

Reflecting on Canada's Freedom Convoy: "The Frozen Ashes" of Our Democracy and the "Frozen Assets" of Those Who Defended It

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Derek Brouwer owns a small fleet of trucks for his business, transporting hay from Southern Ontario, down into the United States. He was interviewed on Fox news recently for the blow back that he received for having a truck in Ottawa during the Emergency Measures Act.

I spoke to Derek over the phone to get the rest of his story.

When a neighbour asked him if he wanted to be in the convoy, Derek's drivers got busy attaching flags to the trucks. One of his trucks was in Florida at the time. The other two drove with the convoy, starting at Drumbo, Ontario. One went to Toronto, and the other to Ottawa. In Ottawa the truck and driver were ushered, by police, to a front row parking space by the parliament buildings.

Derek said he was quite optimistic at the start, he was just waiting for the Prime Minister to come out and talk to them. Especially since Trudeau had told Prime Minister Modi, little more than a year ago to open up dialogue with the Indian farmers, who had protested for 12 months, it seemed like a reasonable request.

"At first it was like hanging out at a truck show," he said. "Lots of people came by to say 'hi', and offer me or my drivers a thank you for being there. I let the young guys go on the weekends," Derek explained. "I took my turn when it was more quiet during the week. Yeah, they took the garbage cans away, and locked the shops up, and anywhere you could go to the bathroom. We were there that first weekend of Jan 29th, and for about 23 days, I think. When the police got pushy and violence started happening on Saturday, Feb 19th, I heard that drivers were being pulled out of the trucks and beaten up pretty bad, so I told my driver to leave the truck there, unlocked, and just get himself out. With all the people and panic, the last thing I wanted was to try moving the

truck and have the wheels unknowingly roll over someone in the street.”

The police were nice all the way through the protest, right up until the end, Brouwer relates. He didn't have much contact with police himself, but did at one point have an affable conversation with an officer about the eternal (centennial) flame, and why it had been extinguished.

The only notice they got that the trucks would be have to be moved were unsigned papers left in a bunch of truck windows...for all you could tell it could have been a prank, because no jurisdiction or official authority was listed on the notice. In fact, it was a little strange, because the concrete barricades had been blocking everything for some time, and the police had just opened them and waved more trucks into Wellington Street, the ones that had been parked on side streets and such, on Feb 15th which was pretty strange. Brouwer was keeping an eye on the situation with the Emergency Act, and decided to move some money to his Florida bank account, through a signed cheque, that Tuesday.



Friday the 17th, the Police began to slowly herd the protesters on foot. Anybody who was arrested on Friday was released within the hour, and let go, without any tickets. But if Friday was a gentle walk, then Saturday was a run. It was like they were waiting for the big crowd, to make a show of force, which made no sense – had they come in at night, during the week, Brouwer figures 20 cops would have been effective at clearing out Wellington Street, had they really wanted to.

While all of this was happening on the streets of Ottawa, back at his office at home, Brouwer's secretary had received confirmation from Florida on Thursday, that the money

had been successfully moved – only to discover when trying to complete a transaction, mid-afternoon on the next day, that the Canadian account was frozen and the money they had tried to transfer was mysteriously caught between banks, showing up on both accounts, with the funds being available through neither. That was his Trucking account. His second option, to be able to pay bills, was a personal credit card, which was also frozen. His drivers had to carry the fuel bills, personally, for a few days. On Saturday 19th, his farm accounts were also immobilized, and Brouwer received notice that his CVOR, a kind license containing the credit score of his driving record as a commercial trucker, would be suspended. The Commercial Vehicle Operating Record is also a quick kind of resume for truckers to get hired on. Landing on him at the same time, was the news that the truck he had left in Ottawa that day was being impounded, and the Mayor of Ottawa was talking about selling the impounded trucks to recoup the costs of that huge police force.

Brouwer said he wasn't worried about his truck, he was just kinda glad that it was a holiday weekend, so that his business wasn't screwed up too badly. He called the Ottawa police, and they informed him that his truck would be released by the end of the next week. About 100 friends and neighbours showed up at the farm the next Monday as a welcoming party for the truck when it came home. The air lines to the trailer had been cut, and the safety sticker had been scratched off the trailer, otherwise it was undamaged.

As for his bank accounts – it may have been the help of all the people who pulled their money from the chartered banks that led to the Emergency Act being revoked, or it may have been a coincidence that one hour after he was interviewed on Fox news on Monday, the RCMP called him to say they were working to get his accounts unlocked. Either way, Brouwer says his relationship with his bank manager is no longer one of trust. Yes, most banks say that they would have to follow the law and do what they were told, but his sense is that it is not as cut and dried as that, and the manager worked pretty quickly with whoever was in charge of this financial seizure, to have things frozen so immediately; and then to act as if he didn't know about it when Derek called the branch, just doesn't sit well.

The greatest irony, of course, is that Derek Brouwer and his trucking company have no criminal charges laid against them, no ticket, no fine from Ottawa, no arrest warrant was issued.

The sanction on his CVOR, did cost him a \$1,000 fine for unregistered plates, on the truck in Florida, but he figures there is nothing he can do about that, as the US are the ones who issued the fine.

So far as he is aware, none of his drivers have ever been asked for a vaccine pass by the United States Border Crossing. It is only the Canadian side that requires the ArriveCAN app. "They know everything about you as you drive up, because of your phone," Derek said.

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