

Protecting the people elected to do the peoples' work from the people who want them to do their work

by kevin harding - Saturday, June 26, 2010

<http://politicsrespun.org/2010/06/protecting-the-people-elected-to-do-the-peoples-work-from-the-people-who-want-them-to-do-their-work/>

Three days, a fake lake, and \$1 billion dollars in security costs later, the G8/G20 meetings will have wrapped up by the afternoon of June 27. Over five hundred protesters will have been arrested, and as of the time of writing, at least three police cars have been burned. Hundreds of police officers will have marched and massed and beat back people protesting the (in)actions of the G8/G20 and so many other causes. Some reporters noted today that protests seem to happen everywhere the G8/G20 meetings go. Perhaps that is indicative of a broader problem with the system itself.

Sitting here in Burnaby, it's interesting observing the protests in Toronto on television or through social media. Were I in Toronto, I would have been on the streets. It would have been terrifying. But it would have been liberating.

Yes, the protests and actions smashed some windows and burned some police cars. Yes, the black bloc tactic was employed. Yes, there were thousands in the streets. But there's a reason for this. The people who are meeting in the downtown core of Toronto as part of the G8 and G20 are our "leaders," our "politicians," and they are the people who, according to the popular mythology, we have elected to do the peoples' work.

But they're not doing that work. And the people are rightfully unhappy. And they want to protest this lack of work. And they do. And the police put on their riot gear and pick up their batons and pepper spray and beat back the people in the streets. Why? They're "protecting" the people in the meeting from the people in the streets.

The protesters in the streets of Toronto, of Vancouver, of Genoa, of Buenos Aires, of Santiago, of Johannesburg, and of so many other cities and towns and places around the world are demanding a different world. And they're demanding a different world, a better world, in the *only* way that might be left.

Emma Goldman famously said, "if voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal." So many of the people in the streets of Toronto today were there because they voted for a difference. And no matter who was in power, promising that difference, it has yet to come.

The media argue that the protesters in the streets have resorted to "violence." Smashing a window is not violence. It is destruction of property, certainly, but not violence. And the property being destroyed when someone smashes a window of a bank or a transnational corporation is but one manifestation of an inherently violent system, capitalism, which requires subjugation and exploited labour and alienation. The window of a bank is one manifestation of a system with forcibly enclosed public spaces, which removed people from lands and removes the product of peoples' work from their own control merely because they

must work to survive.

The smashing of a window is an act of freedom, as it smashes the manifestation of the violent system and strikes at its heart.

And our "leaders," the politicians, know the violence of the system and its inherent contradictions. The capitalistic desire to profit more created the commercial 'products' and predatory lending and so forth that caused the economic crises that hurt so many. The crises that the G8/G20 meetings are struggling to address, in order to restabilize capitalism.

And the people don't want this. They want their education system to be free and of high quality. They want public health care. They want equality and freedom. This is the peoples' work, and it is what so many of us vote for, when we are permitted to vote.

But our "leaders" aren't doing this work. And so the people are in the streets, protesting.

And the fences go up, and the police march in, and the boots come down, to protect the people who have been elected to do the peoples' work from the people who elected them. Who want them to do their work.

Friends, we have a choice. We can continue to hope that the people that we vote for will actually do the work that we want them to do. Or we can do it ourselves.

I'll see you in the streets.