

Not a minor incident

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The *Chronicle Herald* calls the presence of Surete du Quebec undercover cops at the Montebello summit "a minor incident" (Inquiry? Not yet," Aug. 28 editorial). Wrong.

First, it is likely that the three officers were agents provocateurs. If they were, the police were conspiring to incite violence.

Second, the fact that they were masked and dressed as hoodlums and one carried a rock could well have inspired an angry protester to take a violent step. In that case, the Surete would have incited violence even had the officers not intended to. Simply the presence of these officers in the crowd dressed and behaving as they were put people at risk of harm.

Third, suppose the undercover cops had gone undetected. Even if they had, their presence in the crowd as rock-wielding miscreants for all to see would have stained the protest. If the officers were simply there in the service of crowd control, they need not have been masked and in full leather regalia. This might seem a small point, but it brings us to the fourth point, which isn't small at all. We have here a case of police being used, or using themselves, for political ends.

The *Herald* might be right that a full public inquiry into the conduct of the Surete du Quebec would neither get to the bottom of things nor help to reform police behaviour. So what will? Tough reporting and editorializing would be a step in the right direction. I'm not expecting the *Chronicle Herald* to take the lead.