

# LINCHPIN

A PUBLICATION OF COMMON CAUSE // WWW.LINCHPIN.CA

DEC 2012

## Women and Transfolk Bike Night in Kitchener

By Stefan interviews Fig, a longtime organizer of Women and Transfolk Bike Night

Women and Transfolk Bike Night is a Kitchener based project that has been running for the past 2 years. It is based out of Recycle Cycles, a community bike shop and resource centre.

1. Can you tell us a bit about the project?

Women and Transfolk Bike Night was created to provide more space and time for people who do not identify as cisgendered male to fix their bikes. The goals are to provide a platform to connect community members; to help folks learn about bikes; and to build confidence. We don't often frame it in terms of a "safer space". When we talk about spaces it is often forgotten that there is still a question of "safer from what and for whom"? We can't deny that the organizers of the project are predominantly white, able bodied etc., and we need to be aware of this dynamic. There is no formal organizational structure - folks simply sign-up for a variety of time frames and commit to being supportive to each other. We ensure that someone is there to open the space and encourage people with all levels of mechanical skill to participate, share and learn.

2. What led to the creation of Women and Transfolk Bike Night?

As a cisgendered woman spending a lot of time in bike spaces, I was getting pretty lonely dealing with sexism (i.e. dudes who either didn't trust my mechanical skills or would sexualize me). I also wanted more women and transfolk in my life and at the shop. Initial planning conversations moved slowly as we got caught up in discussions of vague ideas instead of practicalities. Finally, I said "Fuck it, I'll start with one night, see's who's interested in organizing with me and go from there". We already had an available and supportive space, which helped enormously.

3. I've always liked the phrase "building the new world in the shell of the old". Do you see this project as an example of prefigurative politics?

I see hierarchies that we try to fight often recreating themselves here. For a long time, many people would only ask me bike questions and not other Bike Night participants. Part of this is because I'm there every week- the space is part of larger organization that can only give so many keys, and so I literally hold the key for the space. But also, part of it is that a lot of people got to know me and assumed that I'm some kind of "expert". At Women and Transfolk Bike Night we try to encourage others, to be messy and give room to everyone's different learning and teaching styles. It's important to give space and to share the work, because many of people who come out have lots of skills to share, and have

diverse teaching styles that click with different learners.

We don't follow a strict decision-making model. Each night depending on who shows up and what their goals are, we collectively decide on what will be worked on that night, as well as upcoming workshops. We have open discussions about everything (even the music we play), and we try to hear from everyone present in the space. This is always changing, so we have lots of check-ins with people to actively solicit feedback, and try to be really present with folks. It's challenging because there needs to be consistent people opening the space, and people are fluid. Still, it's something that constantly we aspire towards.

4. Can you share some of the transformative experiences that you and other Bike Night regulars have had through this project?

A lot of us who come out are either unemployed/underemployed, or generally kind of lost.

## Prisoners Justice Film Festival

In January-February 2013 there will be a Prison Justice Film Festival hosted in London, Ontario. The goal of the festival is to bring people together to start a dialogue about the prison industrial complex, multi-issue movement building, and the ways in which we can build a vibrant anti-PIC movement. Crime rates are the lowest since 1992, yet incarceration rates are at an all-time high. New legislation will create significant increases in prison populations, leading to overcrowding, violence, increased health risks (HIV/HCV), and lack of programming.

We believe in a pro-active approach to creating safety in our communities, which requires affordable housing, accessible health care, drug policy reform, decriminalization of sex work, transformative and restorative justice.

In Canada, people from Indigenous communities are the most targeted, and over-incarcerated in the PIC. Additionally, people of colour, women, queer and trans communities, people living with disabilities, non-status people, people with mental health issues, homeless people, people who use drugs, people living with HIV/AIDS and resisters of state repression are at greater risk of incarceration.

We believe that policing, borders, prisons and institutionalization do not make our communities safer or more secure. We believe in working to build safe, healthy communities based on sovereignty, social justice and self-determination.

In line with these beliefs, the festival will showcase films concerning: women and the PIC; islamophobia and the targeting of Muslim communities; indigenous resistance;

These nights have provided grounding for many of us to find each other, and develop skills that feel really good to have. It has also been transformative because in finding each other we've been able to build and strengthen community networks.

5. Do you find that providing a Women and Transfolk only night has contributed to creating a more inclusive atmosphere for the entire Recycle Cycles project?

I've definitely noticed that folks who come out for the night start to volunteer regularly at Recycle Cycles, and come into the space more during regular shop times. Women and Transfolk Night is usually more chill than other hours in the space, and what's been reflected is that it is a less difficult environment to learn in. People have expressed that they feel more confident in going to the shop in general after taking part in one of the Women and Transfolk only nights.

An extended version of this interview is available online. Visit [www.linchpin.ca](http://www.linchpin.ca) to read more about Women and Transfolk Bike Night.

political prisoners; non-status immigrants and incarceration; queer and trans people in prison; criminalization of youth; and prison issues in Latin America.

We aim to educate the public on prison reform, alternative forms of justice and abolishing the Prison Industrial Complex, as well as to create dialogue on local issues and their relationship to the global PIC, engage in cross movement building, and to create opportunities for people to engage in actions through community education and dialogue.

If you are interested in participating in the film festival, attending, or would like to donate to our event, please contact us at [pjfflondon@gmail.com](mailto:pjfflondon@gmail.com)

## Enbridge Line 9

On November 27th, cities across Canada and as far away as Texas and Trinidad demonstrated in solidarity with the Unist'ot'en Clan and their recent eviction of survey crews for the Pacific Trail pipeline. Hamilton, Waterloo, Toronto and Ottawa all took part in the growing national movement against the development of dangerous energy infrastructure on indigenous lands without consultation. Pipeline projects like the (now defunct) Northern Gateway and Keystone XL have already become some of the continent's most controversial developments, meeting with mass opposition throughout their paths and resulting in thousands of arrests at the Canadian and American capitals.

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Struggle Changes Everything

# Bill C-309 and its Discontents

By Eric Jacobs

Closer to home, Ontarians are beginning to awake to a pipeline of our own. Given the difficulties taking Tar Sands oil west or south, Canada's energy industry has decided to attempt an eastern route, using the existing pipeline network. Portrayed as an "alternative" to exporting bitumen from BC and a means of "safeguarding Canadian jobs", it's attracted support from even the NDP leadership.

For Ontario, that means Enbridge's 37-year-old Line 9, which runs from Montreal to Sarnia, roughly parallel to the 401. The company is now attempting to reverse the flow in order to take oil eastward from Michigan. After gaining approval at the National Energy Board for the first half (from Sarnia to the Westover Terminal), they are now seeking permission to continue work through the GTA. In response, activists in cities around the province have been frantically organizing everything from recent presentations to Hamilton's City Council (who promised to study the matter) to last spring's shutdown of NEB hearings at the hands of Occupy London.

In recent weeks this movement has picked up a lot of momentum, with organizers from around the province descending on Toronto to coordinate opposition along with firm statements of opposition from the Six Nations Confederacy, who vowed to fight development through the Haldimand Tract. From environmentalists to First Nations activists and the Council of Canadians to anarchist organizers, opposition to Enbridge's plans is rapidly gaining momentum.

There are many reasons to be concerned about this project. First is the possibility of a spill in the aging line, like the 2010 burst in Enbridge's Line 6B which dumped more than a million gallons of "dilbit" (diluted bitumen) into the Kalamazoo River. Dilbit is raw, unrefined Tar Sands bitumen (tar) mixed with dilutants like naptha (zippo fuel) which thin it enough to be pumped. The Kalamazoo spill proved dilbit is far more toxic than a normal oil spill, since it quickly separates into noxious vapours and thick, viscous tar. Enbridge was repeatedly condemned over the disaster, both for inadequate safety procedures and an inadequate (and covered up) cleanup.



How does this affect us? Line 6B becomes Line 9 at our border with Michigan.

Enbridge's list of spills is long - as recent as the past few weeks near Chicago (Line 14), and as close to home as Binbrook in 2001 (Line 10).

On a national scale, these pipelines matter because they represent a bottleneck for national energy development projects. The Albertan oil industry may have taken the reigns of Federal power through the Harper administration, but their ambitions still depend on thousands of kilometres of on-the-ground infrastructure. Without direct pipelines to refineries or ports, the Tar Sands are "landlocked" and must sell for a premium, limiting development. These projects pose a direct threat to every community and ecosystem they pass as well as our planet's climate as a whole. Thankfully, they also have to pass unopposed through each and every one of those communities if they wish to succeed.

On October 31, 2012, Parliament voted to approve Bill C-309, an amendment to Section 65 of the Canadian Criminal Code also known as the Preventing Persons from Concealing Their Identity during Riots and Unlawful Assemblies Act. Following a formal rubber-stamping by the Senate, this bill will establish two new criminal offences, each with alarmingly harsh sentencing provisions. Once Bill C-309 becomes law, individuals charged with wearing a mask or other disguise while participating in a riot (defined as "an unlawful assembly that has begun to disturb the peace tumultuously") will face an indictable offence carrying a maximum sentence of ten years; those charged with concealing their identity while participating in an unlawful assembly could face either an indictable offence—carrying a maximum sentence of five years—or a less serious summary offence. The crime of rioting currently carries a maximum two year sentence, whereas participation in an unlawful assembly is a basic summary offence.

Bill C-309, submitted by Conservative MP Blake Richards, was one of three private members bills pushed through Parliament by Stephen Harper's majority government that day; the other two included Bill C-217, which sets harsh new punishments for those convicted of vandalizing war memorials and Bill C-350, which forces claimants who are awarded monetary settlements from the court to use the funds to first pay back pre-existing court-ordered debts, such as child support, victim compensation or restitution payments.

Traditionally speaking, private members bills rarely become law; major legislative initiatives are usually promoted by cabinet members of the sitting government, not by party backbenchers. The Harper government has begun to change this convention, publicly throwing their support behind a number of private members bills—which require far less constitutional scrutiny and parliamentary oversight than their government-sponsored equivalents—as part of a broader strategy aimed at tightening their control over the political agenda in Ottawa.

Beyond the populist rhetoric of taking a "tough stance on crime", recent Conservative efforts such as C-309 are best understood as part of a massive expansion of this country's Prison-Industrial-Complex, and a shift towards a more Americanized system of incarceration. When Stockwell Day announced, in 2010, the government's plan to spend \$9 billion dollars on the construction of new prisons, liberal commentators quickly responded by pointing out that crime rates in the country have actually been declining for years. This confusion belies a lack of understanding on the part of many progressives of the true role that prisons play in capitalist society. The myth of prisons popularly conceived of as institutions intended to deter and ultimately rehabilitate criminals ignores the rampant culture of recidivism fostered by a system that does not address the root causes of crime, and purposefully makes the process of reintegration into society more difficult for those leaving prison. It also shrouds the much more important role of the Prison-Industrial-Complex as both a lucrative site of corporate profit and a vital tool of State control.

It is no secret that Bill C-309 is a response to the spread of black bloc tactics in Canada—such as those witnessed in Vancouver during the city's 2010 Anti-Olympic protests and 2011 Stanley Cup riot, in Toronto during the G20 Summit, and more recently during this year's student strike in

Québec. Speaking to reporters outside Parliament on the day of the bill's passage, Richards explained why various police chiefs and business leaders had asked him for these tough new laws. "They have individuals coming to gatherings of various types and looking to cause trouble and they come with a toolkit. They've got a bag, they've got a mask, they've got a disguise, black clothing, they've got hammers to break windows, objects to throw at the police, things to start fires with."

These new measures should hopefully serve as a wake-up call to anarchists and anti-authoritarians in this country. If you identify yourself as an enemy of the State and capitalism, it should come as no surprise when the State begins to treat you accordingly. In this current age of austerity, it is only prudent for the ruling class to reposition themselves into a more advantageous position to crush the resistance that their policies will inevitably provoke. This is why they are building more prisons—

**"Even more importantly, however, anarchists must strengthen our bonds to the mass movements of the working class."**

and passing new laws to fill them. Realizing this, the question then becomes: what are we going to do about it?

In terms of the deployment of black bloc tactics, this bill suggests the need for a tactical shift, with a stronger emphasis on avoiding unnecessary arrests. What constitutes an unlawful assembly and/or riot is ultimately up to the discretion of police officers on the ground. Any assembly of three or more people can be declared 'unlawful' at any time, thus clearing the way for police officers to surround and arrest small groups of masked protesters. Being aware of police movements and avoiding falling into these types of traps will become increasingly important, as will tactics such as de-arresting and breaking kettles. Along with this must come an increased awareness of the presence of surveillance cameras and the use of plainclothes police—as investigators will likely be happy to wait until after things in the streets have died down to come and arrest black bloc participants in their homes or on their way to work.

Even more importantly, however, anarchists must strengthen our bonds to the mass movements of the working class. The days of the anti-globalization movement are over, and the St. Paul principles that ostensibly served to navigate the rules of "diversity of tactics" are ill-suited to our emergent reality. This approach does not mean we need to compromise our politics—in fact, it demands that we bring anarchism out of the ghetto of radical activism and demonstrate its relevance to those who comprise our natural base of support. The alternative is complicity in the State's ongoing efforts to marginalize us, thereby leaving us even more vulnerable to the full weight of its repressive security apparatus.

Anarchists also urgently need to develop a strategy that sees the potential of incarceration not as a worst-case scenario, but as an increasingly likely consequence of struggle. Our prison support work must extend beyond letter-writing and fundraising events (as important as these are) towards a practice that breaks through the isolation of prison walls in more meaningful and productive ways. If the jails are going to be full of anarchists, then they should become breeding grounds for anarchism. As capitalism ramps up its attacks on the working class, larger segments of the population will be drawn into open class war. Things are going to get ugly. As anarchists and revolutionaries, it is our responsibility to meet this coming period of increased repression with clarity of vision and an inspiring depiction of the new world we believe is truly worth fighting for.