

Now that the pepper spray has settled...

Today we are participating in a demonstration against the police repression that occurred last Thursday, November 10, during the province-wide day of student action against tuition hikes. Riot police marched into campus, clubbed, pushed, and pepper-sprayed demonstrators supporting an occupation of the James Administration building, as well as passers-by. Several people were arrested.

While the actions of the police are brutal and seem shocking to many, since it's not often that they come to privileged places like McGill, these actions are not very surprising. The role of the police in society is to protect capital and the state—that is, to protect power. As such, they repress anyone who either doesn't fit into the social order, or anyone who chooses to actively resist it. Power must flow in only one direction; downwards. The police maintain a social peace that keeps commodities circulating and everyone in line. As soon as this is challenged, as happened with the occupation, the violence required to keep this system going - usually invisible - suddenly makes itself felt. Police brutality is not just the work of a few bad apples, but a key characteristic of how the police maintain their power. The threat of violence on their part must actually be backed up to be effective at all. It's the classic carrot or the stick: if you won't be obedient in order to get your condo/car/cushy job, then you'll be obedient because of the threat of being beat up or imprisoned. The idea is that, either way, you will go to work tomorrow and the system will keep running. These are the reasons that the police as an institution cannot be reformed, but only destroyed.

While it's clearly upsetting that people were hurt by cops on Thursday, let's not play the game of blaming those who are actively fighting against the tuition increases (and beyond). The only people responsible for the violence of the police are the police. Let's not rewrite this night to say we were all passive victims; let's embrace people's ability to hold their ground. It's a sign of our struggle's strength that when the first round of bike police attacked, people were able to physically push them back using their bodies, placards, and other objects.

Challenging power has consequences, and the police, courts, and prison system punish not only the individuals who do so, but also their communities. But this doesn't mean that power should go unchallenged—the only reason many of us are even able to afford to go to school now is because, for the past forty years, people have been fighting - by a variety of means - to keep tuition fees frozen.

In some countries, like Greece, the police aren't allowed to go into university campuses at all. Whenever they try, people fight and physically push them out. This begs the question, if this was actually our campus, what would it look like? Even without the cops, our campus is still a social factory churning out military research, animal torture, control technologies, politicians, and other graduates who will manage the different facets of this shit society. But it doesn't have to be this way - we can take back these spaces, take them out of the circulation of capital, break out of our roles as students or teachers or workers, and share knowledge freely to live our lives as we actually desire. ☺

...and the fight has only just begun

