

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4713>



Environment

# Facing down the oil company dogs

- IV Online magazine - 2016 - IV500 - September 2016 -

Publication date: Friday 23 September 2016

---

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

---

### **Sara Rougeau reports on the thuggish attempts by oil companies to repress a massive Native encampment against the Dakota Access Pipeline project**

The growing showdown at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota against plans to build a massive pipeline underneath vital water basins and tribal burial grounds reached a new peak of intensity last Saturday when private security forces sicced attack dogs on peaceful protesters, who somehow managed to hold their ground and send the oil company thugs scurrying.

Over 2,000 Native American and non-Native protesters, including many tribal leaders from around the country, have come to the Camp of the Sacred Stones and the Red Warrior Camp at Standing Rock Reservation to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).

This \$3.8 billion pipeline project is anticipated to daily carry 570,000 barrels of oil extracted through hydraulic fracturing from North Dakota's Bakken oil fields over 1,000 miles to Illinois. Along the way, the DAPL would be buried under the Missouri River and cross 209 rivers and tributaries.

The energy industry claims that pipelines pose no threat to these precious watersheds, but former Scientific America editor Trudy Bell estimates that "the 'average' pipeline...has a 57 percent probability of experiencing a major leak...in a ten-year period."

The companies involved in building the DAPL, including Enbridge, Marathon and Phillips 66, have attempted to skirt a mandatory environmental impact statement and accelerate construction on land that is covered by the Lakota Treaty Territory, threatening the Standing Rock Sioux's water supply and 8 million other people living downstream of the Missouri River.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has sued the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for fast-tracking approval of the pipeline without proper consultation with the tribe.

-----

These issues have led hundreds and then thousands of protesters to converge on Standing Rock for peaceful protests that have been met with severe repression, from a police blockade of the main road out of the reservation to the cutting of waterlines leading to campsites.

But the crackdown reached another level on September 3, when bulldozers appeared and began tearing up the contested land. Private security forces armed with pepper spray and attack dogs confronted anguished protesters watching burial and ceremonial grounds be destroyed.

At least six people were bitten by the dogs, including a child and a pregnant woman, and 12 were treated for pepper spray. Police stood by passively during the attack.

Tribal activist Linda Black Elk put the company's assault in context in a Facebook post:

## Facing down the oil company dogs

---

On Friday, the Standing Rock Nation filed papers challenging Dakota Access permits from the Army Corps of Engineers...because in a recent survey of the area, the tribe found many incredibly sacred sites, including burial sites, directly in the path of the proposed pipeline. The tribe had never been allowed to survey these areas before, so they hadn't been able to document these sites.

Today, barely 24 hours after those papers were filed, Dakota Access used bulldozers to destroy those sites. It was absolute destruction. They literally bulldozed the ancestors right out of the ground, along with destroying tipi rings and cairns. They did all of this while assaulting peaceful resistors, using vicious dogs, tear gas and pepper spray.

There's only one conclusion: they are attempting to provoke us to violence. They learned exactly how to hurt us the most and then they threw it all in our faces. They were smiling and laughing the whole time...evil grins on their faces as their dogs tore in to peaceful water protectors. It is one of the saddest and most shocking things I have ever seen.

Despite this vicious repression, protesters were able to cross a thin barricade and push back the security forces and construction crew with their sheer numbers—the inspiring victory was captured on video by Democracy Now! The damage done to the site, however, is irreparable.

While it is unclear which company was involved in the September 3 attacks, it is known that DAPL officials have contracted with G4S, the infamous security firm known for its role in violent repression of Palestinians in apartheid Israel, as well as a range of scandals in the U.S. and around the world.

-----

But the combined repression of police and private security hasn't stopped the development of one of the largest Native movements in the U.S. in decades. As Jacqueline Keeler wrote in Telesur:

This 1,168-mile-pipeline extending across four states from North Dakota to Illinois has sparked a prairie fire of united Native American resistance not seen since Wounded Knee and a return of the Great Sioux Nation. This is the first time since the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn that all seven council fires [of the Océti Sakówin or Great Sioux Nation] have camped together.

Just as the movement against DAPL has built on the successful struggle to block the Keystone XL Pipeline, the indigenous-led resistance to DAPL is building on the renaissance of Native activism begun by the Idle No More movement in Canada that spread south into the U.S. in the movement against the defeated Keystone XL pipeline project.

One of the most damaging lies put forward by Keystone proponents was the promise of thousands of jobs to workers looking for a way out of the Great Recession. In reality, Keystone XL would have provided 2,000 temporary construction jobs over a span of two years and only around 50 permanent jobs afterwards.

Similarly, the Dakota Access Pipeline is being lauded as a job creator and has been endorsed by the Laborers union, which called pipelines "crucial lifelines to family-supporting jobs." Lifelines is an ironic word for something with such devastating potential to poison vital ecosystems, community water sources and the very air we breathe.

Speaking on Democracy Now! Native writer and activist Winona LaDuke addressed the need for organized labor to be on the right side of the pipeline fight, and to take up the demand for rebuilding infrastructure to provide clean water to places like Flint, Michigan, and Native reservations around the country. As LaDuke said:

## Facing down the oil company dogs

---

I'm asking American labor to stand with us and to say we want pipelines. We want infrastructure that goes for people, that goes for communities, and not for oil companies that are going to destroy our environment and cause more climate change destruction to our planet.

As the government and oil companies combine to crush protests with brute force and the mainstream media devote barely any coverage to their scandalous behavior the need to build solidarity across the country is crucial.

The Sacred Stones and Red Warrior camps are calling for solidarity rallies across the country between September 3 and 17.

Under the banner of "Mni Wiconi," which means "water is life" in Lakota we must demand access to clean water now and for all future generations and take up the demand for an energy system not for the profits of oil companies, but for a sustainable life for all people.

*September 7, 2016*

[socialist worker.org](http://socialistworker.org)