

Why I'm Attending the Canada Day Protests

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I wasn't always this way.

Pre-pandemic, I lived a quiet, comfortable, relatively apolitical existence. My days were filled with activities and certainty — a life of carefully established routines ingrained into my being over the years. I wasn't an activist. I wasn't a researcher. I wasn't anything of consequence, really.

But, of course, in 2020, that all changed.

My Mother passed away during lockdowns. A brief remote goodbye was granted to me over a video call to a body already devoid of life, followed by a quick cremation in the absence of a proper funeral. That was my goodbye.

I realized then we were wrong for agreeing to lockdown rules, but I had yet to realize just how wrong we could be.

The more I reflected on the panicked insanity building to a frenzy around us, the more I felt it. Nonsensical mandates, regulations, restrictions. Firings, school closures, and snitch lines to tell on your neighbours, all while fear-mongering media delivered a never-ending news stream of anxiety-ridden stories, browbeating us into reclusive submission for “the greater good”.

Days became weeks which became months which became years.

Precious little changed for us under lockdowns circumstantially — we were in a never-ending loop, it seemed, frozen in time. It was always the next wave, the next variant, the next something. We never seemed to quite reach the carrot the government dangled in front of our noses.

We never had our freedom restored, not entirely. No matter what we did, the promised return to the land of normalcy remained a pie-in-the-sky dream, close enough to almost

taste but just out of grasp. And I don't think they ever intended to give it back, really. We were fearful, meek, complacent, and utterly reliant on government handouts for our very existence. It was a winning recipe for a government with a penchant for control and overreach that holds disdain for oversight.

'Trust us,' they said, 'things are much worse in other places around the world. We are relatively free and unrestricted here in Canada. So be grateful for what you've got.'

This habitual claiming of consolation prizes has left us sadly apathetic towards higher achievements. There is no "relatively" free in freedom, and we ought to be the freest nation on the planet.

Liberty is an absolute, not something to be placed on a sliding scale dished out in designated dabs by our government as we jump through the appropriate hoops, and other countries have picked up on this democratic backslide and have sounded the alarm as our civil rights circle the drain.

The feeling of wrongness, the knowledge deep inside of me that something was desperately amiss in our country, grew and festered until I could handle bystander status no longer. I wouldn't be here, writing to you, had our government relinquished their iron-fisted control over our population.

In a way, they made me.

And it begs the question: who else have they made?

They made Tamara Lich.

We didn't speak for very long, but we didn't have to. It was the early days of the convoy back then, and she, like me, knew something was going wrong.

I don't think either of us fully comprehended what would transpire next or that she would go on to lead one of the most powerful, successful protests ever seen against discriminatory government measures, one that captured the hearts and minds of shell-shocked people all over the world. But, for the first time in a long time, a sense of rightness was restored within me. It was a spark, and I had hope.

Now, she's back in jail, mere days before the celebration of our national holiday, but she sent a message from her cell out to all ahead of the weekend — a gentle plea to remain peaceful. Indeed, it was the inherent innocence and peacefulness of her protest that made it such a wild success, and we will do everything in our power to honour that and keep them so.

They made James Topp.

As law enforcement cracked down on demonstrators in the streets of our capital, smashing glass and dragging determined Canadians from car windows to be cuffed and tried for fighting for what they believed in, quietly, without much ado at all, a man named James Topp departed from Vancouver in the dead of a harsh Canadian winter.

A war veteran who served twenty-eight years in the Canadian Armed Forces, dishonourably

discharged for speaking out against mandates while in uniform, the soldier marched across our vast country with almost no attention given to this incredible feat by our media.

Like Tamara and I, he knew something was wrong.

The more I learned about James and his team, the more I admired them. Composed and calm, he is a steady, likeable character, gathering a following as his march across the country proceeds.

Arguably as successful as the truckers were, he recently hosted a series of meetings in Ottawa attended by Members of Parliament in the hopes of opening a respectful line of dialogue, one where the fringe group of unacceptables (a group actually encompassing millions of Canadians) finally had a seat at the table.

As he closes in on Ottawa, the old crowds are coming back. People are once again lining the streets, waving their Canadian flags with pride. So I'll be out meeting him on the road to document the last legs of his incredible journey and to see if, once again, we can rekindle that spark, that feeling that we all sorely miss and ignite a flame once again.

They know we are coming.

We told them as much, and the lengths the City has gone to prevent any of that old fire from returning has been nothing short of extraordinary.

New troops and recruits, fences, concrete blockades, signs, notices, warnings, and news releases stating there will be "zero-tolerance" — the bombardment has been nonstop.

They respond to our messages on social media almost immediately, leaving no doubt in my mind that the surveillance state is already here. The nervousness of officials is palpable, and the harder they frantically push back to subdue demonstrations, the smaller and more pathetically desperate they appear.

What are they afraid of, exactly?

The former claims ring hollow of economic damage caused by the convoy protest, as there were to be open borders, no blockades, and no impediment of traffic, businesses, or people over the Canada Day weekend — not at our hands, in any event. It seems that they are terrified of the very concept of liberty itself. This isn't about economic damage. I doubt it ever was.

It's about quelling dissent.

They say hard times create strong men, and weak men create hard times.

As Justin Trudeau's popularity plummets and he loses the people's confidence to govern, while the cost of living skyrockets to levels not seen since his father was in office, I would unarguably agree that weak men create hard times.

And, if the government continues to hold fast to the god-like powers bestowed upon them by the pandemic and continues to descend deeper into the provocative pit of authoritarianism, those hard times will inevitably create more of us.

Join us.

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