

SWARM



A ROVING CARAVAN STRATEGY
FOR CRUSHING SNAKES AND
OTHER CAPITALIST PARASITES

*“The Earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it
have names and addresses.”*

– Utah Phillips

*A publication of the Killer Bee Syndicate
Illustrations by Jonas Goonface*

Intro to Swarm

The Earth is gasping for air and so are all the living beings on her. The tightest knots around our throats are black snakes, the pipelines that pulse out of the oil fields in Alberta carrying climate-killing carbon across land and water. The fights against these pipelines embody a series of battles in the war for the future of life on this planet: The Tar Sands Blockade. Standing Rock. Unis'tot'en Camp. L'eau Est La Vie Camp. These are places we have made our stands against annihilation. But the battle goes beyond these camps. This is a fight for every one of our futures, and defeat is not an option.

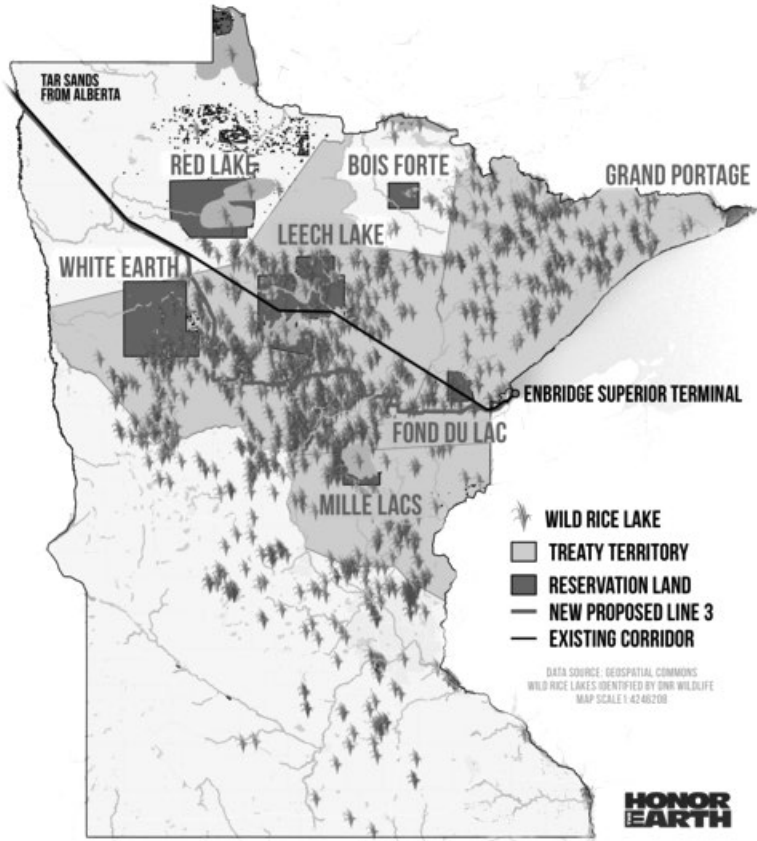
Through hard fought struggle, we have forged and sharpened our tactics in order to adapt and win. This zine has been written and edited by a number of frontline veterans in the climate struggle, hoping to address new concepts around how we fight those who would drive us to extinction. Specifically, we wish to introduce the concept of swarming and the strategy of roving caravans, using the Mississippi Stand campaign as a case study.

Swarm tactics are the use of autonomously-acting cells on the battlefield, acting in coordination without a centralized or hierarchical command structure. This way of carrying out actions mimics swarms in nature, such as bees or piranhas. Humans have used swarm tactics for thousands of years, especially for guerrilla and insurgent forces facing better-funded occupying forces.

The mobile caravan tactic takes the analysis of the pipeline fight as an asymmetric, "guerrilla" struggle against an occupying force to its logical next step. Rather than relying solely on stationary camps set up to block a pipeline, the mobile caravan approach relies on disrupting production up and down the pipeline, stretching police and security forces thin and maximizing disruption.

We aim to bring these ideas into the consciousness of the broader movement for discussion, debate, and subsequent application in the field. This zine has been written in the context of the brewing Line 3 struggle across Ojibwe and Dakota lands and the watersheds of northern Minnesota. However, we believe that the lessons we explore here and the experiences we gain through struggle will find relevance well beyond this particular pipeline fight. We believe that if adopted, these tactics can significantly increase the effectiveness of our struggles against fossil fuel infrastructure.

ENBRIDGE LINE 3 IMPACT ON TREATY RESOURCES



Intro to the Line 3 Struggle

The existing Line 3 is an Enbridge pipeline that transports Tar Sands crude oil from Alberta to Superior, Wisconsin, spanning northern Minnesota and crossing the Leech Lake and Fond du Lac reservations and the 1855, 1854, and 1842 treaty areas.¹

In operation since 1968, it has has had a number of leaks. One of those leaks was the largest inland oil spill in the U.S: In 1991, 1.7 million gallons ruptured and spilled in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.² Now reaching the end of its lifespan, the decaying pipeline cannot continue to haul oil. Instead of decommissioning Line 3 and paying for its removal and the rehabilitation of the lands it has destroyed, Enbridge is branding their aims to expand the pipeline--in order to transport oil at a higher volume and in a new corridor--as a “replacement.”

At \$7.5 billion, the proposed new Line 3 would be the largest project in Enbridge’s history³ and one of the largest crude oil pipelines in the world, carrying up to 915,000 barrels per day of the dirtiest fuel on earth, tar sands crude. According to retired NASA scientist James Hanson:

“If Canada proceeds, and we do nothing, it will be game over for the climate. Canada’s tar sands, deposits of sand saturated with bitumen, contain twice the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by global oil use in our entire history. If we were to fully exploit this new oil source, and continue to burn our conventional oil, gas and coal supplies, concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere eventually would reach levels higher than in the Pliocene era, more than 2.5 million years ago, when sea level was at least 50 feet higher than it is now. That level of heat-trapping gases would assure that the disintegration of the ice sheets would accelerate out of control. Sea levels would rise and destroy coastal cities. Global temperatures would become intolerable. Twenty to 50 percent of the planet’s species would be driven to extinction.”⁴

This project poses a direct threat not only to frontline indigenous communities and millions of people who depend on the rivers and lakes for clean drinking water, but also to living beings all over the planet who would be annihilated by the carbon bomb this project would emit.

Line 3 is poised to be a linchpin in tar sands infrastructure. It is designed to prop up a dying industry for decades more. According to Winona Laduke, a long time indigenous and environmental activist fighting this pipeline,

“Enbridge—they need this to stay alive. This is their last vampire suck of blood...”

Enbridge has put most of its eggs in this basket, and stopping this project would be a major blow to them. Moreover, the failure of this project would send shockwaves across the entire fossil fuel industry, aiding our comrades in struggle against similar development projects. Before Obama vetoed a bill approving the Keystone XL pipeline (which has since been reopened for approval by the Trump Administration) the shaky standing of the project caused a number of corporations to abandon tar sands project plans: Norwegian oil giant Statoil, Royal Dutch Shell, the French energy company Total, and SunCor Energy of Canada. That’s billions of dollars of profit these companies didn’t make just by putting Keystone on the ropes. According to Brian Palmer, writer for *Earth Magazine* in 2014, Keystone was crucial to tar sands projects being profitable, and without it “a marginally profitable business [turns] into a completely unprofitable business—and that’s scaring oil producers off of tar sands projects.”⁵ The relevance of major pipeline projects to the continuation of tar sands is especially true in the case of Line 3.

It should be noted that without pipelines, the fossil fuel industry would be forced to rely on oil trains, and would certainly attempt to increase oil train traffic. However, oil trains are much less economically feasible for the industry. The pipeline is a chokepoint, and cutting it

off means forcing the industry to rely on the less profitable oil trains. Resistance to rail is still a key front; many are doing this work, and if the pipelines are defeated, the oil trains will remain a point of struggle. While aspects of the content covered in this zine could aid and be adapted to that front of the struggle, that is beyond our scope of focus for now.

Line 3 has become the frontline in the fight against climate change. The ability for one pipeline to transport nearly a million barrels daily of the dirtiest substance on the planet is simply “game over” for any chance we have of combating climate change, just in terms of carbon output alone. Moreover, it is the most valuable project that the largest oil company in north america has. Stopping this pipeline would be like severing an artery to the oil industry and removing the flow of the lifeblood necessary to function at all in its current capacity. A victory here would have resounding effects for all of our struggles against the oil industry. We simply cannot afford to lose.

Pressing the Offensive

Our stance: If we want to win, we need to innovate in our direct action strategy. Our current approach of lobbying, mass demonstrations, temporary and even long term action camps--while indispensable--is not sufficient to push the tar sands industry off the cliff they are hanging over. Furthermore, lockdown after lockdown leaves us at the mercy of an often unsympathetic court system that can leave us facing thousands of dollars in fines and years in prison. The state of our pipeline movement is clear: We need to create a new paradigm, that thinks more strategically, and come up with tactics that will be new to our enemy and the law enforcement that protects them.

In this zine, we will be looking at Mississippi Stand as a case study to understand mobile caravans and the swarm tactics they employed. Mississippi Stand as far as we know was the first of its kind to employ this strategy towards pipeline infrastructure.

Resisting as a Good Relative

With the world at risk we all have a stake in this fight. That said, we want to make it clear that folks planning on taking action in indigenous territory, not their own, need to be mindful of the impact that their actions could have on frontline native communities. Those communities are the most directly impacted and have been leading the fight against colonial capitalist ecocide for centuries. Not being plugged into “on the ground” contexts can lead to strategic blunders that can adversely impact frontline communities and the entirety of the pipeline struggle.

We feel that those considering taking the tactics described here on reservation land should develop relationships with radical native folk who are rooted in their communities and who the caravan members find themselves in political solidarity with. While outside the scope of this zine, at the end we will provide an in-depth list of content regarding principled ways of engagement when fighting alongside indigenous people or within indigenous-led struggles.

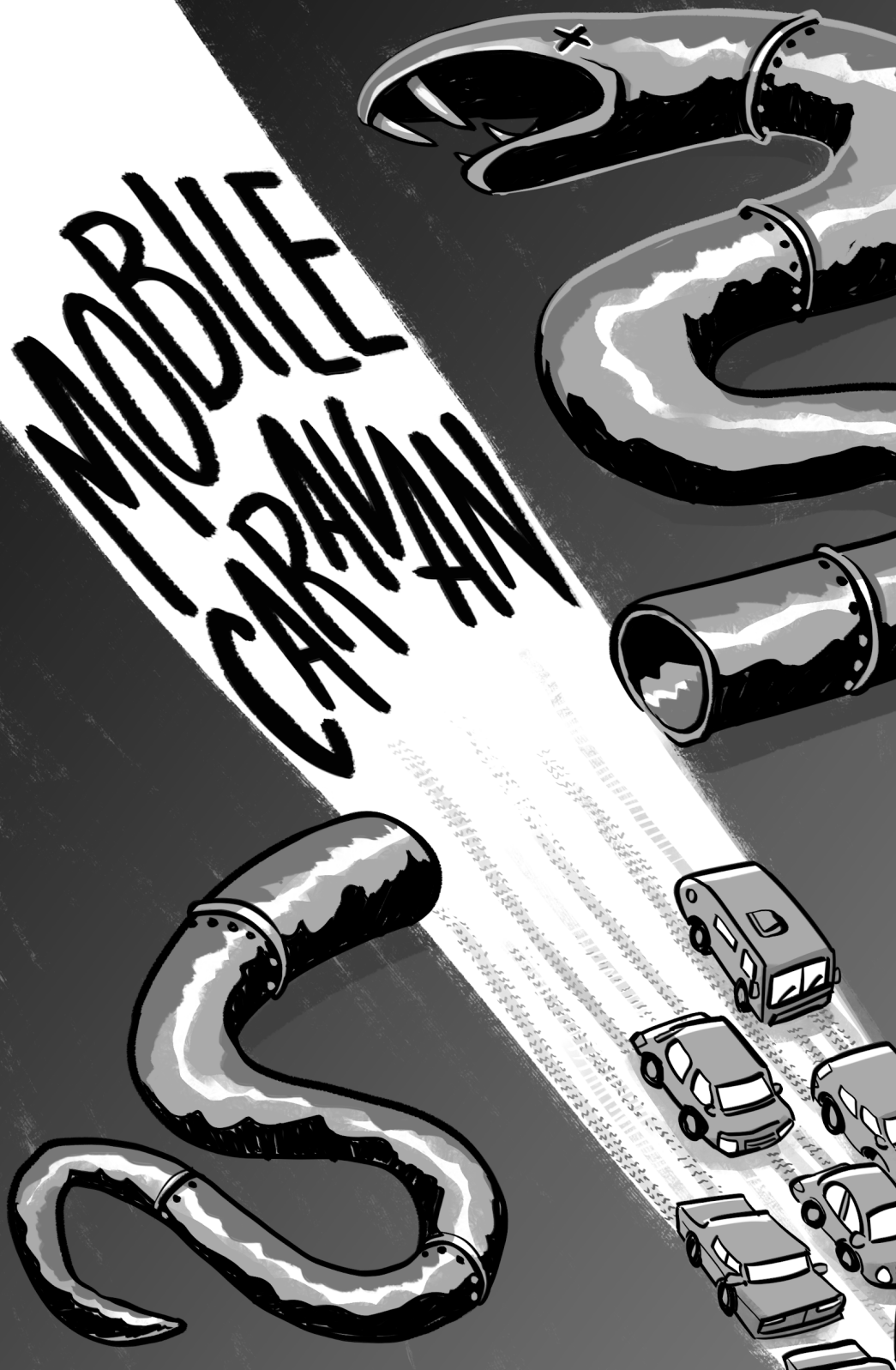
From Camp to Caravan: If it's a Movement it has to Move

The caravan strategy grew out of the Mississippi Stand camp in Keokuk, Iowa as water protectors learned to adapt and overcome the tactical limitations of maintaining a stationary camp.

Keokuk is a predominantly white working class town, on the banks of the Mississippi where Energy Transfer Partners would have to bore under the river to lay the pipeline.

Mississippi Stand was started by Jessica Reznicek and other Catholic Workers the first day Jessica pitched her tent and asked folks to join her 24 hours after her first blockade to block the trucks that were

MOBILE CRAVAN



crucial to boring under the Mississippi River. They engaged often in tactical direct action to stop construction that included locking arms and blockading the road to the construction site. The very first lockdown to the drill site was initiated by Jessica and two others. This campaign was birthed out of this work and the camp was established at the bottom of the hill to the construction site.

With so much happening at Standing Rock, local water protectors had chosen to open up this new front for direct action in the fight against DAPL. There was not a large native community or a native-led struggle in this town on the pipeline path. The local contingent invited outside activists for their expertise and willingness to commit to action. These outside activists did important work early on with community members who had been resisting the pipeline for years in court. They built relationships at stores, churches, and community events. They served food at the initial camp alongside the Mississippi River. This growing solidarity with the out-of-town water protectors built up a sense of comfort among more locals to participate in direct actions and civil disobedience themselves. Many people had never participated in a political march before, but after participating in a number of marches, locals trained to do actual walk-ons onto the construction site to halt work. This was the initial organizing that led to the camp which the mobile caravan sprang from.

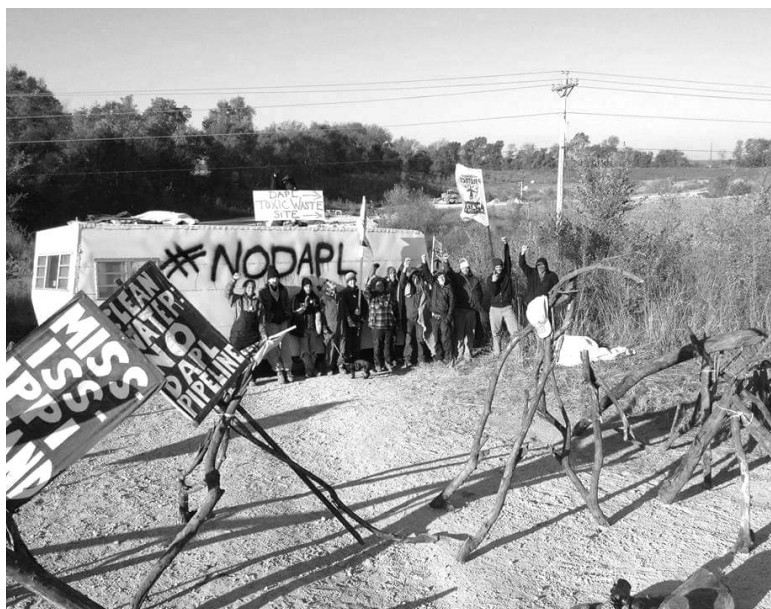
Early on, the camp struggled with logistical problems such as locating decision-making power among jostling parties: the land owner on whose land the camp was later relocated to, the original founders of the movement, those who had been there longer, and the newer participants involved. To move past this impasse, anarchists proposed and implemented a horizontal structure with the consensus of the group.

From the beginning, the camp was as much a target for surveillance as it was a place of refuge. Tents are not soundproof in the open prairie, and voices travel far. Folks had to leave camp anytime they wanted to plan an action. Police officers posted themselves just up the road from

the camp, in plain sight. Surveillance by private mercenaries went even further than the cops, as is familiar to veterans of Standing Rock and anyone who's read the Tigerswan Papers. Planning actions at the camp also meant planning in a space where many fellow campers who were not aligned with the anarchist contingent could hear. Many of these campers were OK with protesting the pipeline, but not with taking direct action to lock down to equipment or disrupt construction. Others simply could not be trusted with sensitive information—either because they had not learned good information security practices, or because they . As we will see later, in “Information Security”, the Mississippi Stand camp did have an informant in it working for private security.

Unable to use the camp to plan actions, the contingent that was more focused on direct action ultimately formed a second, secret camp. An affinity group, in turn, developed out of that camp. An affinity group is a closed group of people who act together around a common cause—often in secret, when engaged in direct action. However, affinity groups do not need to be born in action camps, or even be part of the camp. In a camp that allows for anyone to come, it is imperative that action committees remain separate from the main camp.

In action after action, water protectors rushed the pipeline construction site, locking down to equipment and shutting down production for a few hours at a time. They developed a familiarity with swarm tactics, which we will detail further on. As the struggle went on, some of the pipeline workers and private security grew disgruntled. Some workers revealed an Achilles' heel to the pipeline: if the immense amount of pressure it takes to push a pipe underneath a river were halted during the process called the underbore, that could be enough to collapse the tunnel. This would potentially set construction back months. The economic damage would be even greater than many forms of direct sabotage, and at a smaller risk. The findings were confirmed with some engineers, and the water protectors set to work.



In the days that followed, scouts were sent out to observe the sites on either side of the river via drone and binocular, as well as tail the traffic in and out of the site. Intelligence was gathered and reviewed by the action committee who, after much discussion, identified a dump site necessary for the removal of toxic wastewater in the underbore process. This was a weak point vulnerable to a blockade. A march was planned to confront the main bore site but then diverted to the dump site. Here, an action group used the crowd as cover to set up a 400-pound concrete lock box to shut down the site. At first, both the police and mercenaries proclaimed that this was a waste of time, that the site wasn't valuable and they didn't care if they stayed. Confident in the information that had been gathered, the water protectors doubled down and reinforced their position with a trailer purchased cheaply online, and locked a person to that as well. As time went on, scouts found that work had indeed halted. And the police, aided by mercenaries, attempted for days to dislodge the blockade. Mississippi Stand dug in, took a number of arrests, called for reinforcements, and developed a plan to make a counter-offensive on the bore site.

During the blockade of the sludge dump site in Keokuk before the mobile caravan began:

Unfortunately, two dozen water protectors were not enough to hold the blockade, especially amidst a number of arrests and the legal support that was required. Also, DAPL workers ultimately chose to illegally dispose of the waste water into an already spent site that immediately spilled into the nearby river. They had decided that the risk of fines did not outweigh the cost of halting construction a day longer. Sadly, with a number of their members arrested and without reinforcements, Mississippi Stand could not directly challenge the site of the underbore, maintain the blockade, produce media, and also offer legal support. Construction continued and the underbore was completed.

After failing to hit the weak spot in Keokuk, they chose to try again on another portion of the pipeline at another river underbore. This is the decision that more or less formally began the mobile caravan. In action camps, people are often rooted in one place with only a limited range of targets that can be focused on. The advantage of mobile groups is that they allow for pressing the offensive from anywhere. Having lost the fight in Keokuk, the caravan could now hit anywhere on the pipeline. Constantly moving through different counties and states kept any single local law enforcement agency from getting a good handle on them, allowing the element of surprise at every new site they struck. As a group that specialized in mobility, they could come in, scout the site, and strike. A single area near a camp can be contained, but it is hard to defend a whole pipeline route. The disadvantage for state and corporate forces is the amount of terrain they have to protect. This makes mobility an advantage for smaller opposition.

The caravan group was a smaller crew, each person vetted, and each of them more able to trust one another. This allowed for greater

precision in carrying out actions. The clutter of camp life was left behind: the daily surveillance, the lack of privacy, the security risks by unknown people coming to camp. Familiarity with each other allowed them to put each person in a role that played to their strengths. As they struggled together and learned to work as a unit, they were able to carry out actions with greater complexity of movement and with more variables at play. This familiarity with each other allowed them to remain flexible, and in this struggle, flexibility is key. You can't have a rigid plan and expect it to unfold without complications. You have to be able to see and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves, to press the offensive with the resources you have. On a day to day basis, tasks were better delegated in a tight-knit crew. Auto maintenance aside, resources were used more efficiently.

Still, after months of constant planning and mobile direct actions, their efforts failed. At their last action, during the final underbore, they were unable to pinpoint the exact moment they needed to disrupt the boring process. Communication issues, indecision, and uncertainty of timing led to the window of opportunity being missed to stop the bore. Also, attempts from another crew to lock down to a moving truck going into the bore site failed due to a technical mishap with the lockbox. A water protector was wearing too thick a sweater, which made it difficult to lock into the lockbox while security guards were also pulling them away from the truck. In these actions, no detail is too small to overlook.

It is clear that this model had limitations and disadvantages. We feel it is important to be honest about this so that other water protectors are not caught off guard. These problems should be understood, for the model to be improved in the fight against Line 3 and beyond.

First, the model was not geared towards community organizing. Constantly moving, and not forming ties with communities, they were not able to reliably mobilize local residents to fight the pipeline in areas where that work had not already been done, and we were often

operating in communities where we didn't have support networks for our work. This is important work that needs to be done by activists and organizers rooted in their communities. The caravan is not the tool for that job; it is a tool for direct action.

The caravan was traveling long distances, and constantly at the mercy of cars breaking down. Many if not most of the water protectors were poor, funded only by what was raised through an aggressive media and fundraising campaign. They were reliant on their own vehicles to carry out these actions. One reliable truck would have done wonders for the campaign—O the kind of equipment that caravans could have with support from the broader movement. We could have benefitted from having someone in our group assigned to drumming up that support, by providing communiques and press releases to radical media, or by reaching out to other groups and communities, and asking for fundraising.

Our lack of technical knowledge was a liability at first, though strides were taken to overcome this through careful research and consultation. Initially there had been a number of false perceptions of what would be necessary to stop the underbore. Good tactics based off of faulty information does not do you any good. So, engineers were consulted. Their expertise properly informed the caravan to target crucial moments in the process. Good information is essential for carrying out a successful campaign.

Another weakness was that there was only one caravan. Given enough determination, law enforcement can learn to track and anticipate the movement of a single caravan. If there had been multiple caravans roving and doing actions across the entirety of the pipeline route, the impact would have been exponentially multiplied. Mississippi Stand alone just didn't have the numbers to create a proper swarm.

The biggest limitations were the ones Mississippi Stand imposed on themselves, revolving around ongoing debates concerning violence versus nonviolence or direct sabotage versus non-sabotage. During the

NoDAPL struggle in Iowa, other individuals independent of Mississippi Stand chose to commit acts of direct sabotage, involving the arson of equipment among a number of other tactics. Though much riskier, these acts had varying degrees of success in delaying construction for weeks or even months. They could arguably be considered more effective than any other individual action at the time. They caused a significant price-tag effect through increased security and delayed investment returns, and led to millions in damaged equipment.

Those who choose to take greater risks have a responsibility to do so in a cautious and serious fashion, keeping in mind the greater impact actions can have on the broader movement. The fight to save the planet requires nothing short of a diversity of tactics. Everyone must decide the way they engage in this struggle for themselves. Our solidarity with one another must be steadfast against state and corporate forces that seek to divide and destroy our movements.

We know that after the overall NoDAPL struggle from Standing Rock to Mississippi Stand, Energy Transfer Partners was forced to negotiate new shipping contracts and it cost them more than a billion dollars. If not for Enbridge buying a significant portion of Energy Transfer Partners and securing them as an investment, ETP would likely have gone under. Investors have been pulling money out of dirty fossil fuel projects for safer, less volatile investments. The cultural impact is important too; resistance generates buzz and this mobilizes more people to get involved against fossil fuel projects in their communities. A number of fossil fuel projects are also being shut down in courts. Inarguably, the NoDAPL movement's influence has spread like wildfire since the height of the conflict and turned the tide against the industry.

Information Security

The art of deception is pivotal to any effective struggle, especially between the “David” of water protectors and “Goliath” of the oil industry and the state. This was an understanding that evolved during the campaign. In the beginning, trainings and action planning were actually being done *in front* of law enforcement, at the site of the direct actions. This was a monumental security breach which utterly destroyed the element of surprise necessary for any successful action. Once they got into place to act, the police would simply arrest people before any real disruption to construction took place. The ineffective arrests costs thousands in fines that the movement struggled to fundraise for months. With time and the involvement of new people, deception was embraced as a necessity.

Mississippi Stand consistently feigned actions to draw security forces away from their actual intended targets. A protest would be planned to draw law enforcement away while water protectors struck various nodes of construction infrastructure elsewhere or hidden in the protest. Often times when leaving camp, decoy drivers would be sent one direction, DAPL forces would pursue, and the real action group would go a separate way free of harassment. Misdirection became a necessary daily routine.

Also, after the on-the-ground DAPL struggle ended, documents came out showing the extent that Tiger Swan, a private security firm, had surveilled their activities. An informant for Tiger Swan named Joel Edward McCollough was present at the action camp. He tried persistently to insert himself in the actions of the mobile caravan—however, Joel’s behavior and the caravan’s overall lack of affinity with him led them to keep him at arm’s length. For more information about the extent of private security surveillance during the DAPL struggle check out the *Intercept* article “The Infiltrator: How an Undercover Oil Industry Mercenary Tricked Pipeline Opponents into Believing He Was One of Them.”⁶ This situation highlights the importance of doing direct action work only with those you trust and ideally have

been working with for a couple of years. While everyone in the Mississippi Stand caravan had been vetted, people had relationships that ranged from years of working together to just meeting at the action camp. The circumstances are never ideal—however, having trust with one another when taking on this work is a must to ensure the safety of all those involved.

Counter-surveillance was also important to the work. Water protectors observed security forces' behavior and would take note of their cars being followed. They also followed the vehicles of both security and work vehicles going back and forth to the work site, and noted unusual patterns that roughly indicated to them the level of activity around certain facets of construction sites. This information was used to identify weaknesses in the construction process.

Water protectors used drones to get full access to topical views of their targets. Drones turned out to be infrastructure well worth spending money on. Counter-surveillance is a constantly-evolving process as our enemies and specific situations change. You must use what is at your disposal to adapt.

Resource Efficiency

As the pipeline struggle dragged on, Mississippi Stand learned that each arrest meant hard and prolonged legal support work. A disruption that lasts a few hours—or even worse, a symbolic arrest—could spell months of legal support for and around the arrestee. This takes up the time of organizers, legal defense volunteers, movement lawyers, and performers raising funds that could otherwise go to supplies to sustain the struggle. Even worse, some arrestees never get the legal support they need after locking down, and end up paying heavy, life-altering consequences for their stand. This is not the way to sustain a movement.

So, for each arrest planned, water protectors tried to maximize the disruption they caused. They learned to be discreet and to use the limited resources at their disposal to continuously strike the pipeline in the most efficient ways they could, maintaining a constant pulse of actions. It is difficult to ascertain how much damage you have done without achieving your final goal. However, we know that Energy Transfer Partners spent tens of millions of dollars on private security and that contracts were added and extended due to continuous resistance. If our movements are creating work stoppages, it affects public and investor perceptions. By turning the tide of public opinion against companies and banks connected to the project, we can turn it into a toxic investment. Work delays are key to this. From lockdowns to blockades, you must find ways to consistently delay work or halt it. Other financial drains include the cost of security, refinancing loans, and the loss of political capital. Effective resistance means knowing our enemy. Greater knowledge of the way that the industry works and greater knowledge of the construction process will allow us to strike the pipeline in the right place at the right time, to derail all of their carefully laid plans.

The shortage of resources is a key weakness for water protectors. The movement needs reliable cars, for example, to have multiple caravans. We need food and supplies for camps and caravans alike. We need safe houses where travelers can rest and regroup. We need legal defense money and strong support networks that can provide sustained, reliable support for arrestees. We need decent winter gear for everyone and the means to keep warm. The movement needs more resources, the right resources, and it needs to use them wisely.

Once the caravan began, having places to recoup, store supplies, and retrofit the trailer with insulation and bunk beds was crucial. A 300-dollar trailer became a mobile bunkhouse that could house a dozen and hold hundreds of pounds of supplies. Living out of cars and three-season tents in winter isn't sustainable. Necessary gear is worth investing in.

Fundraising quickly becomes a concern for sustaining the movement. As a direct action group, the caravan understood that the more badass actions looked, the more money was raised online. The media branch of the group was absolutely critical in not only spreading the message but securing the majority of our funds. However, the goal isn't to pull off flashy actions. It to conduct effective ones. The caravan never lost sight of the goal: stopping the pipeline and causing as much economic damage as possible along the way. For supporters behind the front lines, the challenge is to raise money for supplies and legal defense and keep it available for when frontline crews need it. This needs to be sustained, accountable work and is a key place to plug in for anyone who can't go to the front. Logistics win wars.

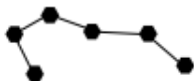
Swarm Tactics

Mobility is key not only on a strategic level, with the caravans, but on a tactical level as well. In Keokuk, water protectors adapted swarm theory to the struggle. A swarm is a network of autonomous structures found in nature, such as bees. As a military tactic, it has been used successfully for thousands of years. Now, in the age of information, it is easier than ever for autonomous actors on the battlefield to rapidly coordinate and adapt. Land defenders and anti-authoritarians have developed the concept more than anyone in recent years, and it has been documented by military researchers.

One such research group, the RAND corporation, is a military think tank that crunches data for the war machine and innovates new tactics for the US military. While we're disgusted with their collaboration with the worst elements of imperialist forces, we have found their particular research on swarm strategy illuminating. They write in their thesis paper "Swarming & The Future of Conflict":

"Swarming is seemingly amorphous, but it is a deliberately structured, coordinated, strategic way to strike from all directions, by means of a sustainable pulsing force and/or fire, close-in as well as from stand off positions. It will work best - perhaps it will only work

Basic Types of Networks: Building Blocks of the New Formations



**Chain
network**



**Star or hub
network**



**All-channel
network**

- **Each type suits different purposes, situations**
 - **All-channel gives network form its high potential**
 - **Mixes of all three may be present, advisable**
-

- if it is designed mainly around a myriad, small dispersed, network maneuver movements.”

They later go on to state:

“...Swarming depends on a devolution of power to small units and a capacity to interconnect those units that has only recently become feasible, due to the information revolution.”

As their paper instructs, networks come in basically three major types:

- The **chain** or line network, in which people, materials, or information move along a line of separated contacts, and where end-to-end communication travels through the intermediate nodes
- The **star** hub, or wheel network, in which a set of actors are tied to a central (but not hierarchical) node or actor and must go through that node to communicate and coordinate with each other
- The **all-channel** network, in which everyone is connected to everyone else.

In Mississippi Stand, the all-channel network swarm was used for many actions. In one such action, water protectors rushed onto the construction site, disorienting DAPL security forces in order to gain access to the equipment necessary to lockdown to (a video of one of their swarms in action titled, “#NoDAPL resistance punks security and lockdown to backhoe”, is cited below. It is recommended that readers watch to get a clear picture of what we are talking about).⁷ As security forces moved to intercept one group, another could move closer to the target. In this way, the mission of each autonomous group became fluid: In one moment, you are the strike force. As security blocks you, you become the decoy while another team moves towards the target. When security goes to block them, you take back the offensive.

They found that swarming helped them avoid costly arrests. During the blockade of the dumping site, private security attempted to capture folks with zip ties to take into their private custody and later into police custody. This was a dangerous situation. Mississippi Stand used swarm tactics to overwhelm the mercenaries and subsequently unarrested their comrades.

Building Up Our Forces, Breaking Down Our Hang Ups

We think it is important to spread this tactical knowledge in the hopes of multiplying from one caravan to many, from one swarm to a swarm of swarms. In Mississippi Stand, a direct action training was introduced to prepare activists for the struggle and to get people working in a shared framework together. Many activists were used to more conventional civil disobedience trainings, which emphasize more centralized and less spontaneous direct action; these trainings often focus on symbolic arrests rather than causing disruption, and normalize willingly getting arrested. So for many, this was the first training they'd taken that encouraged autonomous formations and actions. The training worked to dispel the nebulous divide between

violent and nonviolent direct action. Instead it just focused on *strategic* direct action. Given the miseducation around these topics, the training differentiated between violent action (harm to life) and sabotage (harm to property, in defense of life). It introduced concepts of security culture in regards to these matters, and embraced the importance of a movement-wide diversity of tactics.

Due to the trainings, Mississippi Stand saw an increase in direct action and a greater willingness by people to de-arrest water protectors, which was a radical concept for many. It is important to have these hard conversations about our movement's priorities, resources, and tactics to move to a more effective, efficient model.

Fight Like The Bees

Looking back on Mississippi stand, its potential is clear. While it is true that the DAPL struggle in Iowa lost, the many lessons learned show us the potential of the caravan model if improved upon and expanded. We need to take the struggle out of just the camps and strike the pipelines up and down their routes in autonomous roving caravans.

We imagine caravans as a swarm unto themselves, moving as a “swarm of swarms” across the whole battlefield. Let the security forces focus on front-line camps, if those camps will act as magnets drawing their efforts. The caravans can complement those camps, opening up new fronts until there is no more front line any more—just an asymmetric fight that the state can't contain.

There are still problems with our model which need to be worked out. Effective but secure ways for each caravan to communicate with others and coordinate actions would scale up our impact. Research on the pipeline process would help each group strike weak spots at opportune times. A strong support network of fundraising, material aid, and legal defense, as well as organizing by community members

rooted in their home places, is necessary to sustain the struggle long-term.

We are fighting against an industry, with the full backing of the state, intent on setting off a climate bomb and building their pipeline over Native lands and water. We are fighting mass extinction. They do not care about playing fair, about life, about their own workers, or about the gun they're putting to the planet's head in the name of their profit. We need to stop the pipelines, both the ones being built and the ones already built. We need to stop the refineries, the tar sands, the fracking wells, the whole infrastructure of fossil fuels. They have an industry spanning the planet and choking the skies.

*The whole world is our battleground and its fate hangs in the balance.
We have a duty to win.*

Notes

1. "Issues," *Stop Line 3*

stopline3.org/issues

2. "Company Revises Minnesota Oil Spill Upward to 1.7 Million Gallons," *AP News* (March 13, 1991)

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Further Reading

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