down every time. So far in Southern Ontario, this paranoid perspective is the one that's really gotten around, sometimes coupled with the absurd notion that the entire black bloc at the G20 was an elaborate police provocation. This is the perspective of fear, and fear is our worst enemy moving ahead.

Remember that when we talk about this case, the only police tactics that come up are the ones that worked. The huge majority of the work the cops did led to nothing, and even the things that did work only penetrated shallowly into our networks. The police are not unbeatable. They are not even necessarily very smart.

Throughout this investigation, the police were significantly encumbered by their awkward intelligence structure, which meant that information gathered by one policing body in one city was not necessarily shared with any others. Police are also rigidly hierarchical, with information only flowing up. This means that the cops spying on your house have very little idea of what they're seeing or of what might be important to the investigation. These two factors contribute to a competitive climate in which poor cooperation or even outright antagonism between different policing agencies is the norm.

Our goal here is to temper fear with accurate information and encourage caution, not paranoia, in future organizing. As much as becoming paralyzed by fear is not a useful response, it's also silly to "refuse to be intimidated" and just continue with the same organizing habits as before. We believe there are some crucial and simple lessons to be drawn from the story of the G20 Main Conspiracy case, lessons that can help us shape our strategies and tactics.

Since the Main Conspiracy plea deal, we have seen our friends go to jail and come out again. During this time, many anarchists in Southern Ontario have focused on prisoner support and on the

Contents

Here are some of the things that the G20 Main Conspiracy case is a precedent for:

- Investigations against activists beginning several years before the target event.
- Dozens of infiltrators used against every part of a social movement.
- Using conspiracy charges to cast a wide net over more than a hundred radicals while naming ringleaders from among them.
- Conspiracy to commit an inchoate (not specific) offense—the defendants here are not accused of planning specific acts themselves, but rather of planning to disrupt the summit and create chaos in downtown Toronto. This gives the Crown a lot of flexibility as to how they make their case.

It's also good to remember that the State knew relatively little about the lives and relationships of anarchists and their friends in Southern Ontario before this investigation. Now they know quite a lot, and we only know some of what they know. It will probably take them a lot less time to zero in on the real targets of their investigation next time around. The Hate Crimes and Extremism Unit of the OPP has also been gathering data in parallel to the conspiracy investigation; for instance, they released a report about "hate crimes" aimed against police in the Hamilton area, with anarchists as the main subjects.[38]

The Difference Between Caution and Fear

This essay has focused a lot on what the police and prosecution did well around the G20 Main Conspiracy case. This is not always

[38] The Hate Crimes and Extremism Unit also put out a report describing anarchist anti-cop graffiti in Hamilton, Ontario as a hate crime, meaning that they consider police to be an oppressed group. This report listed the upcoming G8/G20 protests, as well as local anarchist bookfairs, as being among the largest potential sources of hate crimes in 2010. One supposed anti-cop hate crime is the brawl[a] between police and some people at a folk show in Hamilton.

[a] https://supporthamiltonabc.blogspot.com/2009/02/hamilton-police-disrupt-folk-show-make.html

What Does This Repression and the Plea Deal Mean for Future Organizing?

What's the Precedent?

This plea deal does not set a strong legal precedent. Pleading guilty to counselling mischief for making a target list for direct actions, writing callouts, facilitating meetings, or even just speaking at them does not make those things illegal. A plea has little weight as a precedent because the facts have not been tested; they've just been agreed upon by the defendant's lawyer and the Crown.

Likewise, pleas are very specific. For an action to count as counselling, for instance, the person either has to intend for whomever they're talking with to commit a crime, or to be reckless as to the unjustified risk that they might. In pleading, the defendants concede this intention or recklessness, but it would take a trial to establish it for someone else, even if the material facts were identical.

It's also generally understood within the legal system that the courts, prisons, and the whole injustice apparatus are designed to pressure people to plead, often to an offense different than the one they're charged with. If the defendants had the option to go on trial for the charges they're pleading to, they'd probably win. But they don't have that option—if they opted for a trial, the charge against them would remain conspiracy.

Once you're in the court system on charges like the Main Conspiracy all the real decisions have already been made. The meaningful precedent from this case was established back in 2008: multi-year intensive policing against activists is now politically justifiable in Canada. The policing of the G20 risks becoming the new norm for political repression.

Introduction

The mobilizations against the Toronto G20 in 2010 continue to shape resistance in Southern Ontario, both in how it's been an opportunity for learning, and in how the continuing repression from it has affected our lives. You might have been one of the thousands of people who participated in protests, you might be one of hundreds of people who faced criminal charges as a result of this show of resistance. The police infiltration of anarchist and activist communities marked an escalation in repression that should be impossible to forget.

This article focusing on the G20 Main Conspiracy charges was first released in the fall of 2011. It describes the policing and legal strategies of the State and the organizing models of those targeted, to gain an understanding of one of the largest campaigns of repressions against anarchists in Canada so far. The following text is slightly edited, both to fix missing or incorrect information and to tell this story in a more timeless manner.

Our intention is not to become indignant at this lifting of Canada's democratic veil. The legal system is a weapon used against anarchists and against any group that poses a threat to the social order. Rather than just be outraged, let's focus on the many lessons to be taken from this experience about how to organize more safely and effectively in the future. The goal of this paper is to offer a few of these lessons and provide enough information for other communities to draw their own conclusions.

It remains impossible to write a perspective that unifies everyone's voices who experienced repression from resisting the G20 in Toronto in 2010. There are countless stories of people who faced serious repression and police violence during or since the G20. Each person's story is unique and important. Even the story of the G20 “Main Conspiracy Group” remains both incomplete and controversial. We want to embrace the reality that this is controversial—if we attempt to tell a story that everyone will agree

with, we fear it would silence a lot of the hard lessons and critiques we have explored in this piece.

The original release of this report was met both with hostility and with supportive relief that this story was finally being told. We appreciated all of the responses to the original writing—it helped us to realize the trauma that remains around our experiences of the G20 and the difficulty in learning important lessons. We have taken many of the critiques into consideration, making edits where we felt it important to do so.

Sore places are important to explore, and defensiveness prevents us from owning our shit. It's incredibly important for the story of these charges to be available, whether or not everyone agrees with it. We encourage you to add to this telling.

As we continue our struggles against the State and capitalism, the State continues its repression against anarchists and activists in Southern Ontario, across Canada, and internationally. We can only expect similar State strategies in the future—Joint Intelligence Groups (JIGs), ongoing infiltration and intelligence gathering, surveillance, etc. We want to distill timeless lessons, so those that continue to fight can learn from our story—both the mistakes and the inspiring resilience.

Since 2010, there has been a disturbing intensification of widespread criminalization in Canada. The Crime Bill (Bill C10) was passed in 2012 and is projected to imprison tens of thousands more people, informing the building of dozens of new high-tech prisons across the country. Anti-immigration laws are making it ever more difficult for people to stay in Canada, and easier for the State to imprison or deport people without status. The Quebec student strike in 2012 was met with Law 78, essentially criminalizing any participation in protest in an effort to suppress the uprising. The Pan Am Games are scheduled to take place in the Greater Toronto Area in 2015, and we know that police are forming a JIG similar to the one that directed the campaign of surveillance and harassment for the G20. In light of this escalation, we feel there is some urgency in reflecting on the story of the G20 Main Conspiracy Group.

effective in these situations? Is it even worthwhile to take avoiding jail as a basis for our organizing? How can we be safer and still effective within an understanding that we are enemies of the State and will be criminalized?

This reflects a fundamentally different approach to organizing. In this view, organizing that risks repression is best done within our circles of trust. We all have people in our lives whom we know very well—we know where they grew up, what organizing they've been involved in in the past, we know their families, what schools they went to, their passions, their fears, their strengths and weaknesses. If you were to map out the relationships between everyone you know, drawing strong bonds of trust where they exist, you would reveal a web of long-term relationships cemented with political affinity. This is your circle of trust.

There might be some people who you know only a little bit, and some who hang around your social circle that you don't know at all. By comparing your circle of trust with those of your close friends, it might become clear that some people are not well-known by anyone. If we want to include these people, we need to deliberately try to get to know them better, with the goal of broadening our circle of trust. This might reveal that they're not trustworthy, or it might lead to stronger affinity with them.

Expanding a circle of trust takes a lot more than simply announcing a meeting and working with whoever shows up, but it is far safer. There are strengths and weaknesses to both models. It was not possible to shut down the Get Off the Fence march by the time June 26 rolled around, not even by pre-arresting almost all the core SOAR organizers: too many people were already involved. One of the Main Conspiracy defendants said that Get Off the Fence met all of their stated goals for it. However, the repressive fallout from that action took years to recover from. Fireworks for Prisons never happened, so it can't be said to have achieved any of its goals in the streets. But the networks formed around it remain strong, and its organizers have been able to spend the years following the G20 building on them.

> Is it worth planning for open confrontation during summits and other moments of heightened security? Is it possible to both avoid jail and be

As anarchists, we situate ourselves within our local contexts of resistance and within a global struggle against capitalism. We are only beginning to understand global coordination of policing strategies, in a response to a growing tendency towards international anarchist solidarity. The pigs in your town are going to know about the Toronto G20, and they're going to use the same tools against you. Even if you aren't in Southern Ontario or Canada, hearing this story might help you when similar tactics are employed against your community.

Though some bonds have broken under the pressure of these experiences, many relationships have strengthened from the intense care and shared commitment it took to get through it. Together, we've confronted our fears of police and prison, and that's left us with a clearer understanding of the forces we fight against. We're confident that over the long term, these experiences and relationships will help us in our ongoing struggles for freedom.

The Filthy Back Story

The G20 was an unprecedented event in Southern Ontario for the scale of its security. The State spent more than a billion dollars on security for the event, more than five times the amount spent on any of the previous G20 summits. A large swath of downtown was surrounded by a security fence, with the roads leading in guarded by militarized checkpoints. In the two weeks leading up to June 26, 2010, police patrolled downtown in squads of ten or more. There were 18,000 police brought into the city from all across the country. Apart from these swarms of thugs, the normally bustling streets of Canada's largest city were eerily empty.

Meanwhile, several hundred million dollars of that big one billion went into a multi-year intelligence operation coordinated between several policing bodies. In the early days of January 2009, at the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) headquarters in Oshawa, the first meeting of the 2010 Joint Intelligence Group (JIG) took place. This meeting included representatives from the OPP, the federal Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP, equivalent to the FBI), CSIS (equivalent to the CIA), and local law enforcement from Toronto, Kitchener, and several other cities.

At this first meeting, they decided that "criminal leftist extremists are likely to attempt to disrupt the leaders summit." This immediately posed a question: who were these criminal leftist extremists? At least one law enforcement project in Southern Ontario was already working on this question. Travis Wilks, a Guelph police officer who later became part of the OPP Hate Crimes and Extremism Unit, was tasked with spying on anarchists in Guelph.

Wilks' project would become central to the investigation. But first, from intelligence gathered at previous mobilizations and events, the JIG came up with a short list of people known to them as criminal leftist extremists and placed them under intense surveillance. By mid-January of 2009, about a half dozen people's homes were being surveilled, sometimes around the clock. Their movements

own expectations around security culture, but often only knew of others as "the Toronto crew" or "the Guelph anarchists." This sort of loose knowledge was enough for people to come together to brainstorm what actions they would be interested in or to release a callout announcing them. However, this more general sort of conversation quickly gave way to planning the specifics of large actions, including soliciting others to take on roles in those actions.

In that transition, an important line was crossed. It should have involved a serious re-examination of security practices and the creation of some sort of group norm to replace the hodgepodge of different expectations. Remember, it doesn't matter if you aren't doing anything illegal. It is important to be able to organize openly and to involve new people in planning demonstrations, but few would argue against the fact that some organizing is best done behind closed doors. The line for what is safe to do fully in the open is always shifting, and in this case, people did not err on the side of caution.

The appearance of security culture to the outside (formal vouching at spokescouncils) was emphasized more than good security inside (actually knowing the people one is working with) because of the way SOAR operated. In a bit of magical thinking, SOAR chose to assume that it had not been infiltrated already and tried to build a security culture from there.

Here, it is worth comparing SOAR's organizing to that of another anarchist demo organized independently for Sunday June 27, Fireworks for Prisons (FwfP). This event was promoted as a confrontational march to the Don Jail, Toronto's most infamous prison. The rumor was that, in spite of the hype around SOAR's actions, it was to be the most exciting action of the weekend. FwfP was shut down completely by a tremendously heavy onslaught of police—helicopters, snipers, and snatch squads hiding in residential yards—before the group even gathered. However, none of the organizers of this march were ever charged. FwfP also held spokescouncils involving dozens of affinity groups, but these were apparently never infiltrated.

Perhaps some can imagine a victory in the courts and choose to invest a lot of energy there. The law is a weapon and nothing else—and it is not our weapon. Groups that believe they have nothing to hide make the easiest targets, and the State's agents are skilled at creating the story they want to find. Good security culture practices are necessary for ALL political organizing.

Explicit Security Culture Norms Based on Circles of Trust

Some of the security culture practices used by SOAR and other anarchists in the buildup to the G20 worked very well, but others didn't work at all. On one hand, the affinity group model and the form of the spokescouncils meant that the undercovers were unable to say for certain if many of the defendants were even in affinity groups, let alone who was in their groups. The infection was unable to spread between cells. On the other hand, because the spokescouncils were infiltrated, the representatives sent by affinity groups could be targeted. This was because of a crucial failure of the vouching system.

Brenda was able to hang around the meetings unchallenged, even entering spokescouncils at which other people's vouches were actively being checked, because everyone assumed someone knew her. People who had been involved in ousting Khalid from Guelph found themselves organizing with him again, albeit reluctantly, based on his being a member of AW@L, even though in some cases they knew the other people in AW@L even less well than they knew him.

The idea of formal vouching within SOAR met with resistance at first and was never implemented consistently at SOAR meetings. This made vouching at the spokescouncils meaningless, since people already organizing with SOAR could vouch people in without ever having been checked themselves.

Many of the people in SOAR were organizing together for the first time. Each group or community brought to the table their

were monitored, and anyone they interacted with was investigated as well. In their intelligence reports, these people were deemed Suspects, and the people they seemed to work with became Persons of Interest and were investigated further.

Yes, there was a list of people suspected of being threats to the G20 being compiled more than a year before the summit, in January 2009.

The people targeted at this early point were singled out for their long-term commitment to social and ecological justice struggles in the region. They were not targeted because it was suspected that they were doing something illegal, but rather because they had been involved in this work for many years, and were publicly known to be dissidents.

Travis Wilks' Obsession

The investigation that led to the G20 Main Conspiracy charges began in Guelph, a small city known for its vibrant anarchist movement and large number of Earth Liberation Front actions. Although the investigation would soon expand to include several other cities, all of the earliest disclosure notes revealed a focus on Guelph, and it was the only community targeted prior to the start of 2009.

Until the formation of the 2010 JIG though, this targeting was headed up by one cop named Travis Wilks, who was assigned to spy on Guelph anarchists following one particular incident in the fall of 2008.

There had been a squat in the woods on the old prison grounds in Guelph for a number of years, and it had been taking on an increasingly political character. After the squatters began pouring concrete to build the foundation of a permanent home, the city posted an eviction notice. The woodsquat crew responded by marching from the squat to downtown, where they nailed up eviction posters of their own in city hall and the local police station, giving those institutions until September 6 to get out of town. No

collective plan was ever acted on for the 6th, but a police vehicle was torched that night. No claim of responsibility was ever made, but the front page of the local paper made it clear[1] that it was being blamed on woodsquatter anarchists.

From September 2008, spying on anarchists in Guelph became Travis Wilks' full time job. Any time political graffiti went up in town, he was there fingerprinting the site. He kept a file of anarchist propaganda and writings released in the city. He knew where the various collective houses were, and personally drove by them almost every day, sometimes even going out of his way on his days off to check in. He spied on people's mail, he kept records of who rode which bike, and he called Internet service providers to get access to the browsing history of people's workplaces—presumably, their home connections were already monitored.

Basically, Wilks was a creep. And his creepiness did not go unappreciated by his superiors. When the JIG kicked into gear in January, he was one of the first people they contacted. Suddenly, the personal vendetta of one small town cop was transformed into a multi-million dollar intelligence-gathering operation. With a dedicated crew of six officers, he increased the number of houses he surveilled, made lists of who attended what meetings, who they lived with, and what other work they did. With this information, he guided the two undercovers (UCs) provided by the JIG, who called themselves Brenda Dougherty (real name Brenda Carey) and Khalid Mohammed (Bindo Showan), to infiltrate two different but overlapping groups. These groups were the Guelph Union of Tenants and Supporters and Land is More Important than Sprawl. We'll talk more about the tactics used by these undercovers later. These two groups were targeted because they were among the only groups in Guelph that had known anarchists as members.

[1]https://confrontation.wordpress.com/2008/09/10/arsonists-set-guelph-police-van-ablaze

Shit-talk and posturing are harmful. They put the person saying these things and those around them at risk. People went to jail in this case in part because of stupid jokes and bragging. Let's take this as an opportunity to re-examine the cultures within our movements.

One dynamic that emerged is that some of the organizers perceived as most experienced led the way with the shit-talk and posturing in SOAR meetings and elsewhere. Other organizers who felt less connected tolerated these behaviors and did not challenge them. Perhaps they thought that if they weren't talking about sketchy things themselves, then they were still "not doing anything illegal"…

It Doesn't Matter That You Don't Think You're Doing Anything Illegal

Many of the G20 Main Conspiracy defendants were organizing more publicly and with less caution than they usually would have. The scale of the demonstrations they were seeking to pull off involved reaching out beyond their circles of trust and becoming very visible. They were able to justify this to themselves because they did not believe they were doing anything illegal.

And most likely they were not. But that didn't matter. This case demonstrates that it's not the legality of your organizing that will determine whether you are targeted by the police: it's how successful your organizing is, how easy a target you are to gather information on, and if it's politically opportune for the State to strike.

SOAR was a network of anarchists, anti-authoritarians, and other radicals from more than ten cities, with alliances across the continent. They set public and ambitious goals that they had the capacity to follow up on, goals that were printed in huge letters across the front page of national newspapers. Destabilizing SOAR and the longer-term network that gave birth to it became a high priority for the JIG. As we have seen, the law was only one of the tools used to attack SOAR and many other groups that mobilized against the G20.

them. Particularly, AW@L had a culture of one-upping each other with this sort of bravado. Focusing on remarks like that meant the Crown could rework a weekend at the cottage swimming, drinking, and brainstorming about the G20 into some sort of terrorist training camp.

Posturing also includes outright lying. This comes up most tellingly around the way that people fabricated stories about how well they knew Khalid. The appearance of having good security culture became more important than actually having good security culture, which led to people inventing stories about themselves or those close to them having met Khalid's non-existent daughter. It also led person X to exaggerate how well and for how long he'd known Khalid, while boasting about all the cool illegal stuff they'd done together.

A culture that tolerates this kind of posturing is a culture that makes it very easy for police to enter and remain in a group, and also for Crown attorneys to present meetings as something they weren't. Of course, they could have done that anyway, and it's not the fault of these groups that they were targeted; but there's no reason we should make it this easy for them.

The second category is shit-talk. The prime example here is the way that person X used class- and race-baiting to shut down any challenges to Khalid's presence. This person would also often insult people behind their backs, and in this he was unfortunately far from alone. In Khalid's notes, we can see the way that shit-talk educated the police about the fault lines in our movements and communities, giving them convenient gossip to whisper into someone else's ear. It also directly did the cops' job for them by undermining trust and exaggerating differences, breaking down communication and reducing our ability to work together.

Most of us engage in this sort of behavior from time to time, but this doesn't mean we shouldn't be self-critical about it. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough how counterproductive this sort of attention-seeking shit-talk is. Both Brenda and Khalid engaged in this sort of gossipy sniping under the direction of their superiors, but plenty of people do it without being paid by the State.

The Formation of SOAR

Brenda and Khalid spent the next year participating in various projects in Kitchener, Stratford, and Guelph, working with the loose network of anarchists and anti-authoritarians from about eight of the small cities to the east and west of Toronto. These communities had been developing links of friendship and solidarity for the past several years by collaborating on actions that built relationships through the experience of struggle. These relationships between cities were based on being ready for action, on seeking confrontation, and had an urgent, youthful energy. They were only beginning to include space for a shared organizing culture, strategic debate, and deep personal trust when they were disrupted by the conspiracy charges.

In the years before the G20, cooperation between these cities represented a substantial increase in capacity for anarchist movements in the region. For instance, in the summer of 2009, organizers in Guelph mobilized this network to occupy the proposed Hanlon Creek Business Park site, taking and holding a construction site for a month and effectively stopping work for that year.[2] It also demonstrated a significant degree of coordination in protesting against the Olympic torch travelling through Southern Ontario, in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and others resisting the winter Olympics on the west coast.

The formation of the Southern Ontario Anarchist Resistance, or SOAR, in February 2010 was an attempt at formalizing this network for the purpose of organizing against the G8 and G20 summits. Both Brenda and Khalid were already well-embedded in organizing and so were able to participate in SOAR from the beginning.

Toronto organizers were sparsely represented in early SOAR meetings. This reflects some long-standing differences in organizing styles between Toronto and non-Toronto anarchists, with (broadly speaking) those in Toronto tending towards the formation of

[2] See hcbpoccupation.wordpress.com for more information on this action.

organizations and mass participation, and those from outside preferring to act informally in smaller groups. Anarchists from Toronto increasingly got involved with SOAR however, and by the end of March of 2010, it was based in the big city and was working closely with the Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN).[3]

This piece is not intended to be an analysis of SOAR, so we'll just offer some of the questions that SOAR's move to Toronto raises for us.

> What kinds of tensions exist between the political cultures in Toronto and the surrounding cities? In what ways were the intentions of SOAR affected by this shift to a space where the political culture was different? How did organizers' understanding of security and risk differ? Were the goals, forms of organizing, and public rhetoric appropriate to the level of risk?

The TCMN was intended to be a hub for organizing against the G20. The TCMN did not plan any actions itself, but its Action Committee attempted to coordinate actions called by others to ensure a separation of time or space between actions implying different risk levels.

SOAR announced three actions to take place on June 26 and 27, and began meeting bi-weekly, with its working groups meeting more often. Here's a brief summary of what SOAR worked on:

- Planned a confrontational march called Get Off the Fence to break off from the big labor march on June 26. This was presented as a continuation from the labor march, which intended to march in a circle, beginning and ending in the designated protest zone several kilometers from the fence. The labor march was rightly derided as pacifying, collaborationist,

[3]The TCMN changed its named to the Community Solidarity Network after the G20.

did for the G20 was very effective, but maybe next time we can keep the people doing it out of jail.

The Role of Posturing and Shit-Talk

In most situations, the State is not in a position to make it outright illegal to organize a march without the consent of the police, so they needed to find another reason to arrest the Main Conspiracy Group.[37] This meant that much of the evidence presented against them centered around jokes about violence and belligerent comments made by defendants and the people around them over the space of a year and a half.

For instance, at a meeting to make banners for a march against the Olympic torch, the notes taken by the undercover cop did not focus on the logistics of the march, which was the subject of the meeting. They focused instead on someone joking that they love the smell of gasoline fires and that they want to collect spark plugs because of how well they shatter windows. The Crown's strategy was to make it appear that this is what the meetings were about, that it was actions like this that were being planned. Never mind that the jokes being made varied wildly from moment to moment—someone saying "kill whitey" became a plan to murder all non-Indigenous people, for instance. Remember, a conspiracy can happen in a single conversation, even if it's renounced later.

We can look at this in a little more detail. The kinds of comments that the State chose to focus on can broadly be broken into two groups: posturing and shit-talk.

Posturing is bragging, bravado, boasting, macho aggressive humor, and so on. In this case, people made a lot of remarks about how much they wanted to fight police, sometimes getting into (admittedly hilarious) detail about what they would like to do to

[37]This is not to say that they aren't willing to take the step to make it illegal to plan protests without the permission of the police. Remember the Special Law, Bill 78,[a] during the Quebec student strike of 2012.

[a]https://web.archive.org/web/20170611150427/http://www.stopthehike.ca/legal-informations/bill-78

Remember, in the buildup to the G20, all protest was seen as undesirable. One tool the State and media use to discourage protest is creating a divide between "good"/legitimate protest and "bad"/illegal/illegitimate protest. We are encouraged to turn against each other on the basis of tactics, and our movements then self-police to marginalize those advocating any tactic the media considers "bad." Once those people are pushed out, all that remains is the most easily managed group with the demands that are the least threatening and easiest to satisfy. This split led to the largest march on the Saturday of the summit being permitted, planned in consultation with the police, and centered around a protest pen several kilometers from the summit.

The 20 people who were accused of conspiracy are among those who pushed most persistently, eloquently, and successfully for respect for a diversity of tactics in the buildup to the G20. They worked to support the permitted marches while also planning more confrontational events, and they were very public about the work they were doing. These organizers met with unions, hosted mass meetings, tabled large conferences, and engaged in debate and discussion for months. This made them the perfect combination of threatening and visible.

The police are not as concerned with preserving order at summits as they are with preserving the image of themselves maintaining order. For this reason, they are likely to snatch at the lowest-hanging fruit so they have a prize to show, rather than risk climbing the tree. In retrospect, it is clear that planning protests with SOAR was riskier than preparing to smash windows, but those who came prepared to smash windows largely took their security more seriously than SOAR did.

Some argue that one of the key roles of aboveground movements is to push tactics considered "fringe" into the mainstream where they become available to more people. Advocating a respect for diversity of tactics and popularizing more confrontational actions is very important work, but we need to be clear that it puts a giant bullseye on our heads. The organizing that SOAR and the TCMN

and nationalist. There was obviously space for something more empowering on the Saturday of the G20, and many people were drawn to Get Off the Fence as an alternative.

- Planned a roving dance party called Saturday Night Fever for that night.
- Called for an autonomous day of direct action of the 27th to disrupt delegates attempting to reach the convergence space inside the security zone.
- Held three spokescouncils and one large consulta meeting.
- Participated in the completely open TCMN Consulta, and met with reps from the Canadian Labour Council. They also held a large meeting with representatives from NGOs, labor groups, and community organizations to encourage their participation in Get Off the Fence. Many of these groups decided to support the Get Off the Fence march as an alternative to marching in a circle, and the consensus from there was to trust SOAR to organize the march safely and responsibly, having heard their concerns.

The Big Day Arrives

On Saturday, June 26, five days into an exciting and powerful week of mobilizations, less than twelve hours after the last spokescouncil meeting, the JIG conducted two home raids against organizers with SOAR, kicking in their doors with guns drawn between 4:30 and 5 am. Alex Hundert, Leah Henderson, Mandy Hiscocks, and Peter Hopperton were among the first of more than 1100 people who would be brought to the makeshift detention center on Eastern Avenue over the weekend. This detention center was a film studio rented by police and filled with cages and small trailers. The treatment of those arrested during the G20 is now infamous.[4] Several other high-profile arrests were made in the lead-up to the

[4]https://toronto.mediacoop.ca/story/conditions-g20-dentention-centre-are-illegal-immoral-and-dangerous/3918

G20, leaving people with serious charges.[5]

Most of the G20 Main Conspiracy Group were arrested over the weekend, with a few others being picked up over the weeks that followed. Notably, David Prychitka and Jaroslava Avila were not arrested until September[6]. Most of those arrested spent between ten days and three weeks in jail. One accused, Erik Lankin, spent three months in jail after being denied bail.[7]

In the afternoon of the 26th, however, undeterred by the tales of armed goons running cars off the highway to arrest their occupants or leaping from vans to tackle people off bicycles—just two of the ways that other "ringleaders" were pre-arrested—people took to the street en masse. A contingent gathered for the Get Off the Fence march, grouping around the black flags as indicated in the callout.

The plans for the march went no further than gathering. As accurately reported in the CrimethInc Eyewitness Report on the G20,[8] SOAR's process failed to produce a specific plan for the

[5]Byron Sonne was picked up on June 22nd and was accused of making bombs after police gathered any chemical they could find in his house into the kitchen and called in their bomb specialist, who looked at the pile and concluded, "Sure, you could make a bomb out of that." Byron Sonne spent a year in jail, finally got bail, fought his charges, and was acquitted of all counts. Find more details on his support group's website.[a]

Also, on June 18th, three people were arrested in Ottawa for firebombing a branch of the Royal Bank of Canada to inspire the upcoming revolts against the G20. Only Roger Clement was convicted for this, and was sentenced to more than three years in prison. See also a video of the firebombing,[b] details of the arrests[c] and a report on his sentence.[d]

[a]https://web.archive.org/web/20140829211435/http://freebyron.org/index.php/Main_Page

[b]https://youtube.com/watch?v=DL59qIx_XUk

[c]https://cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-rbc-firebombing-raids-see-3-charged-1.888503

[d]https://torontoabc.wordpress.com/2010/12/07/clement-sentencing

[6]The media seemed not to care much about David's arrest, but you can read about Jaroslava's here.[a]

[a]https://archive.is/U4vU5

[7]https://archive.is/vxTQg

[8]https://crimethinc.com/2010/07/05/toronto-g20-eyewitness-report

Security Lessons From This Debacle

Defeat Fear and Paranoia with Accurate Information and Practical Protections

One of the key consequences of the G20 Main Conspiracy case is the fear it has spread within activist and anarchist communities in Southern Ontario. People at meetings for Occupy actions in Toronto hesitated to join the logistics committees, because many of the people who did that work for the G20 were charged with conspiracy. Routine tasks like facilitation and taking minutes, as well as the entire idea of security culture, have been criminalized in this prosecution. Many people, especially those for whom the G20 in Toronto was their first experience with organizing, are worried that taking on these roles will get them into trouble.

This fear has been fed by the limited information available about the real basis of the G20 Main Conspiracy prosecution. In describing this case, the defendants and their supporters have focused on the relatively harmless and popular aspects of what the defendants are alleged to have done, like organizing buses, childcare, convergence spaces, trainings, and sending callouts.

This framing of the issue is propaganda aimed at gaining the support of more liberal activists, building a narrative around the criminalization of dissent. It is also a relatively safe narrative while the legal process was in motion. There is no room for truth while facts are being tried before the court, as any rumors or explanations in our movements are liable to become evidence. But by framing the charges around routine tasks, we erase the real reasons why these specific individuals were targeted with conspiracy charges, as opposed to the hundreds of other people doing similar work.

technologies itself—not just how you use them—works against good security practices.

march, and the spokescouncil the night before had simply agreed that "the plan is not to have a plan." In an inspiring show of courage, about 1000 people broke off the big march, some of whom participated in a black bloc.

The breakaway escaped an attempted kettle at King and Bay, forcing police to retreat, then moved north on Yonge street where a bunch of storefronts were smashed. Several police cruisers were also set on fire during the march in what has become the symbol of that day. SOAR's stated goal of humiliating the security apparatus and making the powerful think twice about ever having one of their parties here again appears to have been a success.

Following Get Off the Fence, the veneer of free speech was torn away in favor of full-on martial law. All other demos for the rest of the weekend were completely shut down by the outrageously brutal conduct of the 18,000 police brought in for the summit. It was in the designated protest zone at Queens Park and outside the detention center that the most intense police violence and largest mass arrests took place. With all this brutality, within twenty-four hours of Get Off the Fence the media were forced to abandon their script about bemoaning the broken windows in the face of the massive public outcry by the literally thousands of people who had been attacked by police.

In all, 1100 people were arrested, 330 were charged, over a hundred were accused of conspiracy, 20 were accused of being ringleaders, and six have plead guilty to counselling. About thirty others have also plead guilty to property destruction charges related to Get Off the Fence. One lone police officer, Babek Andalib Goortani—Officer Bob as his fellow officers apparently call him—was charged for assaulting protestors.[9]

[9]https://rabble.ca/politics/canadian-politics/toronto-police-officer-who-attacked-adam-nobody-found-guilt

So What's the Deal With These Charges?

The Three Pillars

In some ways, the G20 Main Conspiracy Group charges are exceptional; in others, they are predictable. Police use preemptive arrests, trumped-up conspiracy charges, and routine violence and surveillance against many communities in the Greater Toronto Area, with Muslim and Black communities being the preferred targets of the past decade. There have been conspiracy charges used against anarchists in Canada in the past, including the Germinal case after the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec city in 2001 and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty conspiracy the same year.[10]

What makes the Main Conspiracy case stand out is its sheer scale. There were originally twenty people charged, along with more than a hundred accused of being part of a conspiracy to "enact the plan." This stemmed from the work of eighteen undercover police officers who infiltrated more than a dozen different groups starting almost two years in advance. This represents an extreme escalation of repression, and it was explicitly targeted at three overlapping sectors of the resistance: anarchists, indigenous solidarity organizers, and migrant justice organizers. These are the three pillars of the Crown's theory, holding up their vision of one massive conspiracy. We break it down this way in order to understand the case they sought to make, recognizing that in reality, these groupings have never existed so clearly.

[10]See John Clarke's statement[a] on the staying of his conspiracy charges, marking the end of the Queen's Park Riot conspiracy case, as well as some notes on the Germinal conspiracy case.[b]

[a]https://dominionpaper.ca/features/2004/03/16/is_fightin.html

[b]https://rabble.ca/general/then-there-were-five

Facebook and Email Intel

One of the other main contributors to the size of the disclosure is the huge amount of online material collected. Both Brenda and Khalid spent a lot of time on Facebook and email. They especially used these as opportunities to get additional information about Persons of Interest. If they were missing someone's last name, odds are it was attached to an email account. If they were missing someone's date of birth, didn't have a current photo of them, or wanted a better sense of who is in contact with whom, they often turned to Facebook.

There is no evidence of technical surveillance taking place, like phone tapping or monitoring of emails. This is not to say these things didn't happen, but it's worth noting the huge volume of information obtained through simpler means, like friending on Facebook or getting on an email list. Many anarchists take more precautions against technical surveillance than they do against these more traditional methods—it doesn't matter if you take the batteries out of your cellphone if the cop in the room is wearing a wire.

No one expects Facebook to be private, but even seemingly benign information can be useful to the police. The simple act of having a friends list or linking to political articles gives undercovers information about how to target and befriend you. If they know what your interests are, they can more easily pass as experienced, legitimate activists when talking with you. As well, several people had huge swaths of their Facebook pages read back to them in court, with every time they ever clicked "like" on something anarchistic being used as evidence of a pattern of anti-social behavior.

Remember—you are not the client of your email provider or of Facebook: you are the product they offer to their advertisers. They don't care about you, and they are trying in every way to harvest information about you. They encourage you to share information about yourself with others, including police, so that they can sell details of your relationships and networks. The structure of these

to see what they were up to. Some people were filmed going to and from work every day for a month at a time. Some people were placed under extremely overt surveillance every day starting in May 2010 as an intimidation tactic. Surveillance teams typically kept eight-hour shifts, after which they would turn the spying over to a new pair.

They built up a database on license plates associated with political radicals, and ran all the passports and immigration data of the owners of these cars. If they were unsure where a Suspect lived, they would sometimes begin surveillance on his or her family, or call relatives asking if the Suspect was there, then hang up after receiving an answer. This practice landed them a couple of humorous red herrings, for instance, leading them to surveil the 95-year-old grandfather of one the defendants.

Particularly interesting were the Spin Teams. There were many two-person surveillance teams active during June 2010 in Toronto, but these were supplemented by a smaller number of six-person Spin Teams. These teams would simply wait in areas where suspects were being surveilled, standing ready to arrest them at a moment's notice. They were looking for things like shoplifting, postering, even jaywalking. Their purpose was to keep key organizers off the street by burdening them with charges and bail conditions in the days before the G20. Although we can't be sure, these teams were likely responsible for several arrests in the leadup to the mobilization, where a large group of cops would suddenly appear at once to arrest someone for postering, or graffiti, or not having a light on their bike.

In addition, wherever Brenda or Khalid went, there was a cover team nearby with a minimum of two officers and sometimes as many as eight. These cops were there to attack anyone who threatened or challenged the identity of the undercover. Something to be mindful of.

The first pillar, anarchists, is the most obvious, considering the group the State targeted is called Southern Ontario Anarchist Resistance. As mentioned above, anarchists in Southern Ontario have been slowly but surely building connections with each other, learning together, and becoming stronger. That said, the anarchist movement in this area remains small, relatively young, spread out, and not especially visible. But it has been growing, and in the past decade in particular, anarchists have been central to some exciting social struggles.

Some of these struggles to which anarchists have contributed their energy, analysis, and tactics in the decade leading up to 2010 include the Red Hill Valley protests in Hamilton; anti-development conflicts in Guelph; the movement against prison expansion in Kingston;[11] organizing against gentrification and surveillance in Peterborough;[12] labor struggles in Windsor; fighting runaway sprawl in London; creating youth social space in Burlington; resisting the criminalization of poverty in Kitchener; Ontario Coalition Against Poverty,[13] No One Is Illegal,[14] Anti-Racist Action (ARA) in Toronto;[15] the Ontario Common Front; and the Days of Rage[16] across the region.

The other two pillars of the Crown's theory are less obvious, but perhaps more important in explaining these charges. Anarchists involved in solidarity with indigenous sovereignty struggles came under surveillance far more intensely than did other anarchists. This is likely because of the ever-increasing resources dedicated to repressing First Nations Peoples in the past two decades. Since the Oka reclamation in 1990 and Ipperwash in 1995, the struggles of First Nations Peoples for land, health, and sovereignty have become

[11] https://epic.noblogs.org

[12] https://dominionpaper.ca/articles/4074.html

[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontario_Coalition_Against_Poverty

[14] https://web.archive.org/web/20111221213330/http://www.nooneisillegal.org

[15] https://web.archive.org/web/20240812211021/https://stopracism.ca/content/15-anti-racist-action-toronto-ara

[16] https://web.archive.org/web/20160324174611/https://www.nefac.net/node/66

steadily broader and more powerful, inspiring people throughout the region.

In particular the group AW@L[17] was targeted for their solidarity work, with almost half of their members charged with conspiracy. Starting off as a student group at Laurier University in Kitchener/Waterloo, AW@L was banned from campus for direct action against military recruitment. They then moved to downtown Kitchener where they started a community center, the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Centre for Social Justice. Early in its existence, AW@L developed a strong commitment to anti-colonial struggles, and worked to build alliances with First Nations in struggle across the province along with many other groups in different cities.

The anarchists involved in solidarity with indigenous struggles who were targeted by the JIG were primarily working with people at Six Nations, Tyendinaga, and Grassy Narrows. People at Six Nations had reclaimed land from the cities of Caledonia and Brantford, fending off the police and racists who attacked them along the way[18]. Tyendinaga is a reservation known for its self-governance, direct action, and active solidarity with other First Nations; in the years leading up to the G20, they were preventing attempts[19] by the Canadian State to install a fancy new police station on their land. Grassy Narrows is in Northern Ontario, and people there have been holding blockades against clear-cut logging, resource extraction, and the poisoning of their land and water for many years.[20]

The third pillar of the Crown's narrative is the migrant justice movement, one of the most dynamic and effective urban struggles in Canada of the past decade, with the group No One Is Illegal (NOII) taking an inspiring lead. NOII has been successful in

[17]https://web.archive.org/web/20130126140842/http://peaceculture.org/drupal

[18]Some history of Kanonhstaton,[a] also known as the Caledonia land reclamation.

[a]https://web.archive.org/web/20250507102415/http://www.resistance.1hwy.com/custom.html

[19]https://nymwarriorz.blogspot.com/2009_02_01_archive.html

[20]See also their support website.[a]

[a]https://freegrassy.net

a lamination machine. He would always check his watch when someone said something incriminating, so he could note the time later. He would slip away to the washroom to send text messages to his handlers. He says he only had four months of training before joining the OPP, and this was his first undercover assignment.

Surveillance Teams, Spin Teams, Watch Your Back

The defendants received about twenty thousand pages of disclosure from the State, supposedly all of the evidence against them. Much of this consists of reports by more than a hundred different officers involved in surveillance at different times, starting with Travis Wilks in 2008 and intensifying as the clocked ticked closer to the last weeks of June 2010. This is not intended to be an exhaustive summary of the surveillance that occurred; rather, it just highlights some of its more interesting aspects.

In the early days of this investigation, surveillance in Guelph and Kitchener was focused on a small number of people, less than a dozen, that police already considered to be criminal extremists. Some of these were singled out, designated Suspects, and placed under heavy surveillance. Anyone a Suspect spent much time with became a Person of Interest, and everyone they met was considered an Associate. Persons of Interest were investigated and followed around, and if they seemed involved in political organizing, they became Suspects as well.

This work was carried out by surveillance teams, usually two officers in a car. If the targets were riding bikes, the car would circle the block to keep them in sight. If they were walking, often one of the cops would get out and follow on foot, especially in Toronto where it's easy to disappear into a subway. They would follow people into restaurants or stores.

For the most part, the notes they made were banal and undescriptive, but knowing the movements of their targets became important later on when they would go actively looking for specific people

much worse. Even after the Main Conspiracy defendants' plea deal, after Khalid's attempts to entrap him were exposed, person X was still saying that the only reason people suspected Khalid was because of their "ingrained racism."

These polarizing personal attacks around race and class meant that not only was Khalid not challenged at that time, he in fact became immune from further scrutiny in the group. AW@L created an internal story that Khalid was firmly vouched for and that people had met the young daughter he was always claiming to have. This was not true. AW@L in turn vouched Khalid into SOAR, and when AW@L split into affinity groups for the mobilization, he was in one of them. People from Guelph and elsewhere who mistrusted Khalid saw this, but decided to not speak up about it further, many choosing to simply stay out of SOAR instead.

> In what ways do the discomfort around having honest conversations about race and privilege in our movements make it easier for people like Khalid and person X to disrupt them?

Eventually, someone in AW@L got ahold of Khalid's cellphone and saw something suspicious enough that they confronted person X about it. Rather than acknowledge a mistake, person X simply claimed that he had never vouched for him. On June 12, just a few weeks before the mobilizations against the G20 were to begin, Khalid was finally kicked out of the organizing. A feeling of dread settled onto those who had been closest to them, but it seemed too late to do anything about it.

As of this writing, person X is still participating in radical organizing and has not been confronted about his behavior.

Khalid was involved in the Get Off the Fence working group of SOAR. He kept quiet and didn't contribute much but always kept notes. He was generous with money, always taking people out to dinner and encouraging them to have another drink on him. He would gladly go hours out of his way to shuttle people around in his big white van. He had access to cheap photocopies and

keeping immigration enforcement out of women's shelters and schools, and has managed to overturn several deportation orders, which has left the State eager to find ways of harassing them and their allies.

NOII is most active in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, and it is no surprise that the JIG picked a key organizer from each city to throw into the conspiracy case: Jaggi Singh, SK Hussan, and Harsha Walia. However, this pillar of the State's conspiracy narrative collapsed the most quickly—they simply didn't have the evidence to make NOII fit into their evil league of criminal leftists, even by their own flimsy standards. Harsha's charges were dropped at her bail hearing, and those charges were considered so outrageous that she was allowed to walk straight out of the prisoner's box and into the body of the court. Jaggi plead guilty[21] to counseling mischief on June 21, 2011 after an unsuccessful attempt to have his no-demonstration condition removed. He was not sentenced to any additional time in jail. Hussan's charges are being withdrawn as part of the plea deal to resolve the Main Conspiracy charges.

What's a Conspiracy? A Crime in a Single Conversation

As the seventeen defendants wrote in their statement, "The government made a political decision to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to surveil and infiltrate anarchist, Indigenous solidarity, and migrant justice organizing over several years. After that kind of investment, what sort of justice are we to expect?"[22] There is no victory in the courts, and it's well-known that in Canada, conspiracy charges are among the most difficult to beat.

There are two basic elements of a conspiracy. One is an intention to agree to commit an illegal act, and the second is an agreement

[21] https://clac-montreal.net/en/jaggi

[22] The defendants' website,[a] started after their plea deal, contains a collective statement as well as individual statements from many of them.

[a] https://conspiretoresist.wordpress.com

or plan to commit that act. That's all. Unlike in the United States, there need be no acts taken in furtherance of the conspiracy; any such acts are just used to prove the existence of the agreement. A conspiracy can take place in a single conversation, and it remains a conspiracy even if, in later conversations, the people decide not to do it.

Brenda and Khalid, the two main undercovers (UCs) from the G20 Main Conspiracy case, were in place for a year and a half each, and took detailed notes on thousands of conversations. At trial, the defendants might successfully demonstrate that ninety-nine out of a hundred meetings or chats did not constitute conspiracy, but the Crown only has to convince the judge or jury once to secure a conviction. These odds are clearly stacked against the defense.

In addition, the police have the only written record of events. As UC Khalid repeatedly said in court, his mission was to look for evidence of illegal activities. This means that anything not about illegal activities would not have been written down. The narrative of a year of just about anyone's life told in such a way could justify conspiracy charges. Apart from testifying oneself—and one would surely be less credible than a cop and less consistent than a notebook—it is impossible to add anything to this narrative. The defendants were forced to situate themselves within the police's version of events.

Canadian conspiracy law was first developed to deal with striking workers in the early part of the 20th century—look into the Winnipeg General strike of 1919—but it soon fell into disfavor and was seldom used. In the early nineties, conspiracy law was revived and rewritten to target biker gangs and mafias, and it quickly became a weapon to target so-called "street gangs" composed of young people of color. In recent history, it has been a deeply racist branch of law, used to go after entire social circles as a form of collective punishment. Now, nearly a hundred years after these laws were first written to combat organized revolt, they are being used to target anarchist organizing.

drops, discussions, and film screenings. Many of their events and meetings were completely open to the public, while even the events that were members-only were still relatively easy to access if one was willing to make the time commitment of becoming a member.

This more participatory political culture had many strengths, but unfortunately it also came with a less well-developed security culture, and bravado about willingness to carry out illegal actions and jokes about killing cops were generally accepted. Khalid of course happily made notes on all these comments for a solid year, all of which the prosecutors were equally happy to read back in court.

It's important to note that although AW@L is accused of planning offensive violence, they have always been a group that practices non-violent direct action as an effective way of gaining attention and achieving goals. They also encourage collective self-defense against police aggression through time-honored protest tactics like reinforced banners and de-arresting. AW@L has been cast by the Crown as some sort of terrorist group complete with a training camp—a weekend of swimming and brainstorming at a cottage—but this is a gross distortion of the inspiring role that AW@L played in this region for the years it was active.

As Khalid set about buying people drinks, fishing for incriminating comments, and pushing for more militant tactics, it was inevitable that word from Guelph would eventually make it to the folks in AW@L. Person X caught word of the rumors first though, and called up Khalid to reassure him that he would take care of everything. This person then embarked on a small campaign of class- and race-baiting against all the white middle-class kids who "fake being radical," silencing those trying to out his good buddy Khalid.

The whole time Khalid was pretending to be person X's friend, he was trying to talk him into buying explosives. Person X humored him about this possibility, even going so far as to meet with a supposed "rich uncle" who would be willing to finance the project. It seems unlikely that person X ever intended to do this, but it's only luck that no one else got caught up in this ludicrous scheme. The consequences of Khalid's infiltration could easily have been

to exclude drugs and alcohol from the site, this person used it as an opportunity to single out some of the main organizers of the occupation for bullying, arguing that this decision showed how privileged and disconnected the organizers were. Because he was using drugs and alcohol at the time, he spent a lot of time off the site, and he began catching rides between Guelph and the Hanlon Creek with Khalid.

Both Khalid and person X are people of color, while the occupation was predominantely white. This person talked with Khalid about how he shouldn't worry about being excluded, that it was just a bunch of privileged white kids. The Hanlon Creek occupation and the anarchist movement in general definitely have a lot of issues around race and racism, and it's completely likely that both Khalid and person X have grievances from that action that anarchists could learn from. Our failure to effectively address racism in our movements creates cracks that cops and snitches can exploit, which is also an element of this story. The distinction we'd like to make, though, is the difference between trying to deal with an issue and engaging in divisive shit-talk in order to silence people.

Khalid began buying person X drinks, and three weeks later this person was telling organizers in Kitchener that Khalid was his trusted friend. Based on doing a couple of banner drops together and accompanying Khalid as he pretended to buy illegal cigarettes from other OPP officers, this person publicly claimed that he and Khalid had done illegal actions together, and that therefore Khalid was trustworthy.

At this point, being basically excluded from Guelph anarchist organizing, Khalid turned his attention to Kitchener and to AW@L. Here he found a different political culture that was easier for him to infiltrate. The Guelph anarchists generally avoided forming organizations, preferring to work on projects together informally on the basis of friendship. AW@L on the other hand was a formal organization with a list of members and a regular meeting space that would actively recruit new members. AW@L emphasized making it easy for people to get involved in political organizing and direct action, holding frequent protests, leafletings, banner

And Just What Exactly Are They Accused of Conspiring To Do?

The co-accused shared three main charges: conspiracy to assault police, conspiracy to obstruct police, and conspiracy to commit mischief over $5000. In a general way, what the Crown is alleging is that the defendants planned to disrupt the G20 summit and create chaos in downtown Toronto. The specific charges are the means by which they intended to do so: attacking police, de-arresting protestors, destroying property.

One interesting point that the Crown made is that, in all the tens of thousands of pages of disclosure, the defendants never discuss whether or not to disrupt the G20 and interfere with the security operation: they only talked about how to do it. From there, the Crown believes that this means the agreement to disrupt predates the formation of SOAR. This is an interesting premise and is worth examining.

Although the Crown does not need to prove an explicit agreement to disrupt the G20 and interfere with the security—this can be understood from the tactical discussions—in order for their crazy theory to float, all the defendants, along with the dozens of unindicted co-conspirators, need to have a common unlawful motive. The Crown says this unlawful motive was common among all of these different people before any of them had ever met to discuss it in SOAR. But SOAR's only basis of unity was that one be an anarchist from the area who had worked in the movement enough to be vouched for.

The Crown's theory, then, is that having anarchist values constitutes an unlawful motive, that organizing protests around those values is a conspiracy, and that therefore any jokes made in the pub about fighting cops become a crime.

Why Did This Story Take So Long to Come Out?

The use of conspiracy law against the G20 mobilizations is just an extension of the exceptional security that surrounded the G20 as a whole. It is as glaring an indication of the State's illegitimacy and impunity as the security fence, the detention center, and the mass arrests, all of which have been abundantly discussed. Why then have the Main Conspiracy charges been so much less talked about?

Since the Main Conspiracy charges were laid, the State has very successfully harassed and pressured anyone who spoke out about this case into silence. The defendants especially have been targeted for even simply describing the charges in public. They have been under extremely restrictive bail conditions, including the infamous no-demo condition; non-association with their co-accused and an indefinite number of others; and house arrest. The legal matters have also been covered by a publication ban. We'll look at each of these factors in turn, but the end result is that people were scared to spread information, defendants could not take a lead on raising awareness, and reliable information was impossible to come by.

The No-Demo Condition

The principal tool used to silence the defendants was the bail condition that read: *Do not attend or participate in the planning of any protest or public demonstration.* It is fondly referred to as the no-demo condition. This condition is tremendously broad, and replaces the Clarke condition (after John Clarke of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), a defendant in the OCAP conspiracy case) that simply prohibited one from attending any illegal protest. It represents a serious escalation in the State's use of bail conditions to silence defendants before trial, preventing them from mounting campaigns to raise awareness and gain support.

Hanlon Creek and some of the last old growth forest remaining in Guelph.

During this period, Khalid stood out for his habit of taking people off to one side and trying to get them to talk about "doing whatever it takes" to make sure the business park didn't happen. He often invited people (who the disclosure revealed were assigned to him as targets) to come have drinks with him in order to have such conversations. This kind of sketchy behavior set off alarm bells among anarchists in Guelph.

At first, people approached him politely and told him that talking about illegal activity at LIMITS was unsafe and unwelcome, but he didn't stop. By June 2009, Khalid was considered to be a cop by anarchists in Guelph and their close allies in a few other cities. When the occupation of the Hanlon Creek site began in July, Khalid was deliberately excluded.

But he was never publicly outed, nor was he explicitly dis-invited from anything. At the occupation, he was simply told that he was making people uncomfortable on the site, and was put in charge of bringing things in from town. Khalid had a large white passenger van that he was always quick to offer; his story was that he worked for a property management company and had to travel around a lot.

Meanwhile, on the site, another conflict was brewing. This is a delicate thing to talk about. There was one person in particular—let's call him person X—who went out of his way to lie and bully to keep Khalid involved in anarchist organizing. It is impossible to tell the story of Khalid's involvement in the G20 Main Conspiracy investigation without talking about how person X's behavior sheltered an undercover cop and contributed to people going to jail. In writing about him, we are relying wherever possible on people's own experiences with him during this time rather than on Khalid's notes about him.

Since his arrival on the occupation site, person X had been taking pleasure in exaggerating sectarian differences and bragging about his organizing experience. When those at the occupation decided

She even made it into the spokescouncil meetings, which Khalid was never able to do. SOAR had issued a callout inviting people to organize themselves into affinity groups, and then one representative from any affinity group that could be vouched for was invited to attend the spokescouncils. Brenda simply faked having an affinity group. When one person questioned her as to whom she was working with, Brenda got defensive, chiding the comrade for bad security culture.

On June 25, 2010, Brenda wore a concealed recording device into the final spokescouncil meeting. As anyone present that night knows, it was probably one of the top ten most unpleasant anarchist meetings of all time, and after several hours of discussion, all that could be agreed upon was not to have a plan. Armed with this knowledge that there was no plan, Brenda's superiors ran off to whatever corrupt judge was awake at that hour and got themselves a whole stack of warrants that they moved on immediately.

> Brenda was the more subtle of the two undercovers, but were there opportunities to call her out? At what point does our respect for people's privacy give way to a need to know personal details of each others' lives so that we can build deeper trust? How can we better notice and communicate about people who we hesitate to trust, whether or not we suspect them of being cops?

The Adventure of Khalid

Khalid appeared on the scene rather earlier than Brenda, back in November 2008. He attended a film screening in Guelph debunking myths around the Vancouver Olympics. A few months later, he reappeared, regularly attending meetings of the group Land is More Important than Sprawl (LIMITS). LIMITS was organizing against the construction of a business park on a tributary of the

Crown attorneys have attempted to impose this condition on at least one other anarchist since the G20.[23]

The police in Toronto, under the leadership of John Vandenheuvel, used this as an opportunity to harass and bully defendants with complete impunity. One defendant was pulled over while driving home from a private fundraising event for the legal defense fund. Although the event was invitation-only and very successful, she was threatened with arrest if she ever did anything like that again.

Out of the defendants, Alex Hundert was the most persistent and most public in denouncing the charges, and early on he was singled out for intense repression. While on house arrest, he was invited to speak on a panel at Ryerson University about the criminalization of dissent at the G20, and he attended the event with a surety in compliance with his bail conditions. His remarks are available on Youtube. When he arrived home afterwards, he was arrested[24] for violating what has come to be known as the "no-demo" condition.[25]

At his bail hearing for the breach charges, the Crown pushed for a new condition that read "No expressing of political views in the company of others." Alex refused to sign and so returned to jail. But that night, he was taken from his cell by guards and confronted by higher-ups in the prison who threatened him with indefinite solitary confinement if he didn't sign the conditions immediately. Surrounded by these brutal thugs, Alex decided to sign the paper. He was then kicked out of the jail in the middle of the night and had to walk home.

Alex immediately wrote an article about his experience and the new condition. Three days later he was re-arrested, this time for allegedly writing down the license plate of the Crown attorney's car while leaving a bail review hearing where the Crown was trying

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[23] This was Mohammad Reza Hedayat, charged with assaulting police after a cop got a rib broken at an ARA action in Toronto.

[24] https://web.archive.org/web/20111130024735/http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/statica/2010/09/g8g20-communiqu%c3%a9-re-arrest-alex-hundert-%e2%80%93-why-police-should-be-charge

[25] See also Alex's blog.[a]

[a] https://alexhundert.wordpress.com

to harshen his conditions. He was charged with intimidating a justice system participant, and spent about two months in jail before managing to get bail again.

Although Alex dealt with this repression bravely, all this harassment did serve to keep the other defendants from taking similar risks. Some defendants found that they were able to continue organizing in the ways they had been before, as long as they didn't talk about the G20. They could either keep organizing and stay quiet about the G20, or talk about the G20 and risk so much heat coming down that they wouldn't be able to do anything at all. Or so the choice appeared. This meant that although most of the defendants stayed politically active even while on house arrest, they didn't speak up about the conspiracy charges.

> What were the consequences for the Main Conspiracy defendants of being pressured into silence about their case? Is the risk of further repression worse than the risk of isolation from staying quiet? Can there be meaningful solidarity if defendants do not call for it? Can we expect defendants to risk further repression if they don't know that the solidarity will be there?

Non-Association Conditions

For criminal charges in Canada, it's routine that co-accused are only let out on bail if they agree to sign a condition that they won't associate or communicate with each other. In political circles, these conditions are routinely ignored: some people with non-association conditions have even been arrested together again without being charged for breach of bail. Maybe it was the knowledge of the surveillance they'd been under for years, or maybe it was the huge sums (up to $150,000) pledged by their sureties for bail, or maybe it was trauma from the experience of arrest and prison, but from

Discussions in the years since Brenda was revealed to be a cop have shown that many people kept Brenda at arm's length, but never talked about why. One reason some people described for why they never became closer friends with her is that she didn't really have a political analysis and acted pretty naive. She always helped out with whatever was going on, but never offered any ideas. In fact, more than just not talking about their mistrust, many people ended up projecting a lot of friendliness towards Brenda, perhaps unconsciously responding to the enthusiastic friendly attitude Brenda used. This projected friendliness towards her may be why the crucial question “who vouched for Brenda?” was never asked until after she was revealed as a cop—people appeared to know her better than they actually did.

She had a very clear sense of who she was targeting, and made conspicuous efforts to get those people involved in SOAR. In one instance, she even went as far as yelling at someone about how they should get over their shit to do more important work. One night, she invited people over to her apartment to watch a movie, and the space was oddly empty. There was nothing in the fridge, no pictures of family, just some radical posters on the wall. She had a fake boyfriend named John who was also an undercover cop. He had a military tattoo on his arm and remained active in London under a different name for a little while even after Brenda was outed.

There is some confusion around how exactly Brenda became a part of SOAR. It doesn't seem that anyone vouched her in, yet she was present even at early visioning meetings in Guelph, more than a month before the name SOAR was first uttered. It seems that she was simply “around” when these early meetings were announced. She was then able to show up unchallenged as the meetings began to involve more people, and was just grandfathered in when the group decided to call itself SOAR and adopt a loose vouching system. She also had a car and would offer people rides to meetings, so she was usually seen arriving with someone trusted, diffusing concern from the group, while the people she travelled with thought someone else had vouched her in.

profile actions in that city. In March 2009, as they were getting to know Brenda, their main project was a weekly meal serving downtown, and they were pleased to find someone who would show up reliably, work tirelessly, and always volunteer to wash the dishes.

These meals were cooked in the kitchen of one of the busiest collective houses in town. By hanging around there and encouraging gossip, Brenda quickly got to know the social and political layout of the anarchist community in Guelph. Gossip was one of Brenda's favorite tools for gathering information. She encouraged people to vent their frustrations to her, to talk to her if they were feeling sad, and she was never above dropping bits of information gleaned from others in order to provoke those feelings. In the winter of 2009–2010, the Guelph community was experiencing a large and serious internal conflict that took up a lot of energy. Between trips to Toronto, Brenda spread rumors and invented lies to make the situation worse, all while offering people rides to the next SOAR meeting where she could build up cases against them.

She took exhaustive notes on who was making out with whom and who was angry at whom. As a result of her work, the State now knows quite a bit about some of the fault lines in Guelph and the surrounding communities. We need to keep in mind that years from now the State might try to play on unmended divisions to pressure us into incriminating our former comrades even if we're no longer active in the movement. There's a recent case out in Vancouver where American prosecutors exploited decades-old divisions in the American Indian Movement to convict John Graham for a murder that occurred more than thirty years ago.[36] It's likely that Guelph was initially targeted on account of the large number of anti-police and anti-development arsons there, and we can expect that those investigations are still slowly moving along even as these charges come and go.

[36] See also background information about John Graham's case.[a]

[a] https://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/trial-john-graham-native-land-defender-begins/5281

the beginning, the Main Conspiracy Group decided to take their non-association conditions very seriously.

The rest of the movement took them seriously too, generously organizing to help accommodate these conditions once the defendants had some freedom of movement back. But there was another non-association condition too. This one read: do not associate with anyone known to you to be a member of SOAR or AW@L. Some defendants also had non-association with members of NOII.

It would be difficult to overstate the amount of fear and trauma among activists in Southern Ontario after the G20, with anarchists and their close allies most affected. The newspapers were full of wanted lists, dozens of their comrades were in jail, the streets were still full of police, and the courtrooms were packed with prisoners from the G20 trying to get bail. It didn't take long before everyone knew that SOAR was considered a criminal organization, and as the Main Conspiracy Group began to get out on bail, that it was considered to have "members."

Just a few weeks before, hundreds of people were involved in planning actions against the G20 through SOAR. It never had formal membership—anyone known and trusted by those present on a given day could show up and take on tasks. It was not open, but it was by no means closed. It had a core of perhaps two dozen people who were most consistently involved, but even this was fluid, with people stepping in and out depending on their other commitments. In the days following the G20, however, a line was drawn through the movement: member of SOAR or not member of SOAR, anarchist criminal or just plain anarchist.

It's not that people distanced themselves from SOAR, necessarily. It's that lovers were scared they would be prevented from seeing their partners, roommates wanted their friends back, siblings risked being kept apart. People just stayed quiet. They kept their heads down and waited for the storm to pass. Many of them were waiting for some kind of statement to appear, some website about "Free the G20 Twenty" or whatever the Main Conspiracy Group would be called. But that never happened—the defendants couldn't even go outside or speak to each other—and so SOAR and AW@L went

from being inspirational groups to being vaguely shameful subjects that people avoided talking about too much.

This condition meant that it has taken a very long time for the defendants to reconnect with people. Some interpreted non-association with SOAR and AW@L to not forbid them from seeing anyone because neither group still existed and SOAR never had members. Others played it safe and kept clear of any face they recognized from a meeting.

> The non-association conditions were the most disruptive element of the Main Conspiracy charges for the network of radicals in this area and for the defendants personally. We need to seriously reconsider signing these things. Or, if we choose to sign them, we need to have a plan for how to not obey them.

House arrest doesn't take much explanation. For the better part of a year, the defendants were not allowed outside unless in the company of a surety (one of the people who bailed them out). Since most people only had two or three sureties, and these were often parents, the options for leaving the house were extremely limited.

The defendants never took a solid lead on organizing politically around their own case, and neither did anyone else. There was some organized support for people on house arrest or in jail, and some fundraising to get folks through the "prelim"—the preliminary inquiry—but the big push back against the charges never appeared. For some defendants, this absence of political momentum was the biggest factor in deciding to plead guilty rather than continue on to trial. Without political momentum around the case, the charges felt like an inconvenience rather than an opportunity or site of struggle. This is not to blame anyone, but it hopefully explains why ending the charges quickly seemed to the defendants like a good choice on a political level.

and patches, as if proclaiming with the stickers on her laptop that she was certainly not a cop.

She was perhaps in her mid-forties, and her back story was extremely effective at shutting down any questions about her life. She claimed to have been born in Victoria, British Columbia, and then to have moved to England in her youth. She moved back to Canada to flee her abusive relationship, and moved to Guelph to try and get back on her feet. Fear of pursuit by her abusive partner meant that she was typically guarded about details of her life. Because of the sensitive nature of her story, she was never questioned further, and was in fact welcomed into a collective house when she needed a place to stay. Of course, she only wanted to live there to get closer to one of the people she was targeting.

It's worth noting that at a certain point, she attempted to change her story to make it more radical. One person describes a moment in the summer of 2009 when Brenda mentioned having been involved with the Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC) campaign in England[35]. She said she left the country when her friends started getting arrested for arson attacks against companies linked to Huntington Life Sciences. The person hearing this story was surprised that she was sharing it with someone she just met, but never passed it on to anyone else until much later.

> The person who heard this story described never revealing it because it's common security culture practice to not talk about someone else's involvement in criminalized activity. Should there be exceptions to this principle?

Brenda wormed her way into people's lives through the Guelph Union of Tenants and Supporters (GUTS), a radical anti-poverty group in Guelph that had recently been involved in some high-

[35] See this CrimethInc text[a] on the SHAC model and the repression against them.

[a] https://crimethinc.com/2008/09/01/the-shac-model-a-critical-assessment

two examples, undercovers among the medic collective of the TCMN absconded with most of the medical supplies, and an undercover in the CLAC directed the buses arriving from Montreal on the Friday night preceding the G20 to unload their passengers in the wrong part of town. There were also cops in the TCMN working to block consensus on diversity of tactics, cops among the legal observers pretending to uphold protestors' charter rights but actually building charges against them (for instance, against Kelly Pflug-Back[34]), and cops in Greenpeace trying to talk young people into committing crimes.

It doesn't matter if you aren't doing anything illegal. If there are cops in your group, you are at risk, and if you tolerate their presence you are putting other people in the movement at risk. Their presence is not benign, they are not just checking to make sure you aren't committing crimes—they are actively trying to disrupt and undermine you.

The Tale of Brenda

Of course, the Southern Ontario Anarchist Resistance was also infiltrated. The cops who called themselves Brenda Dougherty and Khalid Mohammed operated in different ways, targeted different people, and entered SOAR through different routes, but both were ultimately successful in gathering huge amounts of information to use against anarchist organizers. We'll look at them each in turn.

Brenda was the more experienced undercover, having done numerous prior operations relating to prostitution, gambling, and organized crime. On her first day on the job, she ordered some PETA t-shirts on the Internet, watched V for Vendetta, and bought a Ward Churchill book—no joke. She dressed colorfully, had a friendly smile, and liked to wear her politics on her shirts, buttons,

[34]Kelly Pflug-Back was sentenced to 15 months in jail based largely on the testimony of a cop masquerading as a legal observer during Get Off the Fence. See also a letter from Kelly to her supporters.[a]

[a]https://web.archive.org/web/20130103000141/http://kellypflugback.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/dear-friends

Miscellaneous Harassment

Apart from the factors relating to the bail conditions of the defendants, there were a few other instances in which the police intimidated the broader movement out of getting too curious about the Main Conspiracy charges.

One of the co-accused, David Prychitka, who was arrested three months later than the others, was finally picked up just two hours after attending an event in Hamilton denouncing the criminalization of dissent at the G20. The police had his address, so they could have arrested him at any time, but they only finally did because he was starting to make a fuss. Some people had known since early July that there were still two more warrants in the main conspiracy case, and David was one of those living with the threat of imminent arrest. However, many people in Hamilton did not know this, and only saw a local activist ambushed and arrested by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) after a day of protest. Likewise, Jaroslava was arrested on September 29, 2010, after leaving an event. Both of these public, long delayed arrests contributed to a general culture of fear and paranoia.

The OPP also sent an agent to the people who run anarchistnews.org to pressure them to remove a link to the website SnitchWire from their page.[26] SnitchWire is a hub for news relating to undercover police and informants in political movements, and both Brenda[27] and Khalid[28] were featured on it. Officer Vandenheuvel had been unsuccessful in convincing blogspot to take SnitchWire down, so he contacted local police in the United

[26]An Anarchist News admin was approached at their home by local police acting at the request of the OPP. They threatened legal action if the SnitchWire links were not removed. Because the posts had already been up for several months and barely received any traffic, they decided the consequences of removing them were minimal. They posted a description of these events on anarchistnews.org shortly after.

[27]https://snitchwire.blogspot.com/2010/07/police-infiltrate-anarchists-and.html

[28]https://snitchwire.blogspot.com/2010/08/concerning-potential-infiltration-in.html

States to go to the homes of the Anarchist News crew and order them to remove the link.

On August 25, 2011, journalist Dan Kellar from Kitchener was arrested two days after he made a blog post describing his experiences with the undercovers, and referring to details from the SnitchWire posting. He was charged with threatening a police officer and released on the condition that he remain a kilometer away from either of the UCs—which conveniently prevented him from attending the preliminary inquiry that began two weeks later. His charges have since been dropped.[29]

Keep It Out of the Papers: The Publication Bans

Since the earliest days of bail hearings back in June 2010, the legal proceedings against the Main Conspiracy Group were covered by a publication ban. These bans are common in Canada, and are issued all but automatically if a defendant requests it. In this case, if any defendant requested a ban, it would be applied to all of them, as the evidence was the same.

The standard publication ban prevents anything brought up in court from being published in any way until the ban is lifted, either by the charges resolving, the beginning of a proper trial, or the order being struck down by a judge. When the ban was originally requested by a lawyer for the defense, the defendants had not yet had any opportunity to discuss, having just been arrested that morning. The media were into their seventh hour of filming police cars burning while making fearful noises, and in that moment it seemed best that they not be given a group of ringleader-scapegoats to tear into.

Publication bans are useful to defendants and are commonly issued because of the recognized bias that exists in bail hearings and preliminary inquiries. A bail hearing is presided over by a Justice of the Peace who is not a judge and is usually not even trained

[29] https://toronto.mediacoop.ca/newsrelease/14166

Undercovers, Snitches, Surveillance, and More

Infiltrate Everything

It has been proven that the police had at least seventeen long-term undercovers infiltrating a wide variety of groups in the years leading up to the G20. These groups included Greenpeace, Common Cause Ottawa, Mining Justice, the Toronto Community Mobilization Network (TCMN), the Convergence des Luttes Anti-Capitaliste (CLAC), and the legal observers trained by the Movement Defence Committee, among others.

Some might wonder why the police would bother infiltrating so many clearly aboveground groups. They did it for basically the same reason that they attacked all the people sitting on the grass in the designated protest zone while the confrontational march tore up Yonge street. The problem for them is not a matter of separating the bad protestors from the good protestors: all protest is undesirable in the eyes of the police. It has violent elements and pacifist elements, but the police see those elements as part of a single whole, and it is this whole that they aim to break.

The police are happy to stay away from those who will fight back against them, preferring to attack those who are unwilling or unable to defend themselves. A breakoff march like Get Off the Fence only exists in the context of a larger mobilization, so the police tried to end that mobilization as quickly as possible by attacking its most vulnerable elements. The police have tried to paint the violence in Queens Park as the actions of a few bad cops, the result of a breakdown in the chain of command, but this is clearly a lie. Using their undercovers, they initiated a similar strategy in these groups years in advance, seeking to undermine and disrupt all protest.

Even when they couldn't find evidence of "illegal" protest activity, undercovers could still cause a great deal of damage. To give just

as a lawyer. Instead they are "pillars of the community": former cops, school principals, and famous athletes. They are notoriously conservative and unpredictable, and by routinely denying bail, they are responsible for about sixty percent of all people incarcerated in Canada. So much for presumed innocence. In a bail hearing, the Crown prosecutor has nearly unlimited leeway to make any claim about the defendant without needing to back it up. Evidence cannot be meaningfully challenged; all the defense gets to do is present reasons why the accused person should be released.

The prelim has more of a veneer of legitimacy, but even the legal system still recognizes it as slanted in favour of the prosecution. A preliminary inquiry is a hearing at which the Crown has to demonstrate that all of the elements of the charges are present in the evidence. If they can demonstrate at least some evidence on each element of each charge that, if believed, might reasonably result in a conviction, then the accused is committed to trial. Typically, one doesn't make a serious attempt to avoid committal. Rather, the defense uses the prelim as a chance to get a clear sense of the Crown's case, identify its weaknesses, and get their witnesses to commit to positions so as to prepare for trial.

When the prelim came around, many of the defendants wanted a publication ban again. This time, it seems to have been largely because there wasn't the political momentum present to meaningfully shape the narrative in the press. So again, the ban was requested and it was passed.

This is by no means intended to fault their decision. But these bans did contribute to the absence of awareness and information around the case. The fact that it was illegal to share information about the case publicly ended up creating a lot of fear and contributed to stifling what little discussion was going on, especially in the context of the ongoing harassment of those who spoke out.

The publication ban was sought as a form of self-defense against a system that tries politically important cases in the media before they reach the courts, shaping the narrative in the public's eye to such a degree that the verdict becomes certain. For an example of this, look at Nyki Kish, convicted of second-degree murder after a

From mid-September to the end of November, there was a ban on linking to the SnitchWire posts, or reporting on the undercovers or the substance of the case. A music video[32] by Test Their Logik was banned because it contained a picture of the UCs, as was an issue of The Peak, an independent magazine out of Guelph that talked about infiltration of the Hanlon Creek Business Park occupation.

Even talking about the existence of the ban was illegal; if the Crown hadn't screwed up it would still be illegal to tell this story.[33]

[32] https://youtube.com/watch?v=Kd_wJ5FOUR4

[33] Considering this report relies heavily on information from the disclosure that was never revealed in court, it might still be illegal.

multi-year media feeding frenzy about "scary, violent panhandlers" and the passage of the controversial Safe Streets Act. But that's another story…[30]

No Discussing the Cops Among Us

In addition to the standard publication ban sought by the defendants, the Crown put in place a far more exceptional, dangerous, and far-reaching ban. With less than a day's notice to the defendants' lawyers, the Crown presented at the prelim a proposal for a publication ban on anything to do with the identity of the two key undercovers, Brenda and Khalid.

This ban was quashed at the request of the Crown when the defendants entered their pleas, on November 22, 2011, but not before at least one activist was charged under it.[31] The Crown said it was because the ban had already been breached and now the information is so public that the ban is irrelevant.

[30]Nyki is an anarchist, traveller, writer, musician, and anti-prison organizer from Hamilton. On the night of her 21st birthday, she was hanging out in Toronto when two men began aggressively harassing her. She stood up for herself, her friends and passersby got involved, and the confrontation escalated into a brawl in which one of the harassing men was stabbed to death. Although it was Nyki who called the ambulance to the scene, the police decided to charge her with murder. One particularly odious cop, Gary Giroux (who was also a lead investigator in the G20 case), invented a narrative in which Nyki had been panhandling, and stabbed the man after he refused to give her money. This immediately launched a multi-year shitstorm in the mainstream media in which she was constantly invoked as a bogeyman to give the police ever more power to harass and criminalize visibly poor people in downtown Toronto. After four years of house arrest fighting this absurd fix-up, Nyki was convicted of second degree murder even though none of the dead guy's blood was on her (whereas others were covered in it); not one of a dozen eye-witnesses saw her holding a knife; and the only videos that could clear things up were destroyed or lost by the police. The fiction of the panhandler murderer had already been transformed into truth by the media and by reactionary politicians—by the time her case actually made it to trial, it was too late for any other outcome. For more details about this case, see Nyki's support website.[a]

[a]https://freenyki.org

[31]https://julianichim.wordpress.com/2011/11/20/im-charged-with-three-counts-of-breaking-a-court-order

This was of course not a worry the Crown had two months earlier when they were first seeking the ban. The real reason is likely that a Crown assistant in this case leaked information covered by the ban to a national newspaper, apparently in an effort to discredit the co-accused. He was quickly found out though, and the Crown opted to simply quash the order rather than risk being humiliated by charges of abuse of process during a legal challenge against their exceptional publication ban.

It is lucky that the Crown messed up in such an obvious way; if they hadn't, the ban would have been active indefinitely after the defendants chose to plead rather than go to trial. For two months, it was illegal for anyone, anywhere, to publish the real names of the UCs, their pseudonyms, their images, or "any details that might serve to identify." This prevented the former roommates of these scumbags from saying that they lived with an undercover cop. It prevented any of the hundreds of people who Brenda and Khalid interacted with from saying that this person who once gave them a ride, sat across from them at a meeting, or took them out for drinks, was in fact a police officer.

Unlike the regular publication ban, it reached beyond the walls of the courthouse to criminalize the sharing of the personal, lived experiences of hundreds of people. Throughout the entire prelim, Justice Gerald Lapkin went along with any proposal the Crown attorney had, be it to double security or to assign an armed guard to sit beside the witnesses. So when asked to pass a historically far-reaching publication ban that was definitely outside of his powers as a prelim judge to order, he complied without asking any questions. For anyone present in the courtroom, it was easy to see Justice Gerry just didn't care, only looking up when there was some talk of breaking windows.

In a rare show of generosity, Gerry did add that people needed to be warned of the ban before they could be arrested for breaching it. However, when being warned, offenders would be handed a copy of the order with—if you can believe it—the details of what they are not allowed to report on blacked out.