

G20 fallout resonates

Sat Dec 11 2010



Pedestrians make their way around the security fences while police keep a close watch at the corner of Bremner Blvd and Lower Simcoe Street, June 22.

BERNARD WEIL/TORONTO STAR

Re: **Apology shouldn't save Blair from axe, Dec. 5**

The definition of a police state is officers acting like thugs, abusing their authority and committing violent crimes on innocent people, with no accountability or repercussions for their actions.

The Star's investigation into the many examples of the SIU rubber-stamping the most reprehensible behaviour by our police was everything good investigative journalism should be — finding the darkest corners, and shining a light into them.

As for the G20, this was the greatest single abrogation of our most fundamental rights of assembly and right to dissent in Canadian history.

Of course, lawlessness and lack of accountability are not restricted to our once-but-no-longer-respectable police force. Our Prime Minister has shut down Parliament twice for trying to do the people's business of holding the government accountable, has repeatedly ignored the will of Parliament, as well as Supreme Court rulings he disagrees with, and having brought into law fixed federal election dates, rightly stating no ruling party should be able to throw an election the moment it is up in the polls, he then broke his own law and promptly threw an election the moment the Tories were up in the polls.

When the government and the police are equal partners in crime, abuse of the electorate, erosion of democracy and non-accountability, then we are truly living in a police state. Our famed Canadian passivity is not serving us here. Surely it's time for us to rise up and truly stand on guard for thee, before the Canada we've known and loved is but a distant memory.

Peter Dick, Toronto

This time, like most of the other times, Rosie DiManno hit the nail right on the head.

The column expresses the opinion of the majority of decent people against the "cowboy" attitude of the Toronto (and other cities') police force.

For far too long, the police have been allowed to get away with abuses against human rights with impunity. It culminated with the abhorrent criminal behaviour of the police force during the G20 protests on the streets of Toronto.

Although a handful of trouble makers could have been easily annihilated, the police chose to behave like hooligans and violently charge into the crowds of lawful demonstrators, inflicting pain, arresting and detaining scores of innocent people and trampling upon citizens' basic rights.

Let's put an end to this police dictatorship mentality which is dangerous to our cherished democracy. Chief Bill Blair, one of the "architects" and defender of this mentality, needs to resign. The civilian authority should be the supreme decider in all police matters.

Like Hitchcock once said: "I'm not against the police; I'm just afraid of them." In a free democratic society, we shouldn't be afraid.

Alex Radulescu, Cambridge

I would like to thank you very much for your pursuit of the issues that arose regarding the G20 this summer, especially Rosie DiManno's columns about the police beating with impunity and the Adam Nobody issues, the continued bail issues of the detained suspects, and the passage of "Secret Laws."

By continuing to report on these issues, you are doing a great public service. This is an issue that might have been swept under the table and never discussed again were it not for your continued efforts to keep it in the public eye. By doing this you are fulfilling an important part of your mandate as journalists.

In an age where many people cast doubt on the value of big newspapers and journalists, your continued activity on this front is a justification for the continued existence of strong, established and independent newspapers.

Andrew Max, J.D. Candidate, University of Toronto Faculty of Law

The symmetry of your placement of news stories on your Dec. 8 issue is perfect. At the top of the page we see Don Cherry, vigorously insulting anybody who disagrees with him. Typically, individuals who are incapable of mounting logical arguments, resort to abusive name calling. In the matter of Mr. Cherry's logical abilities, that ship has sailed long ago.

Below, we see, members of the Toronto police beating up on individuals who are most likely exactly the type of people Rob Ford's new best friend so inelegantly disdains. Ontario Ombudsman Andre Martin calls the G20, police riots a "massive breach of rights." I would call it the new normal in Stephen Harper's Canada.

Terrifyingly, with the upcoming Ontario election, the 65 per cent of Canadians who don't agree with likes of Harper, Hudak and Ford (read: left wing kooks) are looking at the perfect, right-wing, storm.

I hope that idiotic displays like Cherry's, and clear evidence (thanks to the *Star*) of jackboot police brutality, will force us to unite the left-wing kooks behind one opposition party and make Canada, once again, a country of which we can be proud.

Howard Weeks, Toronto

Archaic laws enacted in secret, unmarked police officers abusing their powers, a billion or so of our tax money squandered. So what was accomplished? I see very little for our billion dollars.

The economy still sucks, both wars continue, with more likely on the way, countries headed for bankruptcy, and we need bigger prisons we are told. Canada's overrun with criminals.

This sounds increasingly like a government preparing for massive civil unrest. And well on it's way to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Richard Kadziewicz, Scarborough

Chief Bill Blair's resignation will solve nothing. What we need here is accountability, transparency, and a sense that the police force knows the difference between right and

wrong. Blair's resignation would cause such confusion that the city will never focus on these issues.

Instead, Chief Blair should be asked to focus on these issues. He should demand that officers tell him what they are doing on the job. He should ask his supervisors to identify the officers in the *Star* photos. He should put in place a protocol that requires officers to truthfully tell their supervisors and him, what happened on the job, and if they don't then they are gone.

And where is the board on all these issues? Remember, it is not just the G20: police have killed four people this year, two or three of whom were mentally ill. Why hasn't the board made it clear this is unacceptable and policies need to be changed?

Continuing to suggest that Chief Blair's resignation is the solution to the problem is wrong: it will take us away from answering these bigger issues that affect police forces across the country.

John Sewell, Former Toronto Mayor

Perhaps Ontario Ombudsman Andre Marin is too young to remember October 17, 1970 when that supposed champion of civil rights, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, proclaimed the War Measures Act to combat a "state of insurrection" in Quebec after the FLQ blew up a few mailboxes. Armed soldiers patrolled the streets and nearly 500 people were arrested, most later released, and the civil rights of the population were suspended.

Methinks that the many loud voices that are alleging government abuse of civil rights in G20 security measures should get their perspectives in place and reconsider their damning comments that are now making newspaper headlines.

Robert Cornish, Hawkestone

The headline article by Rosie Dimanno on Dec. 8 presents damning evidence on the identities of several police officers involved in the beating of two bystanders who were clearly not presenting a threat to the public or to the police. If Chief Blair does not identify these officers right away and punish them appropriately (job loss, prosecution and immediate suspension *without* pay while the first two are looked after), then how can we trust the police force again? One can only conclude that they as a group are corrupt because no one is snitching and Chief Blair refuses to correct a problem within the force.

I know that there many fine ethical men and women on Blair's force who are also sickened by the demonstrations of poor decision making and police brutality during the G20. Please

deal with this situation with transparency to punish the offending officers severely. Only in this way will the public trust be restored.

I sincerely hope the *Star* continues to pursue this matter and thank you for your investigative reporting and bringing it to the public's attention.

Donna Tuttle, Scarborough

How long before Stephen Harper and his Tories hear the message that a full inquiry into police behaviour as demonstrated at the recent G20 in Toronto (plus many other recent, disturbing incidents) must be called? The silence from "The Hill" in Ottawa is deafening, to say the least.

Mr. Harper needs to understand that delaying tactics are not acceptable and that, this time round, the Canadian public is not going to take "No" for an answer. Call your MP, email Stephen Harper and Vic Toews; let's hold them accountable and insist that they act in defence of the Canadian public rather than by protecting a police force that is clearly out of control.

I'm quite sure that the many responsible members of the police force will applaud such action; they must be greatly embarrassed and mortified by the actions of a minority who, by any measure, should not be wearing police uniforms.

Eric Balkind, Guelph

"Why were the police there?" Are the press and the public naive enough to think the police were there to prevent a curious populace, wanting to gape at the world's most powerful people. "NO" they were there to prevent an assassination.

Every one of these world leaders, especially President Obama are vulnerable to assassination by radicals in their own country. Toronto would be an ideal place to do it. Police are no match for a mob of 20,000.

Other countries would bring in the army. What the police unfortunately did had to be done. Students can be irresponsible as we should all know when we too were young.

James Lowe, Toronto

It has been almost six months since the G20. Please, let's move on!

John Ross Jensen, Toronto

I think it's a good thing that Mr. Nobody is becoming Mr. Somebody.

Beric German, Toronto

What a gutsy paper and I always knew Rosie was not in fear of anyone, but to dare to take on the police performances at the G20 is just outstanding and restores my faith in honesty and courage still appearing, although rarely.

Jean Crowe, Kingston

Two words on G20: Thank you. But why is Bill Blair having to wear all of this? Who passed the rogue legislation and kept it secret? Dalton McGuinty.

Who rammed G20 down our throats and is responsible for its "security" apparatus? Stephen Harper.

So let's not just go after the available little guy. Let's go after all three.

Peter Ferguson, Kimberley

Police Chief Blair is quite rightly being held to account by the *Star* for the unwarranted actions of the police under his command during the G20.

And Ombudsman Marin is holding Premier McGuinty to account for his government's role in resurrecting and misusing a wartime regulation.

So all that's missing is that the person who actually instigated this whole mess by imposing the G20 on Toronto over the objections of the city also be held to account: Prime Minister Harper.

Marv Gold, Toronto

The abominable treatment of G20 protester Alex Hundert by the authorities and the lack of concern by MPs and MPPs is a sign this nation is on the road to becoming the kind of police state we went to war against in 1939.

Bill Prestwich, Dundas

When confronted with allegations of police brutality, Ottawa's chief of police condemns their actions and seeks accountability. Contrast that to Chief Blair's response, in the case of

Adam Nobody, to circle the wagons, to accuse the photographers of tampering with the video, and to accuse Nobody of attacking his men, all with no evidence.

Sometimes Ottawa does get it right.

Cheryl Harrison, *Wasaga Beach*

Toronto should have no trouble finding the money for 100 new cops once about 100 are fired for G8/G20 brutality.

Samuel Martin, *Toronto*

Rosie DiManno is absolutely right. Blair has to go. He should be pushed out, rather than giving him the out of resigning.

Greg Hills, *Toronto*



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