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Socialist Voice #441, July 1, 2010

Toronto Appeal: No More Police State Tactics!

by Judy Rebick

Below is a statement that you are being asked to sign. We believe it is urgent to get as many signatures on a call for a public inquiry. We believe it is possible to shift the terms to debate, and to shine a spotlight on the abusive police practices during the G8/G20. But we need your help to do that.

Please sign on and circulate the call widely to friends, colleagues, allies and networks who might be willing to sign.

Email *TheTorontoCall* with your name, affiliation and which category you prefer to be placed in (trade unionists, faculty, students, community activists, legal workers, teachers, cultural workers, arrested and detained)

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The police response to the protests against the G8/G20 in Toronto was the largest mass arrest in Canadian history, surpassing the 1993 Clayoquot Sound logging blockade.

It constituted the most far-reaching single assault on political rights in the Canadian state since the War Measures Act of 1970.

This response fits the pattern of militarized policing at global summits, which consistently produce mass arrests. It also builds on long histories of police brutality in this city and across Canada, particularly aimed at people of colour, indigenous peoples, and poor communities. The use of these police state methods is increasing as the social divides produced by neoliberal policies deepen.

In Toronto, this ground was further prepared by extraordinary legislation passed in secret by the Ontario government that designated the G20 security zone as a "public work." Police deliberately misled the public to believe that anyone appearing within five metres of the four mile long wall surrounding the G20 zone could be searched without warning and arrested for failing to state their purpose for being near the fence.

As part of the \$1 billion security buildup, there was a massive police presence on the streets of Toronto, beginning days before the summit. Police stocked up on — and paraded before the media — weapons ranging from sound cannons that can cause permanent hearing loss, to water cannons, tear gas, riot gear, and other devices.

The police presence significantly increased at the Indigenous Solidarity rally on Thursday, June 24, where over 1,000 people gathered to protest the G20 and its entrenchment of global racist colonization. On Friday, June 25, security tactics were further escalated in response to the large community rally. A large section of downtown Toronto streets was taken over by police in riot gear, in parked vans and buses, in buildings and helicopters, on horses and on bikes. Within this highly militarized atmosphere the police incited tensions with the violent attack and arrest of a young, deaf, black man. It is a travesty of justice that he was denied access to an ASL interpreter. That is the equivalent of being taken into custody and having your mouth duck taped shut.

On Saturday, June 26, the mass arrest of protesters began. The pretext for this crackdown was the limited property damage in protests that day, which was similar to recent hockey riots in various cities but treated very differently, as pointed out by journalist Linda McQuaig.

We believe it is important to openly discuss and debate the effectiveness of various tactics used in activist mobilizations. However, the key issue remains the security build-up and police response that was completely out of proportion to Saturday's events.

Over the course of the weekend, more than 1,000 people were detained. Core activists were arrested in their homes or grabbed on the streets by police snatch squads. These targeted arrests reveal a disturbing degree of racial profiling of both residents and visitors to Toronto, consistent with ongoing police practices.

On Sunday, June 27, people who gathered peacefully outside the massive temporary jail set up on Eastern Avenue were beaten by police and shot with rubber bullets and tear gas “muzzle blasts.” Scores of protestors and bystanders were penned in for long periods by police at Queen St. and Spadina Ave. Many in the crowd were eventually arrested, as were several activists blockaded in and around the activist Convergence Space.

In the week leading up to the summit, Conservative Cabinet Minister Stockwell Day signaled a particular focus on “anarchists” for this security crackdown. This simplistic targeting of a long-standing political tradition was further used by police to justify assaults on all demonstrators as well as the round-up of activists by claiming they were hunting for the “Black Bloc.” This criminalization of activists aimed to silence attempts to address the real issues presented by the G20.

It is clear that long-term police plans, including the heavy infiltration of activist organizations, were at work in the mass arrests on Saturday and Sunday. The closure of many public institutions, including the University of Toronto, attempted to create a ghost town in the core of the city to facilitate the arrest of activists.

Statements by the Mayor of Toronto and Chief of Police have focused on labeling non-Torontonians as the source of disturbances. The image of “dangerous outsiders” draws on racial

and ethnic stereotypes and suggests that it is not legitimate for people from outside Toronto to exercise their rights to political expression, free association and freedom of movement. The G20 is a global assault that requires global solidarity in response.

The hundreds who were detained faced dismal and abusive conditions. People were held in overcrowded cages and denied access to food, water, and legal counsel. Friends and families did not have access to information about who was detained or when they might be processed or released. The reports of those released from detention reveal a pervasive pattern of sexual, gender, trans, homophobic and racist harassment by police.

This assault on civil and political rights must never be allowed to happen again.

We the undersigned call for:

1. The immediate release of all those detained
2. A full campaign to defend the civil rights of those facing charges arising from this extraordinary policing regime, especially those facing excessive charges and/or punitive bail conditions that criminalize, limit mobility, and curtail rights in the long term.
3. An independent public inquiry into police actions during the summit, including disclosure on the role of police infiltrators leading up to and during events, and the chain of command for the extraordinary crackdown on legal rights and protests.
4. An end to the targeting of anarchists by the Conservative government and the police.
5. The resignation of Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair

Initial Signatories

- Abigail Bakan Toronto Professor of Politics Studies, Queen's University
- James Cairns Toronto Assistant Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford)
- Kate Cairns Montreal PhD student, OISE/UT
- Deborah Cowen Toronto Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
- Sue Ferguson Toronto Wilfrid Laurier University-Brantford
- Naomi Klein Toronto Author
- David McNally Toronto Professor of Political Science, York University
- Mary-Jo Nadeau Toronto Lecturer, University of Toronto, Mississauga
- Eroca Nicols Toronto Toronto Dance Community Love-In
- Jenny Peto Toronto Activist
- Judy Rebick Toronto CAW Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy
- Alan Sears Toronto Sociology, Ryerson University
- Rinaldo Walcott Toronto Professor, OISE University of Toronto
- Cynthia Wright Toronto York University, Member of CUPE 3903

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Socialist Voice note: For further information and analysis of the G20 meeting and related events in Toronto, see articles posted on *The Bullet (Socialist Project)* and *The Killing Train*.

Socialist Voice #442, July 6, 2010

From Water Wars to the Fight for Climate Justice: Pablo Solón on the Lessons of Cochabamba

by Pablo Solon

Bolivia's UN ambassador gave this talk to the Shout Out for Global Justice, sponsored by the Council of Canadians and attended by nearly 3,000 people on June 25 in Toronto, during the ten days of protests against the G20 meeting.

Other speakers included Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians and Indian eco-feminist Vandana Shiva. Video of the event can be viewed at rabbletv.

In addition to this meeting, several other events during the ten days of G20 protests focused on Cochabamba, including:

- *Two panels at the June 19-20 People's Summit organized by Toronto Bolivia Solidarity and KAIROS, each was attended by more than 50 participants.*
- *Greetings by Erika Dueñas, Chargé d'Affaires, Bolivian Embassy to the United States, and Raúl Burbano of Toronto Bolivian Solidarity to about 250 participants in the People's Assembly on Climate Justice, June 23.*

In addition, the pamphlet Cochabamba: Documents of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth was widely distributed at G-20-related events.

This talk was transcribed for Climate and Capitalism by Derrick O'Keefe.

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First of all, I think you [the MC who introduced Solón] have made a mistake. I am not the ambassador to the US, I am the ambassador to the UN, because we have kicked out the US ambassador in Bolivia and we don't have an ambassador in the United States.

You know I met Maude Barlow and Vandana Shiva about 10 years ago. I remember it very well because it was at a meeting in Geneva after the water wars in Cochabamba in Bolivia, after we expelled the Bechtel corporation that was privatizing the water.

In those days I was a water warrior, now I am a water warrior ambassador. And now I only have a new possibility, that is to continue the fight we began more than 10 years ago. We have discussed very much with Maude, with Vandana and many of you, that there is something that we must do: We have to have water declared as a human right in the UN.

We have declared in the UN the right to food, the right to health, the right to education, the right to shelter, the right to development – but not the right to water. And we all know that without water we can't live. So nobody can argue that it is not a basic and fundamental and universal human right, but despite this it has not been, until now, recognized as a human right.

So we have presented, two weeks ago, a draft resolution, so that this coming month, in July, we expect to have a vote in the General Assembly of the United Nations. And we want to see which

countries are going to vote against that resolution, we want to vote to see which governments are going to say to humanity that water is not a human right. We want to expose, like sometimes you have to expose vampires, to public opinion.

Ten years ago we needed your help and you gave it to us. It was after the water war, when we expelled Bechtel, Bechtel sued Bolivia. They presented a demand to this arbitration panel of the World Bank. It was a demand for \$30 to \$100 million, even though they were only in Bolivia for six months. And, with a global campaign, we managed to have Bechtel at the end of five years saying 'we are going to give up our demand, we are going to sell you everything.' And they sold us everything for one dollar.

Why were we able to do that? Because in California, in Washington, in New York, here in Canada, in Europe – all around the world – activists, trade unions, social movements, NGOs, began to mobilize and say 'it is unjust to put a suit against Bolivia for \$30 to \$100 million for the right of Bolivians to decide what they are going to do with their water service system in the city of Cochabamba.'

Now we need your support again. Because this resolution that declares the human right to water is not going to pass if we don't build a global mobilization around the whole world, in Canada, in the United States, in Europe. We are discussing one of the key issues and it is necessary to have and to build this global political coalition now, and to act very strongly in the coming days. So, we are counting on you.

After the water war, for Bolivia, that was a very important moment. Because until the water war, we had lost all the battles in the social movements. We lost the battle against the privatization of social security, the battle against the privatization of the energy system, the privatization of gas, the privatization of railways, but when we won this battle against the privatization of water we said 'we can do it.'

And we began to strengthen forces, the indigenous people, who are the majority in my country, came together with social movements, trade unions and we said 'now we have to recover our natural resources' that had been privatized, if we want to have another future.

And a big movement was built in order to nationalize the gas and oil company that was privatized. Before, when it was privatized, 82 percent of the revenues went to the companies and only 18 percent to the state.

So we built a movement and we realized that in order to accomplish the nationalization of the gas and oil company we also had to take control of the government. We had to nationalize our government.

And, after an election, an historic election, in the year 2005, President Evo Morales, with what we call the political instrument of the social movements, won for the first time with 54 percent of the votes.

Four months later, on May 1, we nationalized the gas and oil company. And when we nationalized it, then we said, 'now 82 percent is going to be for the state and only 18 is going to be for the foreign investor.'

And they told us everybody's going to run out, nobody is going to stay to administer that, but in the end we renegotiated 42 contracts under these new rules because even with 18 percent they have profits. And we have 82 [percent].

You know they have the G8/G20 model, but we have another model. If we take control, as a society, of our companies, of our resources, we can have enough money, first, to create more employment. In Bolivia, employment hasn't decreased, it has increased. We have raised salaries, we have increased social benefits. Why was it possible? Because we control, now, the economic power of the country, not the corporations.

And we don't have a fiscal deficit, we have a surplus. So there are two models, and this is the discussion that should have taken place. It's not a discussion between stimulus package and austerity, between Europe and the United States, it's a discussion between the society taking control of the economy, or the corporations. That is the main discussion. And the example of Bolivia shows that it's possible. It is possible.

So for us, the main thing, our main lesson is that every time there is a problem we need to appeal to the people, to the social movements. For us, when we had this problem in Copenhagen, where they tried to impose this Copenhagen Accord – I remember it, at 3 o'clock in the morning, I was there. We said what are we going to do? Let's call for a people's world conference on climate change and Mother Earth rights. Because if we have to have a response, it has to be with the social movements of the world.

And between the 20th and 21st of April, we had this people's conference and we discussed, what are we going to do? That's the key: what is our agenda? We know what their agenda is. What's our agenda?

And we said, 'there is a problem here'. The problem is really very big with climate change. Because if emissions are not reduced in the short-term, not in the long-term, the temperature is going to rise – right now it's more than 0.78 or 0.79 degrees more than it was in the pre-industrial era – if this keeps on we will see two, three degrees increase, four, five.

And what does that mean? Our glaciers are going to melt, Africa is going to burn, some island states are going to be beneath the ocean, food production is going to be reduced by about 40 percent, depending on how much the temperature increases.

And we only have these coming decades to act. Each year we lose is something like 35 or 40 gigatons of CO₂ that is thrown into the atmosphere. So we need to act fast.

And we said in this people's world conference, we want to have a reduction of 50 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, in a domestic way, without market mechanisms, without offset mechanisms, approved in the next negotiation on climate change that's going to take place in Cancun, Mexico. And this is key. If we are not on board on this issue, we, our children, our grandchildren, are going to have a very bleak future. We must engage in this key issue if we want to change the future.

But another issue that is very important for us is the issue of Mother Earth rights. Why is this so important for us? Because in their agenda, what they say is that they have failed because

privatization hasn't gone further, to nature. So now is the time to privatize even nature – carbon markets, carbon rights, environmental services, water.

And we say *No!*, the alternative is not that, it's precisely the opposite. We must recognize that there are things, beings, that cannot be commodified, that have rights as we have rights.

So we have presented, in the UN, a draft proposal of a resolution on the Declaration of the Universal Rights of Mother Earth – the right to live, the right to regenerate its biocapacity. That for us is key, it is the key thing of this century. That is why we have begun to build a movement to defend Mother Earth.

As [the MC] said, you are now all part of the Council of Canadians. I can say that you are now all part of the global movement for Mother Earth.

Just to finish with one very important message. What are we going to do with this plan of security, of authoritarianism, militarism. What is our alternative? We have also discussed this in Bolivia, and we said we must promote a global referendum, a worldwide referendum. We must call not G20, not only 'G192' – that is, the General Assembly of the UN, very important – but we have to call this 6 billion that Vandana [Shiva] was speaking about. A global referendum where we can ask the people: Do you agree, in the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent? Do you agree with Mother Earth rights? Do you agree that military budgets should be redirected to solve climate change issues and not to promote war?

So the key thing, against authoritarianism, is democracy. Global democracy, all around the world. Thank you very much.

Socialist Voice #443, July 7, 2010

Tax Revolt Destabilizes Government in British Columbia

by **Roger Annis**

What were they thinking? Mere days after its re-election in May 2009, the Liberal Party government of British Columbia announced a new consumption tax that took effect on July 1, 2010 and will fleece an estimated \$1.9 billion from taxpayer pockets in the first year.

It hadn't breathed a word of the tax during the election campaign, except to deny it was considering it.

Now the contemptuous ruse is backfiring, badly. The government is facing a tax revolt that challenges its moral authority to govern and could eventually unseat it.

Another provincial government, Ontario, imposed the tax on the same date. It has met much less opposition.

Fight to repeal the tax

The Harmonized Sales Tax in British Columbia merges the existing seven percent provincial sales tax into the five percent federal Goods and Services Tax regime. Three big changes result. One, the HST applies to a lot more categories of purchases than the provincial sales tax.

Two, it shifts a large tax burden away from business and onto individuals and families, principally because businesses will get input tax credits to recover the HST paid on most expenditures previously subject to the provincial sales tax. The government estimates this will save business some \$2 billion in taxes in the first year alone.

Three, the new tax will be fully administered by the federal government, reducing administration costs.

A petition to force a repeal of the tax in BC was launched several months ago under the terms of provincial referendum legislation. Its organizers gathered more than 700,000 signatures which they delivered to the province's electoral authority on June 30. The government now has two choices: either it submits repeal legislation accompanying the petition to a vote in the provincial legislature, or it must submit the tax to a referendum vote by September 2011.

A vote of 50 per cent or more must be achieved in two thirds of the electoral districts in the province in order to repeal the tax. There must also be a voter turnout of more than 50 per cent in all districts. Petition organizers are confident such a vote would be won, but there's a further rub. The provincial legislature can simply vote down repeal legislation, though it would do so at even greater peril.

Because they introduced the tax on the sly, believing it would meet only token opposition, the government and its business supporters have been caught entirely off guard by the scope of public reaction and anger. Electoral law prevented them from advertising during the petition campaign. Only now are they gearing up to wage a propaganda war in favour of the tax.

A coalition of business interests, including the Mining Association of BC, the Coast Forest Products Association and the BC Chamber of Commerce, has asked the province's Supreme Court to quash the petition, arguing that the tax falls under federal, not provincial, jurisdiction. The court will hear the arguments within a month.

Philip Hochstein of the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association of B.C. warned in the *Globe and Mail* on June 25, "There appears to have been a fundamental breach of trust between the government and the people. I think it would be a mistake if they don't reach out to their party supporters. If they don't do that, they will lose the next election."

Meanwhile, petition organizers have launched their own legal action, asking the courts to quash the tax because it was not voted by the legislature; the cabinet merely adopted an order-in-council authorizing the government to enter an agreement with the federal government to impose the HST in British Columbia.

Huge shift in tax burden

A study by Statistics Canada commissioned by the *Victoria Times Colonist* shows that all income groups will pay more taxes as a result of the HST. It says the average annual hit on households will be \$521. The poorest in the province will be cushioned from the tax by rebates, but only provided they fill out the necessary income tax returns, and only so long as rebates remain in place. Consumption taxes hit hardest at families forced to spend most of their income on basic goods and services, and this one is no exception.

Liberal and Conservative federal governments have pushed hard for provincial governments to switch over to a harmonized sales tax, including offering financial compensation for revenue shortfall. BC will receive a one-time transfer of \$1.6 billion to compensate.

HST proponents argue, correctly, that it will lower the taxes paid by businesses. From there, their advocacy enters into a fairy tale world where fewer taxes on businesses result in more business investment and therefore more employment and more income tax revenues to pay for government programs. Everyone wins, companies and workers alike. Even better, companies will lower their final consumer prices in grateful recognition of the reduction of their tax obligations!

Similar arguments were made by a federal Conservative Party government and big business when the government introduced the GST, in 1991. The new tax replaced a long-standing manufacturing sales tax paid by companies when they purchased input goods. The net result of the GST was a similar shift in the tax burden from corporations to consumers, with no meaningful benefit to working class people.

Three of four provinces in Atlantic Canada switched to the HST regime more than ten years ago. (Quebec also adopted the HST but administers the tax itself.) Curiously, the anti-tax protest in BC has been directed exclusively against the provincial government, ignoring the key role played by the federal government in promoting and administering it.

Petition drive targets 'big corporations'

Opposition to the tax is widespread. The petition campaign is spearheaded by Bill Vander Zalm, premier of the province from 1986 to 1991, and Chris Delaney, a former leader of the extreme-right BC Conservative Party. Thousands of campaign volunteers have been recruited to collect signatures and otherwise run the campaign.

The campaign's success has Vander Zalm and Delaney holding considerable sway over the future direction of the Liberal Party government. Their weapon is the province's recall legislation. If 50% of eligible voters in any electoral district sign the required petition, the electoral authority is obliged to convene a by-election. The government holds a 14-seat majority over the opposition NDP. Vander Zalm and Delaney say they will use the recall threat to pressure the government.

On June 22, they announced they have drawn up a list of 24 members of the provincial legislature who could be targeted for recall. "We have 7,000 troops that want to carry on," said Vander Zalm. "We will accommodate them." A right of recall comes into effect 18 months following an election. That will be on November 15.

Trade unions and the NDP have identified with the campaign. Pro-NDP commentator Bill Tieleman is the third member of the steering committee of the campaign, though strictly as second fiddle.

The NDP calls Vander Zalm "the worst premier that BC ever had." Many working people recall the deep cuts to social services that his government carried out. But Vander Zalm is nothing if not an experienced demagogue. He delivers an appealing anti-tax message, telling CBC Radio on June 29, for example, "This government is all about looking after big corporations and they've shown it again."

While delivering the 700,000 signatures to the electoral authority the next day, he repeated the same theme, responding to the just-announced court challenge by saying, "We will be in court two weeks from now standing up to the big corporations and to a government that wants to punish the people."

NDP and unions tail-end right-wing antitaxers

Opposition to the HST from the New Democratic Party and its trade union backers has been little more than token. Neither the NDP nor the BC Federation of Labour websites feature the anti-HST campaign. The federation website makes no mention at all of the HST. It does not promote the petition at worksites.

The NDP's website contains two press releases on the HST over the past three months. Neither release mentions the petition/repeal drive.

The NDP has failed to voice a progressive alternative to the HST. The party's principal message on the HST is that it will slow economic activity by undermining "consumer confidence" and will hurt service industries such as tourism and restaurants that were exempt from the provincial sales tax but will now have to charge the HST.

Since the defeat of its last government in 2001, the NDP has bent over backwards to display a loyalty to business interests, including attempts to weaken the role of affiliated unions in party life. Party leader Carole James has lost two provincial elections preaching a pro-business theme, in 2005 and 2009. The party's total vote actually declined between those two elections.

The Green Party has followed a similar, pro-business course and has suffered even sharper vote declines than the NDP.

Without a meaningful alternative to the governing party, many working class voters have simply turned away from electoral politics. Voter turnout in 2009 reached an historic low, less than 50% of eligible voters.

Despite massive cuts to jobs, social services and quality of life since 2001 – including, remarkably, a minimum wage that has remained frozen at \$8 per hour since 2001 and is now the lowest in Canada – only a few trade union challenges to the government of Premier Gordon Campbell have been mounted. The most significant was the hospital workers strike of April/May, 2004. A general strike in support of the workers was set for May 4, but it was called off the night before by Federation of Labour leaders and the strike went down to a bitter defeat.

Right-wing demagogues hope to translate a successful anti-HST campaign into longer term political gains, such as further cuts to government programs as a result of future tax cuts. But they face several difficulties along this road.

One is the divisions among themselves. Big business has lined up squarely for the tax, and so has the right-wing think tank, the Fraser Institute, always a darling of the right wing.

Another is that most supporters of the Vander Zalm-led campaign do not share the view that “less government is good.” On the contrary, support is fuelled by popular opposition to the deep cuts in social and environmental programs by the same federal and provincial governments that have imposed the new tax.

The campaign against the HST should not be the exclusive reserve of populist demagogues. The unions and other progressive organizations should fight for policies that ease the tax burden on working people. They should demand higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy in order to pay for urgently needed improvements to social programs and services and to environmental protection.

Many working people are sceptical of the claims that lower taxes and higher profits for corporations benefit society as a whole. There is every reason to anticipate that they would support an anti-HST campaign centered not just on a repeal of the tax but also on defending social programs and services and shifting the tax burden to the wealthy.

One good way to advance such a campaign is to vigorously support the struggles against cuts to education funding that are erupting in the province, notably the occupation of the elementary school in Dunster (northwest BC) to protest its scheduled closing and the demands by teachers and school board trustees in Vancouver that schools in the city receive more funding.

Socialist Voice #444, July 26, 2010

‘If protesting is a conspiracy, then we are all proud to conspire!’

by Derrick O’Keefe

On July 17, 200 people marched and rallied in Vancouver, Canada to protest the police repression of protests during the G8/G20 summit meetings in Toronto June 25-27.

Speakers at the rally included representatives of Amnesty International and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, Derrick O’Keefe of the Vancouver Stopwar coalition, and New Democratic Party MP Don Davies.

Also speaking were three young people who took part in the protests and were arrested, including Montreal resident Natalie Gray, who was shot twice by police rubber bullets then detained and abused for 30 hours. Gray has retained noted civil rights lawyer Clayton Ruby and is suing the Toronto Police. Her talk at the July 17 rally has been published by rabble.ca.

All speakers delivered powerful affirmations of the right to speak out and organize against the policies of the G8/G20 summit gatherings, including the call by Toronto protest organizers and participants for a full and independent public inquiry into the police operation that cost more than \$1 billion and incarcerated some 1,000 people.

The following is Derrick O’Keefe’s talk to the Vancouver rally.

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Thanks to everyone for coming out today. There are rallies like this one across the country today. There is a rally in Toronto, and I’ve heard that there are a lot of bubbles in the air heading over the police’s heads at this rally. Did you hear about this? A young woman was arrested in Toronto during the G20 summit for blowing bubbles, if you can believe that. What do we think of that? [“Shame!”]

Our idea of free speech includes bubble blowing – it’s not a chemical weapon. And this just gives you an idea of what happened in Toronto and what the atmosphere was. I went out to Toronto with the Canadian Peace Alliance. On my first night there, I spoke at a forum about Canadian foreign policy in Afghanistan and in Palestine. I was speaking on a panel with a journalist who writes for *The Guardian*, named Jesse Rosenfeld.

While we were having this ordinary public forum in a small art space on Bloor Street, we noticed there were police peeking through the windows, about six of them. Someone went out to ask the police, “What are you doing? This is a public forum.” They asked, “Are there any protesters inside?”

So they were treating everyone in Toronto that week as a potential protester, as a potential dissident and therefore as a criminal. This was the climate that was created, and it was obvious. They didn’t need any pretext, they didn’t need anything to justify what they did. This was planned. You could see in the days leading up to the weekend of protest that there were going to

be mass arrests. There were 20,000 police officers in Toronto, that's more than one for every protester who was out for the big day of action on Saturday, June 26.

What do we say about turning a major Canadian city into a police state? [*"Shame!"*]

What do we say about spending 1.3 billion dollars for a week-end of photo-ops for some of the biggest thugs and war criminals in the world? [*"Shame!"*]

What do we say to a government that would be party to ordering the biggest mass arrest in Canadian history and then stonewall and deny a full public inquiry? [*"Shame!"*]

That's why we're here today.

I know some people have said that the police weren't really doing their job, but if you think about it, in a society like ours with so many injustices, the police were doing their job, just in a little more over-the-top way than normal.

They were serving and protecting, but who were they serving and protecting at the G20?

They were protecting the criminals who were *inside the fence*, the criminals who are destroying our environment, the criminals who are waging illegal wars abroad, and the criminals who are attacking your rights every single day, who are attacking the poor people right across the country!

It wasn't enough that they arrested over 1000 people. They arrested journalists. They arrested Jesse Rosenfeld, the young guy on the forum panel with me; on Saturday night, they punched him in the gut and hauled him away for witnessing a peaceful sit-in in front of the Novotel hotel where G20 delegates were staying.

They arrested bystanders who had just walked out of their homes to see what was going on.

And they even arrested some corporate media reporters live on the air – which helped the media coverage quality. But that is a real shame and an attack on free speech.

It wasn't enough that they did these mass arrests – today there are still people in jail. I think it's about a dozen people, facing conspiracy charges. I suppose that's appropriate, because there was once a time in this country where you could be charged with criminal conspiracy just for getting together and talking about organizing a union. You could be charged with criminal conspiracy if you were a group of women getting together and talking about the fight for the right to vote, or the right to choose. They have always tried to criminalize dissent when people get together and fight for their rights.

We're here to say that if organizing for social justice, if dissenting, if protesting is a conspiracy – then we are all conspirators, and we are proud to conspire! [*Cheers, applause*]

And as long as any one of our comrades, as long as any social justice activist is in jail in this country for organizing, we are going to continue to conspire, we are going to continue to protest, and we are going to continue to stand up for our rights! [*Cheers, applause*]

So let's continue pushing for a public inquiry, but more importantly, let's continue asserting our rights. Because you don't win anything without constant protest, without constant vigilance.

Every right that we have won has involved people going to jail, it has involved people going outside of the laws of day sometimes when those laws were unjust, and that continues to be the case today! *[Cheers, applause]*

We don't have to beg for our right to protest, we don't even have to politely ask. Everything we have in that Charter of Rights and Freedoms was demanded, was fought for, and was taken from the government of Canada. We will continue, every day if we have to, to take our rights and to assert our free speech from coast to coast to coast! *[Cheers, applause]*

So let's finish up with a little more of that slogan, "This is what democracy looks like! Because this is what democracy looks like, and this is what political participation looks like!"

[Chants: This is what democracy looks like!]