

Toronto Cops Find Themselves Guilty!

Fifth Estate Collective

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When the cops themselves say they acted illegally, you know it's got to have been bad. It is also rare when the police (smiley-faced when helping kids across the street; brutal, out-of-control mercenaries when unleashed) make their misdeeds public.

So, it was a shock of some proportion to read parts of a 287-page report issued in May by Toronto's Office of the Independent Police Review on the excessive force, illegal arrests, and attacks on peaceful demonstrators during the June 2010 G-8 meeting in that city.

The brutality witnessed in the suppression of Occupy sites and against recent Quebec student strikers is always brushed off by police and city officials either with blatant denials even in the face of video evidence, or, as with the student strikers in Montreal hit with police-launched projectiles, with the claim they were responding to violence from demonstrators.

The latter excuse was also the fall-back claim of the Toronto police. The cop violence was part of a \$1 billion security effort to guard the imperial chieftains meeting behind closed doors.

The report states that the police "ignored basic rights," jailed people without cause, used "excessive force," and that it was cops who escalated violence after a first night of window trashing by small groups of demonstrators.

The report puts the blame on Toronto deputy police chief, Tony Warr (an appropriate name!), who investigators said "wanted the streets that had been made unsafe by the terrorists that were attacking our city to be made safe again by restoring order." However accurate this maybe, the idea that this type of police violence, the armed might of the state in repressive mode, is the result of one officer going rogue is ridiculous.

Rogue means behavior altered from the norm, but as is evident to all through ubiquitous social media, the state's armed thugs behave with brutality and impunity from Liberty Square in Cairo, to Zuccotti Park on Wall Street, to Oscar Grant Plaza in Oakland, Calif.

When people blast through the mass mind set of submission and revolt against the rulers, police function as the first line of military suppression. The inherently violent and repressive nature of police forces cannot be altered by new recommendations as contained in the Toronto report, police/community review boards, sensitivity workshops, or the like. The police everywhere acted out their ultimate script.

The state lacking police or minus a military would be comprised only of the rulers without the capacity to maintain their domination. The political state has accurately been described at its core as a body of armed men.

On the individual level, think of the personality structure of those police who take part in repressive activity. Would any of us enjoy (and, they do enjoy it) suiting up in robocop gear, strapping on a variety of weapons, all of which you hope you get the opportunity to use, and then attacking people, some dressed in t-shirts and flip-flops (a bad idea) with clubs, fists, blackjacks, tear gas and smoke projectiles (and, we know they aim deliberately at people), and finally arrest them knowing they had done nothing other than protest against government policies?

These are violent and twisted personalities given undue respect by much of the citizenry, many of whom have similar authoritarian personalities, and others who see the police as holding back, well, yes, anarchy.

Bill Blair, Toronto's police chief, refused to apologize even in the face of the scathing criticism of his force.

Left out of the official report is the sexual savagery women were subjected to by the Toronto police during the G-8 demonstrations which our article printed on page 20 chronicles. Sexual assaults by police against women demonstrators are regular occurrences across the world, the worst being in Third World countries where women are routinely raped by police as well as state- and corporate-funded paramilitaries.

David Graeber, in “New Police Strategy in New York–Sexual Assault Against Peaceful Protesters” at truthout.com, writes about the experiences of women at Occupy Wall Street where New York City police turned suddenly to groping as an intimidation tactic.

The cops probably would be at least a little nicer if we agreed not to object to anything, but as we get closer to the inner layers of power, the praetorian guard may very well step up its violence.

As usual, the best tactic against police assault, besides our media, which allows public exposure of brutal and sexual attacks, is our solidarity and preparedness. At least, don’t wear flip-flops.



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