

#1471 Taking Delight in Chaos (Trucker Protests Go International)

Intro 2-22-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left Podcast* in which we shall take a look at the new right-wing protest tactics, sweeping the world, truck convoy siege tactics in capital cities. Their causes are nonsensical, their tactics are harmful, but cracking down on them too harshly may boomerang on progressive protests down the road.

Clips today are from *The Daily Show*, *the Rachel Maddow show*, *the Rational National*, *The World, Today, Explained*, *World Review from the New Statesman*, and *It Could Happen Here*, with an additional members-only clip from *Today, Explained*.

Canadian Truckers Inch Closer to U.S. Border in Protest of COVID Restrictions - The Daily Show - Air Date 2-11-22

[00:00:38] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** There is a major anti-vaccine protest taking place in Canada's capital city of Ottawa right now. Now anti-vaccine protests are pretty common these days, right? But these protesters are different, because they're truck drivers, which means they have trucks and people with trucks have more power than any other people. They just do.

This is like a fact of trucks. Think about it: In every heist movie ever, what do they need to pull up the heist? A truck. Yeah. When a Batman villain tries to shut down the city, they need a truck. Having trucks just gives you the ability to outmuscle people who don't have trucks. And so even though 90% of Canadian truckers are vacc'd, this small minority is still able to cause big problems. They've essentially shut down downtown Ottawa for two weeks now. And if you want to know why these truckers are so fired up, well, they're more than happy to tell you.

[00:01:26] **REPORTER:** What is the stuff that you can't do right now as, as a non-vaccinated person?

[00:01:30] **TRUCKER PROTESTOR:** I live in Quebec, so it's a bit more intense than other places in Canada. But look, I can't go skiing. I can't go to Walmart. I can't go to Canadian Tire. I can't go to Home Depot. I can't go to restaurants. I can't go to bars. I can't go to the gym.

[00:01:40] **REPORTER:** Because you're not vaccinated, have you -- is there businesses there, stuff you can't do in Canada now?

[00:01:45] **TRUCKER PROTESTOR:** Yeah. Like I I'm like, I'm like, well, basically, if you want to compare Canada, uh, to anything that's like, uh, Hitler's Germany, and we're like the Jews, eh.

[00:01:54] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** You see, this is why we shouldn't be banning books. Because now this guy thinks that the Holocaust is when you can't take a shit in a Tim Horton's. I mean, even Marjorie Taylor Greene is looking at the sky, like, dude, this isn't anything like the Holocaust. There's no soup here at all.

It's actually wild when you think about it, like how many different ways people disrespect Holocaust survivors, because some people are like, "What happened to you didn't happen!" And then some people are like, "No, what happened to you did happen, and it's happening again to me right now, because I can't go skiing. Team!"

But anyway, the point is these truckers and their supporters feel persecuted. And when this starts it was just a protest against vaccine requirements for truckers. But it's now grown into a wider movement against all coronavirus restrictions. They want vaccine mandates gone. They want mosque mandates gone. They want to be free to sneeze into strangers' mouths again, like the good old days. But blocking traffic in downtown Ottawa hasn't done the trick. So now they decided to take things up a notch.

[00:02:52] **REPORTER:** A crucial trade link between Canada and the United States was disrupted by protesters for a third day in a row. The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest international crossing in North America, linking Windsor, Ontario to Detroit. While another border crossing in Ontario is experiencing an hour's long delay, the Ambassador Bridge sees about one-quarter of all the goods that go between the two countries every day. On a normal day, that's about \$340 million worth of goods rolling through. And the impact is already being felt. Ontario auto plants, including Ford and Stellantis, reduced production over the last 24 hours due to missing parts from shipments.

Prime minister Justin Trudeau calling for an end to the protest.

[00:03:36] **PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU:** Now people in Windsor are suffering and losing their jobs because they can't get auto parts across the Ambassador Bridge.

[00:03:43] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** Yeah, you see, you see? Now you can really see how much of an impact the truck protests can have. You just park a bunch of them on a bridge, just a key bridge. Boom! International trade slows to a trickle, which I didn't even know could still happen by the way. Cause that almost sounds like a story from medieval times, you know, when the army would block one mountain pass and then your entire village would starve. Then you'd have to eat your horse and then your dog, and then eventually you'd be forced to eat your own children. And then right as you finish eating your last child, the siege would end, need to spend the rest of your life in therapy. [imitating elderly person] "I just feel really bad for eating my own children." [imitates therapist] "Look, you can't blame yourself. That path was closed for almost two days."

But think about it, think about it. If these were just regular protesters on foot, the cops would have cleared them off by now. But to move a truck, you need someone who can drive a truck, which isn't as easy as it sounds. It takes months of training to be able to sit in the driver's seat of a truck and not just honk the horn the whole time. It's extremely tempting.

So now these truckers are finding a lot of support, not just from Canadians, but from Republicans in the United States. Yeah. Rand Paul, Donald Trump, everyone on Fox News are coming out in support of these truckers. Which I do find kind of funny, because all of these people who are cheering on the truckers are like, "Yeah, shut it all down, truckers, bring the economy to its knees!" Aren't those the same people who said we shouldn't have any COVID restrictions because the last thing we wanted to do is bring an economy down to its knees? I mean, so basically what, it's not worth hurting the economy just to save countless lives, but it is to make a point? Then, if you're just making a point that it's like, "Yeah, go for it, buddy. You got it."

But regardless, these Republicans are now calling for the trucker movement to come to America. And it looks like they might soon get their wish.

[00:05:28] **SHEPARD SMITH:** Ottawa's so-called "freedom convoy," spawning similar anti-vax mandate protests in cities around the world.

In Australia, protesters assembled outside the Capitol building, many waving Australian flags and signs asking for freedom. In New Zealand, protesters camped outside parliament for a second day. And in France, hundreds of protesters in Nice headed for Paris, waving Canadian flags.

[00:05:53] **REPORTER:** The Department of Homeland Security is telling law enforcement authorities it's receiving reports that a similar kind of convoy could soon begin in the US.

[00:06:01] **ALI VELSHI - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:** The department has received "reports of truck drivers, planning to potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities in the United States." The protest could begin as soon as Sunday in Los Angeles to disrupt the Super Bowl, and then travel across the country to disrupt president Biden's State of the Union in DC on March 1st.

[00:06:19] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** Whoa. You guys want to disrupt the Super Bowl? [breathes in] I don't know, man. That seems like a terrible strategy. I mean, think about it. You'd be ruining one of the last things that everyone in America loves. Everyone. You're going to block the Super Bowl? What's your follow-up? Driving over Dolly Parton? And honestly, I don't know how disrupting Super Bowl traffic is even going to work. If you're in Los Angeles on Super Bowl Sunday, *you're* the one who's going to be stuck in the traffic. "Come on, move it! I gotta get to the traffic disruption! Come on!"

And not to mention disrupting the State of the Union could also backfire on these truckers. Yeah. They're going to come there and then what? Honk their horns? You realize all those horns are just going to help Biden stay awake. [imitating Biden] "State of the state of the union... yeah... [horn honk] Strong! The state of the Union is stong. C'mon Jack is so strong. Super strong, man."

So yeah, these truck protests from Canada might be coming to America. And if that's the case, we've got to prepare ourselves, because a lot of things that are big in Canada, they blow up much more when they come to America. You know, Drake, Justin Bieber, those cool weed posters that they got up there.

But I will say this: The funny thing about the whole protest is that when it comes to coronavirus restrictions in America, what are they going to be protesting? There's not a whole lot left, right? I mean, coronavirus isn't over, but everyone has already started to act like it is. Businesses are open. Schools are in session. And even the bluest states are getting rid of mask mandates.

So I guess what I'm saying is, Congratulations, truck drivers! You did it!

Canada Afflicted With Right-Wing American Covid Conspiracy Chaos - The Rachel Maddow Show - Air Date 2-10-22

[00:07:48] **ALI VELSHI - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:**

We're now on day 13 of what officials in the Canadian capital of Ottawa are calling "an occupation." For the past two weeks, hundreds of truckers have been camped out on the streets in their vehicles, bringing the city center of Ottawa to a virtual standstill. The truckers, calling themselves a "freedom convoy," originally came to Ottawa to protest a requirement that Canadian truck drivers crossing the US border be fully vaccinated.

But those protests have since escalated. They've started spreading beyond the capital. We've now entered day three of protestors blocking the busiest crossing in North America, the Ambassador Bridge, which links Windsor, Ontario to Detroit. About 200 people in vehicles are blocking or snarling traffic on that bridge, which carries 25% of all trade between the US and Canada, or an estimated \$300 million a day.

Farther west, protesters and about 50 trucks are blocking the Coutts border crossing, which is the busiest port between Alberta, Canada, and the state of Montana. That crossing typically sees more than \$40 million of goods pass through daily. And today protesters blocked yet another transportation artery at the Michigan-Canada border.

It's important to note that as much chaos as these few hundred truckers and their 18-wheelers are causing, their view on this issue is not popular in Canada at all. More than 80% of the Canadian public is vaccinated. Almost 90% of Canadian truckers are vaccinated. This protest wasn't even organized by the Canadian trucking unions, the largest of which has come out actively against the protests.

So not only is this a fringe group of Canadians, it's a fringe group even within the small niche of Canadian truckers.

But where this group is popular -- this is interesting -- where they found an incredibly large platform is right here with American conservatives and American conservative media. Their stories become a staple on right wing

outlets, like Fox News. American conservatives from Glenn Beck to Marjorie Taylor Greene to the former president himself have all championed their cause.

It's hard not to miss the Trump flags flying among the crowds in Ottawa. Also spotted in the crowds: Confederate flags, Q Anon banners, swastikas, none of which are common sights in Canada.

In addition to giving this fringe group one of the world's largest megaphones, this American attention means the protesters have been able to fundraise millions and millions of dollars, further amplifying their cause.

This is a genuinely complex political issue. People have the right to peacefully protest. I've probably defended that, even if you don't agree with their point of view. And Americans, conservatives in American media, are fanning the flames here, taking what would be a local issue and giving it international attention.

Today, a copycat freedom convoy trucker protest started in France. Similar protests are underway in New Zealand and Australia. And this afternoon, NBC News confirmed that the Department of Homeland Security in the United States is now warning law enforcement and public safety officials that a copycat trucker protest could begin in the United States this Super Bowl Sunday. The DHS bulletin says the department has "received reports of truck drivers planning to potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities in the United States in protest of, among other things, vaccine mandates for truck drivers. The protests could begin as soon as Sunday in Los Angeles to disrupt the Super Bowl and then travel across the country to disrupt President Biden's State of the Union in DC on March 1st."

Now as much as this is an issue about pandemic requirements and vaccines, it's somehow become an issue about democracy and how we make decisions collectively. As these protests spread internationally and come to us here in the United States, how can we make sure we both defend the right to peacefully protest, and don't let fringe minorities bully us into accepting their point of view?

Joining us now is Timothy Snyder. He's a professor of history at Yale University. He's the best-selling author of *On Tyranny: 20 Lessons from the 20th Century*. Professor Snyder, good to see you. This is a strange one, because I'm not even sure as a Canadian, that I knew what to make of this or thought that it would be much, but it's turning into something that's got tentacles and connections around the world with these antigovernment protests, and gaining

some connective tissue to bigger and sort of more insidious protests that we're seeing.

What do you make of this?

[00:12:24] **TIMOTHY SNYDER:** Yeah. I mean, like you, I was a little bit uncertain at first. I have a lot of friends and colleagues in Canada who write to me about the work that I do. And usually what they're writing about is they're concerned about their friends in the south. They're concerned about the United States.

These last couple of weeks is the first time that I've had lots of Canadians writing to me and saying, Hey, you as an American need to speak out about what's happening in Ottawa. And I think they're right. I think what's concerning about this is, as you've already said, we're talking about a minority of a minority of a minority.

I mean, they're only there about 15,000 long haul truckers in Canada, maybe 10% of them are directly affected, that's 1,500 people. And the thing they're protesting against is not actually a Canadian law, they're protesting against American law. It's American law that they have to be vaccinated. So protesting the Ottawa makes zero sense.

So it's a very small group with a nonsensical claim, which nevertheless has begun this spiral which threatens both the institutions of Canadian democracy -- as we see in the capital of Ottawa -- and also the Canadian economy -- as we've seen the border crossings. So what I worry about here is that we're seeing a kind of model where a very small number of human beings using tools like trucks, funded from another country, as you've already reported, and fanned or encouraged by conspiracy theories on social media, can do an awful lot of political and economic damage very quickly. So I'm seeing this as a kind of model, as a kind of dark politics that's emerging.

[00:13:56] **ALI VELSHI - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:** And the model doesn't work in a vacuum, right? If these truckers existed and nobody talked about them, that'd be one thing.

What do you think the interest is that's coming from right wing media in the United States, in these protests?

[00:14:08] **TIMOTHY SNYDER:** I think a big wedge of right-wing politics in the United States is about the claim that government doesn't work. I mean, it's a

form of right-wing anarchism basically. And so if that is your view, you take delight in chaos in your own country, but also in perhaps, especially in other countries.

So it can become a kind of parlor game, you know, to sit in Florida or in Washington, DC, or, you know, in a newsroom, and root the truckers on in Canada, because you like destruction, you like chaos. You want to see the deconstruction of the administrative state. So if people who are carrying that out before you, before your eyes, you're just happy.

So I think, you know, the ideology here has to do precisely with dysfunction and disorder and proving that government can't work. And of course the Canadian government generally works extremely well. So if you can suggest that democracy doesn't work in Canada, you know, then you're making a strong argument about democracy in general.

[00:15:05] **ALI VELSHI - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:** Of course, this is why it's important to talk to somebody like you, because you study these matters, not just in the United States, but around the world. And there is a similarity to the types of protests that are going on around the world, that seemed to be anti-government, anti-something, not entirely focused on the cause at hand. As you point out, the restrictions that these Canadian truckers are protesting by causing blockages and trouble in Canada are, generally speaking, not Canadian laws.

[00:15:34] **TIMOTHY SNYDER:** Yeah. I mean, we don't have to go so far afield to find examples of this. In United States for the past couple of years, protests, which presumably had something to do with vaccine mandates, branch out very quickly into much larger conspiracy theories. It's really striking to me how the conspiracy theories that turn up in the social media backdrop of some of the organizers of the Canadian protests are basically the same generic stuff that we also have in the US or we find in Europe, around the world. The same QAnon, the same ideas about Bill Gates. It's all generic now. It's all international now.

But another way that you can think about the connection between Canadians and the rest of the world here is that you can flip this around and think about America now as a kind of bad actor. Like, if there are lots of Russians who are contributing money to a GoFundMe, and then to this Christian site, which then, funding disorder in the United States, funding blockades in the capital, funding blockades of border crossings, we would say, Hey, that's a hostile action. But right now that's effectively what we're doing. We have some private actors in

the United States and some very well-known ones, who are organizing behind the destruction of democratic institutions and economic institutions in Canada. If we watch somebody else do that, we would say, Hey, that's outrageous. I mean, if a former president of another country did what Mr. Trump just did to Justin Trudeau and say that he's a fanatic who's destroyed his country, we would think, wow, that's really excessive. That's really outrageous. So I think, you know, in a way this puts us in the mirror.

[00:16:59] **ALI VELSHI - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:** It's a very strange development, this whole idea of QAnon and Trump flags and Confederate flags in Canada, it's just, as you know, not a thing. So to see it becoming a thing is remarkable.

Tucker Uses Convoy To Cosplay As Working-Class Ally - The Rational National - Air Date 2-8-22

[00:17:10] **DAVID DOEL - HOST, THE RATIONAL NATIONAL:** So let me get into the actual convoy here. What it actually is. So first hear some responses from some working class groups, people, organizations that represent truckers that are truckers, that are made up of the working class, Teamsters Canada here with their statement on this:

"Teamsters is proud to represent over 55,000 professional drivers from diverse industries across the country, approximately 15,000 of which are long haul truck drivers. 90% of whom are vaccinated. The so-called 'freedom convoy' and the despicable display of hate led by the political right, and shamefully encouraged by elected conservative politicians, does not reflect the values of Teamsters Canada, nor the vast majority of our members, and in fact, has served to de-legitimize the real concerns of most truck drivers today."

And by the way, I'll get to what those real concerns are, that of course are being ignored by the convoy. Because again, the convoy is not actually made up of working-class truckers.

More here. You also have the Canadian Trucking Alliance. They put out their statements saying they are against this convoy. They do not support and strongly disapprove "any protests on public roadways, highways and bridges. CTA believes such actions, especially those that interfere with public safety, are not how disagreements with government policies should be expressed." So they

go on to basically say they are also against this convoy, but later on in an update, they also say this: "While a number of Canadians are in Ottawa to voice their displeasure over this mandate, it also appears that a great number of these protestors have no connection to the trucking industry and have a separate agenda beyond a disagreement over cross-border vaccine requirements. As these protests unfold over the weekend, we ask the Canadian public to be aware that many of the people you see and hear in media reports do not have a connection to the trucking industry."

So when the Canadian Trucking Alliance comes out and says, "Hey, this is not us; don't be fooled by these people. These are the actual truckers," it should give you pause to at least understand that maybe there are some people -- I mean, definitely there's some people that are wrapped up in this that are, have been fooled by this -- but there are a lot of people there who simply do not care at all about truckers and are simply there for their own agendas.

Trucker protests energize Canada's far-right movement - The World - Air Date 2-4-22

[00:19:29] **MARCO WERMAN - HOST, THE WORLD:** Those truckers in Canada we were talking about earlier on the show, they've inspired of movement in Europe where a lot of people also feel that COVID restrictions have gone too far. The so-called European Freedom Convoy said it would send thousands of protestors from across Europe to Brussels today, it turned out to be more smoke than fire. Police in Brussels said several hundred people showed up along with about 500 cars and camper vans. Perhaps stern warnings from authorities scare the protestors off, or maybe because more European nations are lifting COVID restrictions.

In France, protestors have remained the most disruptive. You need a vaccination pass to participate in some of the joys of modern French life, like going to a pub or cafe or taking a ride down the ski slopes. Reporter Rebecca Rossman in Paris spoke with protestors this weekend making their way to Belgium and filed this report.

[00:20:21] **REBECCA ROSSMAN:** Flanked with French Canadian and Quebec flags of solidarity, hundreds of people from across France defied a ban to meet on the Champs-Élysées over the weekend. Their rallying cry, liberté.

55-year-old Giselle Mandana drove her RV all the way up from the southern city of Nice as part of the Convoi de la Liberté or freedom convoy. She's been following the movement's whereabouts on the encrypted messaging app Telegram. While police stopped Mandana and other vehicles from blocking traffic on the Champs-Élysées she said she planned to converge with other European convoys, including from the Netherlands in Portugal, in Brussels Monday.

"We've been dealing with all these restrictions for too long. We don't have a life anymore," says Mandana, who is unvaccinated, "we're living under an authoritarian regime. What kind of life is this?" Mandana is referring to France's vaccine pass, which requires people to show proof of vaccination to enter restaurants, bars, and other public venues.

More than 90% of the French adult population has now received at least one dose of the vaccine making the convoy a very small, but vocal minority. Speaking on French television last week, European affairs minister, Clément Beaune dismissed the movement. "This isn't a Conway of freedom, but rather one of shame and selfishness," Beaune said, casting off its participants as a group of anti-vax conspiracy.

Some people compare them to the 2018 antiestablishment yellow vest protests, which at one point attracted more than 250,000 people across France. Jerome Rodriguez, a leading figure amongst the yellow vests has also played a key role in the Convoi de la Liberté. French president. Emmanuel Macron eventually made some concessions to the yellow vests, including raising the minimum wage and scrapping a planned fuel tax. But many of the protestors I spoke to over the weekend say they're still fed up with Macron. " Mr. Macron is a dictator," says Maurice, a 76 year old retired nurse who accused the president of taking away people's freedoms. But with the majority of the French population fully vaccinated and COVID-19 restrictions beginning to loosen across Europe, the convoy's momentum may be shortlived.

What the truck is happening in Canada? - Today, Explained - Air Date 2-15-22

[00:22:51] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** Justin, you just mentioned that these protesters are actually raising a ton of money; and not only that, you earlier mentioned that this thing is, kind of, going international. Tell me more about that.

[00:23:01] **JUSTIN LING:** This has found a whole bunch of purchase in other countries where you've seen, you know, more stringent and strict vaccine requirements and lockdown measures.

You've seen it in the U.K.

[00:23:15] **DELIVERING LIBERTY:** Here we are outside New Scotland Yard Freedom Convoy.

[00:23:20] **JUSTIN LING:** Finland had a relatively large solidarity protest. There was a planned convoy for Brussels.

Liberte!

Canberra and Australia and New Zealand.

[00:23:30] **DEMONSTRATOR:** I'm not against vaccination, because I actually am vaccinated. I'm actually against mandating people to be vaccinated. I think it's disgraceful. Forcing vaccination on people who don't want it.

[00:23:42] **JUSTIN LING:** A number of places have seen these solidarity convoys and protests pop up, largely inspired by the Canadian occupiers. But in the U.S., things have been a little bit slower.

But also in the last couple of days, you've seen some of the organizations pop up and say, basically, "We've been working behind the scenes. We've been toiling to get sort of these plans together, and we're finally ready to, kind of, come out and announce our routes."

So you're going to see, in the first week of March, at least three different organizations launch their own quote unquote "freedom convoys" headed for Washington, D.C.

[00:24:15] **BRIAN KILMEADE:** And I have news for you, America. They're coming our way! They've already blocked one major bridge that has 20 percent of all the commerce. They're already organizing for a March 1st move from Oregon over to Washington, D.C. People want their lives back. What don't they understand about that?

[00:24:34] **JUSTIN LING:** And it's funny, because they're not really protesting vaccine mandates. They don't really have that many vaccine mandates to object to. What you're seeing is, sort of, a grab bag of grievances. To some degree,

they're supporting the Canadians. To some degree they're opposing masks. To some degree they're just fundamentally rejecting vaccines and the Biden administration and, sort of, everything.

[00:24:57] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** What are they rejecting? The mask mandates are ending across the country, and a whole lot of people here aren't vaccinated, and that doesn't seem to be an issue.

[00:25:03] **JUSTIN LING:** Yeah, but, you know, in the recent days, I heard one of the chief organizers say, you know, "We're not just up against the U.S. government, we're up against, you know, a 30 trillion dollar pharmaceutical industry, right?"

They're fundamentally not even asking for anything. They're just going to, sort of, register their rage at vaccines, by and large.

And you're seeing the same conspiratorial thinking from the U.S. organizers as you've seen from a bunch of the Canadian ones. They believe the vaccines are dangerous. They believe they're all an effort to create a one world government. They think the World Economic Forum is behind everything. They think their, sort of, patriotic revolution that has started under Donald Trump is under threat. And this is their attempt to, sort of, fight back.

And it should not surprise anyone that a number of people who were at the Jan. 6 insurrection are also organizing this... this freedom convoy. You've already seen, you know, a number of people, including folks who advocated for the arrest and execution of members of the media and members of the government participate. You're already seeing an appeal to groups like the Three Percenters and the Oath Keepers to join in their... their convoy.

And it's really raising the possibility that you're gonna see a lot of the same people who came out for January 6th descend on the Capitol again in early March.

[00:26:19] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** You know, we've seen anti-vax, and, you know, conspiratorial ideation in this country and abroad since the pandemic began. What was it about this trucker convoy in Canada that struck such a chord that you're now going to be seeing – potentially – these similar protests happening around the world?

[00:26:39] **JUSTIN LING:** I think there is this innovation that-- I'm not sure the Canadian organizers realized would be effective until they did it-- and it's

just the reality of bringing these trucks along is incredibly impactful, right? If 10,000 people had descended on Ottawa, no one would have blinked. Ten thousand people is a medium sized demonstration for Ottawa.

The fact that they were able to bring these trucks, and shut down the city, and shut down these highways, and overwhelm police in their response suddenly catapulted this into an international story. And it made them basically impossible to get rid of, at least in the short term.

I think a whole bunch of organizers around the world saw that and went, "Oh my God, they cracked the code! Suddenly we can, you know, capture the narrative and... and dictate our expectations to city and local state governments."

It's worth noting that the Canadian occupiers have already been super effective. Four provincial premiers actually now have announced an end to some of their vaccine mandates and their vaccine passport system.

[00:27:44] **MICHAEL BARBARO:** Hm!

[00:27:44] **JUSTIN LING:** They've they've essentially won. You know, this has been a coup for them, right? This has worked for them. You have to imagine there was a bunch of anti-vaccine groups who are looking on enviously who want to repeat that success.

[00:28:02] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** And the one major innovation here, it seems, is that everyone figured out they can use trucks to disrupt the country when they don't like the government's policies.

[00:28:13] **JUSTIN LING:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's... I'm sure a lot of them are kicking themselves and not having it figured out earlier, but that's, kind of, it.

I mean, it will also depend a lot on what police and D.C. do, right? If they can stop this convoy from showing up in Washington and, sort of, thwarting and short circuiting those efforts, then maybe this innovation isn't so great. Maybe this is more of a failure of the Ottawa police than anything else.

But if the convoy to DC makes it to the Capitol and they decide to embark on their own occupation of the city, well, you know, this may kick off a method of protest that isn't going away.

Vaccine protests in Canada - World Review from the New Statesman - Air Date 2-3-22

[00:28:54] **MEGAN GIBSON:** So it's been branded, basically, as a trucker protest, where a number of lorry drivers are protesting COVID vaccine requirements for drivers who cross the U S-Canadian border.

But the protest is actually much wider. There are now demands to remove, basically, all COVID measures within Canada, and even for Justin Trudeau to be removed from office.

So, listeners will, obviously, see the echoes of the January 6th insurrection on the Capitol in DC, and I think those... those parallels are very deliberate.

So what... how this all started: it began on January 22nd in British Columbia, where a trucker convoy, a collection of... of lorry drivers decided to drive across the country in protest; drive to the Capitol in Ottawa, and, basically, just hold up Parliament hill with their demands.

As they crossed country, it picked up steam, it picked up media attention, so by the time it reached Ottawa last weekend, there were-- some say-- as many as 10,000 people, estimates have said. (It's probably a much more on the lower scale, lower thousands). But it's been enough to, basically, bring Ottawa to a complete stand-still. Shopping centers are closed, traffic is gridlocked.

And while there hasn't been any violence, there's been a lot of disruption. And it's gone far beyond just truck drivers and lorry drivers. It's, essentially, attracted, basically, every disaffected fringe right-wing group in the country, and on the other side of the border.

So you've got QAnon types; you've got people from the WExit movement, which is a group that advocates that Western Canada should secede from the rest of the country; you have far-right politicians who are on board; Elon Musk, Jordan Peterson, they have both tweeted their support; Donald Trump has mentioned his support for the Canadian truckers at one of his rallies.

So, it's really brought together, uh, a very mixed bag, and a very unpleasant mixed bag. Lots of signs and placards have used some pretty awful language. You know, you see a lot of references to conspiracy theories, lots of swastikas covering Canadian flags and being draped over various monuments.

And so it's just been a really disruptive and quite unpleasant period in... in Canada at the moment.

[00:31:32] **EMILY TAMKIN:** This is a mixed bag, but at the same time, um, there's been reporting of how almost a fifth of truck drivers in Canada are South Asian, or South Asian descent, and yet they're not involved in this convoy and in these protests. To what extent is this about disaffected people, and frustration with mandates; and to what extent is it an outlet for white nationalism?

[00:31:55] **MEGAN GIBSON:** I think it's a massive outlet for white nationalism. It's... well, you mentioned the South Asian truck drivers, but even as a whole, it's estimated that as many as 90% of truck drivers are vaccinated. So this is a fringe within a fringe.

And while lots of people have reported on the ground in Ottawa, and said that the... the majority of the protesters are not violent or [im?]polite, it's obviously these white nationalists voices, this really, really hostile, nasty rhetoric that is standing out from the crowd and getting a lot of the attention.

[00:32:33] **PROTESTER 1:** It's so nice to see so many faces! I have a question for you. Okay. I need you to help me out. I'm looking for someone. I need to know what a white supremacist looks like. Are you a white supremacist?

[00:32:53] **PROTESTER 2:** Yes! I am a white supremacist!

[00:32:58] **PROTESTER 1:** [Gulp!] Alright... There you go [Ummm, uhhh...] Oh. Okay. Alright. Well. [checks notes] I'm just confused. And sure you'll see why I'm confused, because all I can see are free, dumb, "loving" Canadians.

[00:33:16] **MEGAN GIBSON:** And even for the people who are involved with the protest, who say, you know, they have nothing to do with white nationalism, I think they need to ask themselves that why these really awful fringe characters feel so comfortable attaching themselves to this... to this protest.

[00:33:34] **JEREMY CLIFFE:** Just listening to this, I'm thinking back to when you first came on this podcast, Megan, which was to discuss the Canadian election in September last year. And I remember then it felt like Canada's politics was such a contrast to politics south of the border in the U S. You have a, sort of, far less polarized system, in which you have a, sort of, centrist liberal prime minister, a sort of progressive party to the left, a, kind of, relatively conventional Conservative party on the center right. It looked a lot more calm and consensual than U S politics,

But the images we've seen from Ottawa in the last days, really, you know, more at a piece with what we thought and known about U S politics in recent years.

Do you think this speaks of, or augurs, some sort of Americanization of Canadian politics.

[00:34:17] **MEGAN GIBSON:** Yes. And we actually had a really, really insightful piece, um, that we ran on the website over the weekend by a commentator, Michael Coren. And he said that this, kind of, highlights the Americanization of the Canadian right.

And I will... I do like to stress, it's not the broad Canadian right, but the... the far right.

But, you know, American influence in Canada can't really be overstated. I mean, Fox News travels across the border, lots of online rhetoric. It gets... it gets shared.

While Canada's social policies and, kind of, just, history aligns it much more with Europe, there definitely has been strains, especially... I think it has been exacerbated by the pandemic, which Canada-- while, you know, it's doing quite well in its vaccine program-- like any country in the world, the pandemic really exposed a lot of inequalities.

And I think a lot of people are frustrated, and how their frustrations have manifested has come out in some very dark ways. I don't think we can say that we're at a American levels of polarization, because I would say that the vast majority of Canadians are looking at what's happening in Ottawa and at the border with disgust.

And I don't think this protest has really brought anyone onto their cause. But it is definitely an example of how disruptive a small minority of very motivated people can be.

Do you

[00:35:56] **JEREMY CLIFFE:** see this finding expression in electoral politics? In... in... in... in the medium or long-term?

[00:36:01] **MEGAN GIBSON:** Yes

[00:36:01] **JEREMY CLIFFE:** There is-- is it... It is the People's Party, isn't it? Which is, sort of, right-populist. I mean, does... where does this go?

[00:36:07] **MEGAN GIBSON:** Yes, umm, the People's Party. So, that's Canada's right-wing populist party, and they kind of flirt with the far-right. But they are quite fringe. They only received 5% of the vote in September's election. So they are definitely a minority within... within Canada.

But I think the larger problem, and the more significant impact that the protest has already had, is on the opposition party, the center-right conservatives. So on Wednesday, the majority of sitting conservative MPs voted to remove leader Erin O'Toole. O'Toole has been leader since 2020, and he has taken great strides to position the Conservative Party as a more moderate choice, a more centrist party, in hopes of attracting Liberals who are unhappy with Trudeau, and just a bigger vote... vote-share.

This has, sometimes, put him, obviously, at odds with the more hard-line members of the party, and the base. So, he struggled a lot, up until now, but I think it's all really come to a head this week. O'Toole he tried to have it both ways when it came to the program. He initially voiced some support for the central cause of the truckers, who were protesting the vaccine mandate. But as soon as it became clear that there were all of these very toxic fringe elements, he worked very hard to try and distance himself and the Conservative Party from the convoy, saying that, you know, the Conservative Party had two... two choices, two paths, it could go down: it could, either, go down the angry disaffected route, or it could aim for optimism and hope.

And the majority of the base and sitting MPS decided that they did not feel that they should follow O'Toole's path, and go down the choice of optimism, and they want to embrace some of the elements that are there, coming out in this... in this protest.

So it's not clear yet who will succeed him as party leader. It could well be someone who is much more hard-line, much further right. And I think that will cause a lot of problems with the Conservative Party in trying to win an election. Just, the majority of Canadians are not supportive of anti-vax sentiments, full stop, let alone all of these other very, very dark, toxic elements in... in the protest.

There's

[00:38:36] **JEREMY CLIFFE:** a slight contrast, I think, with... between this and Germany, which is another country, like Canada, that's been held up as an example of a, sort of, a country where the center has held over the last years of... of Trumpism and so forth.

But where we have seen quite a vicious and quite a wild conspiracist, um, fringe making its presence felt on... on... in demonstrations and... and actions in opposition, particularly, to some of the COVID policies. And similarly, where the mainstream center-right, the Christian Democrats, now out of government, is, sort of, having to deliberate on how much it should open itself up to that... to those sorts of tendencies. So there's a... there's an interesting similarity, perhaps, there, between these two... these two countries, considered bastions of, sort of, solid centrist politics.

[00:39:21] **MEGAN GIBSON:** Yes, definitely. And, I think, a longer term issue is going to be, just, how other countries and other leaders deal with these fringe movements of anti-vax sentiment. Because we can see how it's very attractive for white nationalists or other disaffected groups to, kind of, grab hold to this issue, and try and capitalize on it. So it will be really interesting to see where that goes and how it plays out in different countries.

[00:39:52] **JEREMY CLIFFE:** And it's a, sort of, catchall, isn't it? It draws together all sorts of different streams of anti-system white nationalists, conspiracy theory type thinking into one... into one unit.

I mean, I was struck by the list of causes that you... you named as being part of this movement. So, everything from independence for the west of Canada, through to classic white nationalism, it's... it's a, sort of, a unifying, um, structure.

[00:40:15] **MEGAN GIBSON:** Yes. And it all comes under this umbrella of "The Truck Driver," which is, actually, as an archetype, is a very useful symbol for the right in general, just because you can bring in, you know, the working class, you can bring in small business owners, you can bring in..., it's largely male. As Emily pointed out, it's not largely white, but I think that the idea in people's imaginations is largely white male.

Um, so it's... it's a very sympathetic figure. But as you... as you'll see, and as I mentioned, I mean, this has gone far beyond actual truck drivers. And the vast majority of truck drivers actually don't have, you know, sympathy or support for this so-called "trucker" protest.

Canadian 'Freedom Convoy' Part 2: Border Blockades & Political Ramifications - It Could Happen Here - Air Date 2-15-22

[00:41:02] **GARRISON DAVIS - HOST, IT COULD HAPPEN HERE:**

Prime minister Justin Trudeau invoked to the Emergencies Act for the first time in Canadian history to give the federal government, and police, extra powers to handle the ongoing blockades and protests against pandemic restrictions.

[00:41:16] **PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU:** Here's how the measures we're taking today will help get the situation under control. The police will be given more tools to restore order in places where public assemblies can constitute illegal and dangerous activities, such as blockades and occupations as seen in Ottawa, the Ambassador Bridge, and elsewhere. These tools include strengthening their ability to impose fines or imprisonment.

The government will designate, secure, and protect, places and infrastructure that are critical to our economy and people's jobs, including border crossings and airports. We cannot and will not allow illegal and dangerous activities to continue.

The Emergencies Act will also allow the government to make sure essential services are rendered. For example, in order to tow vehicles blocking roads. In addition, financial institutions will be authorized or directed to render essential services to help address the situation, including by regulating and prohibiting the use of property to fund or support illegal blockades.

Finally, we'll enable the RCMP to enforce municipal bylaws, provincial offenses where required. This is what the Emergencies Act does.

[00:42:50] **GARRISON DAVIS - HOST, IT COULD HAPPEN HERE:** The Emergencies Act, which replaced the War Measures Act in the 1980s, defines a national emergency as a, "temporary, urgent, and critical situation that seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians, and is of such proportions or nature as to extend the capacity of authority of a province to deal with it." the unprecedented deployment of the Emergencies Act gives police quote, "more tools to restore order in places where public assembly has constituted illegal and dangerous activities, such as blockades and occupations," according to Trudeau.

But the thing is, police already had all the tools they needed. The illegal occupations and blockades were already illegal, they just didn't want to enforce it. You can look at how the Coote protesters and the police are hugging, right? This isn't a matter of having not enough tools. All this does is set a terrible precedent for using this type of extra power in the future to respond to protests. Because the cops are still going to take a very gentle approach if they ever are forced to take physical action against the Ottawa occupation.

While using the extra powers of the Emergencies Act, the Finance Minister of Canada also announced on Monday a broadening of the laws regarding financing of crime and terrorism to now include crowd funding, and also extra surveillance measures against people who donate and use crowd funds for criminal acts, including illegal protests.

[00:44:19] **CHRISTIA FREELAND:** As part of invoking the Emergencies Act, we are announcing the following immediate actions. First, we are broadening the scope of Canada's anti money laundering and terrorist financing rules so that they cover crowdfunding platforms and the payment service providers they use. These changes cover all forms of transactions, including digital assets such as cryptocurrencies.

The illegal blockades have highlighted the fact that crowdfunding platforms, and some of the payments service providers they use, are not fully captured under the Proceeds of Crime and Terrorist Financing Act. Our banks and financial institutions are already obligated to report to the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Center of Canada, or FINTRAC.

As of today, all crowdfunding platforms and the payment service providers they use must register with FINTRAC, and they must report large and suspicious transactions to FINTRAC. This will help mitigate the risk that these platforms receive illicit funds, increase the quality and quantity of intelligence received by FINTRAC, and make more information available to support investigations by law enforcement into these illegal blockades.

[00:45:57] **GARRISON DAVIS - HOST, IT COULD HAPPEN HERE:** That's all the information I have at the time of recording. So now I'm going to talk more about the potential political effects that this protest could have, not just on Canada, but also in how we view protest in general. So the actual result of liberal media framing this type of protest as scary terrorism is laying the groundwork for brutal police actions against massive, mostly non-violent and tactically smart, protests to be more normalized across Canada. An extremely brutal police response and harsh charges are unlikely to be leveled against a

protest made up of these conservatives, but will absolutely happen to any future progressive social justice cause, especially if they use occupy style tactics.

The more powers please obtain and the legal precedents that are set will have long lasting implications, with legal consequences that will always come down harder on the left than they do on the. Police will do a bare minimum to resolve this conservative so-called "freedom" protest, but then we'll use it as a justification to grab a greater resources and power and use this movement to justify severe preventative protest suppression in the future.

If liberals can wildly celebrate and the thirst for harsh crackdowns of a protest made up of white conservatives and their families, calling the entire movement a criminal enterprise and cheering on as police steal property of the protestors, despite what the majority of these protesters are doing, just camping on the side of a street, think of all of the ways that consent can be manufactured to clamp down on any future large scale protests, especially when the movement isn't made up of a bunch of regular white people and their kids, and instead of actually challenges the underlying power structures that prop up white Canada, instead of just reinforcing it, like the convoy does.

I have a similar issue around all of the hubbub around the fundraisers. Restricting where crowdfunded resources can come from will only result in future political social justice causes to be negatively impacted, whether that be bail funds or supporting indigenous blockades from out of country. On February 10th, the Canadian federal government effectively shut down the freedom convoys, Give, Send, Go fundraiser, making it illegal for the funds to be used in any way.

Governments setting the precedent for shutting down a protest crowdfunding is not a good thing. Now, any future of protest bail funds and crowdfunding for the Wet'suwet'en blockade will always be in jeopardy. I'm by no means saying that action against a generally hateful, anti-democratic, and dangerously conspiratorial protest isn't justified, but just when governments start using it as a reasons for more power and creating new precedents for years in jail and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines for an occupation of protest, that shouldn't be cheered on, because those things will only come back to bite progressive causes a lot harder than they will be used against the conservative convoyers.

What the truck is happening in Canada?

Part 2 - Today, Explained - Air Date 2-15-22

[00:49:01] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** This trucker convoy situation in Canada has become so bad that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had to kick off the week with a move unlike any the nation had seen since his father ran the country a generation ago:

[00:49:15] **PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU:** The federal government has invoked the Emergencies Act to supplement provincial and territorial capacity, to address the blockades and occupations.

[00:49:28] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** He was turning up the heat on the convoy.

[00:49:30] **PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU:** Blockading streets and critical infrastructure and depriving your neighbors of their freedoms is a totally different thing. It has to stop.

[00:49:44] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** And the message was pretty clear.

[00:49:47] **PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU:** The time to go home is now.

[00:49:50] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** But even if the truckers go home, which they haven't yet, they've scored a pretty significant victory.

[00:49:56] **JUSTIN LING:** Thousands of people have occupied Canada's capital with a demand for a dropping of the vast majority of our vaccine mandates. They represent the most coordinated effort of anti-vaxxers since the start of this pandemic, and this is about to spread much further than Ottawa.

[00:50:15] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** Justin Ling has been covering the trucker convoy. We reached out to ask him how these Canadians struck such a chord with the world.

[00:50:23] **JUSTIN LING:** This thing has taken on a life of its own. There is no clear sign when it's going to end, and it's now spread throughout Europe into Australia and New Zealand, and it's going to probably be an incredibly significant meeting of a number of far right and anti-vaccine groups in DC in a matter of weeks.

[00:50:43] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** Believe it or not, all of this kinda starts with Q-Anon.

[00:50:48] **JUSTIN LING:** Yeah. So listen, at the beginning of all of this thing, there's a guy named James Bauder. About two and a half years ago, he took part in another convoy to Ottawa, but this time the convoy was all about a price on carbon that Justin Trudeau had put into effect.

[00:51:03] **JAMES BAUDER:** To us Justin just says one thing and does another, and we can't get our oil to tide water. We can't build a pipeline, we can't get one east... and the carbon taxes! How much can Canadians afford?

[00:51:15] **JUSTIN LING:** And when they arrived, it was sort of this hodgepodge event. You had some mainstream political figures, you had some oil workers, some truckers and some white nationalist figures. So it wasn't terribly successful. It was a big rally, everyone left and went home, but I guess James Bauder got in his head that these convoys are super effective. So, not long after he got back home to Alberta, he founded this group called Canada Unity.

[00:51:43] **JAMES BAUDER:** My name is James Bauder, founder of Canada Unity Foundation. So brass tax, all in, is the convoy for freedom is going to bring trucks, car, vans, pickup trucks, semis, are going to go to Ottawa and give Ottawa a big loving bear hug.

[00:52:06] **JUSTIN LING:** And it didn't do much at first, but once the pandemic began, he started a Facebook page, a website for this group, and it was very clear that he was against all sorts of public health measures around COVID-19. He starts posting the "where we go one, we go all" QAnon hashtag. He starts sharing a whole bunch of conspiracy theories that have become dogma of the QAnon movement. Obviously, he believes in the Big Lie that Donald Trump actually won the last US presidential election.

So he uses his group, Canada Unity, to start organizing a convoy to Ottawa, and his idea is that we're going to go to .Ottawa. We're going to protest in front of the Prime Minister's house and tell him we want him gone, and we're going to

deliver this document to the Speaker of the Senate. And this document claims that all vaccine mandates and measures are illegitimate and illegal under Canada's constitution and a whole bunch of international law, and basically says that by signing this document it would abolish all of these vaccine mandates and requirements and set up a committee whereby him and a random assortment of citizens would be able to dictate policy for the Canadian government.

[00:53:18] **JAMES BAUDER:** Everybody got together and said, "you know what? We're gonna get on the road and we're gonna go to parliament and we're gonna make history and we're gonna tell Trudeau that drama class is over, we didn't hire a drama teacher, we hired somebody who was supposed to manage the affairs of our country, and not destroy our country." So hopefully when he gets there his resignation is in his hands and he just gets out and leaves directing a country to those who actually know what they're doing.

[00:53:48] **JUSTIN LING:** He's basically saying we should override our democratically elected parliament in order to abolish all these vaccine mandates and dictate what the policy of the government should be. But the thing about this convoy is that it didn't work. This happened in October of last year. He drove to Ottawa with maybe a couple dozen people, if that, they protested for a couple of days and he left. And it wasn't until early January this year he started planning a second trip to Ottawa that other groups started joining, that other anti-vaccine influencers started getting in the know, and this thing absolutely took off.

[00:54:28] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** What was different this time?

[00:54:29] **JUSTIN LING:** I think really, they had a great new frame for the whole thing. In late December, early January. Justin Trudeau and the Biden administration announced they were going to basically remove an exemption for truckers crossing the border, and that as of mid-January they would have to be vaccinated against COVID 19 in order to avoid a 14 day quarantine. So in practice, it meant that it would be almost impossible to be an unvaccinated trucker crossing the US-Canada border. This doesn't actually impact that many Canadians, about 85 percent of truckers are fully vaccinated, but it became the sort of popular national concern that this could disrupt supply chains, and that there would be a risk, to greater inflation, to food shortages, so on and so forth—if this vaccine mandate came into effect.

It's important to note he never actually says it's about the truckers, he wants every single vaccine mandate and passport gone, and the trucker thing just

becomes a really useful news peg for him. And because it's getting so much public attention, you see a bunch of anti-vaccine groups take advantage of this. They notice that this is in the public discourse. They realize it's their great opportunity to get some coverage, to get some news, and you see all these other groups start joining Bauder's effort. None of them are household names, but there's one that represents police officers who have been removed from the job for not getting vaccinated. There's one that's a coalition of doctors who have been thoroughly discredited, but who are passing on disinformation about the safety and efficacy of vaccines. You have another group that's against all COVID 19 measures, especially masks. You have a number of independent organizers one of whom has pedaled the white replacement theory that is a common trope of the white nationalist movement, who also engages in Holocaust denial. You have a number of organizers who have pushed to make Canada's western provinces independent from the country.

So you have this real constellation of folks who have been working at different ends for quite some time, who are now, for really the first time, getting on the same page, getting on the same email chains, using their own networks together, and it gets really big. It's super effective.

[HORN]

[00:56:47] **ANCHOR:** Well over a thousand people lining the TransCanada Highway outside of Winnipeg in -30 wind chills. Protesting what they call “government overreach”.

You came from Calgary?

[00:56:57] **TRUCKER 1 2:** Yea!

[00:56:59] **ANCHOR:** What do you think of this?

[00:57:00] **TRUCKER 1:** It's awesome.

[00:57:00] **TRUCKER 2:** It's time to take our country back!

[00:57:02] **JUSTIN LING:** By January 25th, 26th, you start seeing these images from way out west and way out east of these trucks starting to make their way across the country. You're talking about hundreds of vehicles at this point, some trucks, some personal vehicles, and as the day goes by and they get closer and closer to the capital, you see more and more vehicles joining. You

see these solidarity and support rallies coming out to meet the convoy as they cross the country.

[00:57:28] **SALVATORE VELTRO:** It's a togetherness like I've never felt before.

[00:57:31] **ROBERT JORGENSEN:** This isn't about a vaccine mandate on truckers. This is about the entire thing. It's gotta go.

[00:57:37] **GLOBAL NEWS TV CLIP:** It's all mandates. It's for the freedom of everybody here. That's why I'm here. And I'm gonna stay as long as it takes to change everything.

[00:57:45] **SEAN RAMESWARAM - HOST, TODAY EXPLAINED:** How does this disrupt the day to day in Ottawa?

[00:57:48] **JUSTIN LING:** It has made basically everything in downtown Ottawa grind to a halt. Most businesses can't be open. Most people are actually having a hard time sleeping or leaving their homes. People have decamped to anywhere else, gotten hotel rooms, gone to their cottage, gone to stay with friends. It's basically impossible to drive through the downtown core. People are literally afraid to keep their masks on because they're getting harassed by some of the occupiers.

[00:58:16] **PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU:** The people of Ottawa don't deserve to be harassed in their own neighborhoods. They don't deserve to be confronted by the inherent violence of a swastika flying on a street corner or a confederate flag.

[00:58:30] **JUSTIN LING:** But it has not been overtly violent thus far, I think that's important to note. There has not been an effort to beat up people in the street who disagree with them or you attack police or anything like that.

Final comments on a successful vacation and the weak allure of the internet

[00:58:41] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Daily Show*, giving an overview of the trucker protests in Canada, and its spread to the US. *The Rachel Maddow Show* spoke with Timothy Snyder about the protest through the lens of authoritarianism and undermining democracy. *The Rational National*

highlighted the response from the Canadian trucking industry, which does not support the protest. *The World* gave a report from France of a truck convoy-style protest in the works. *Today, Explained* described why trucks are such an effective protest tool, due mostly to their sheer size. *World Review from the New Statesman* explained the americanization of Canadian politics. And *It Could Happen Here* explained how a crackdown on conservative protesters being treated with kid gloves by the police is likely to boomerang back on progressive protesters who won't be treated so kindly.

That's what everyone heard, but membersh also heard a bonus clip from *Today, Explained* diving more deeply into the conspiratorial origins of the trucker protest.

[00:59:43] **JUSTIN LING:** But once the pandemic began, he started a Facebook page, a website for this group. And it was very clear that he was against all sorts of public health measures around COVID-19. You know, he starts posting the “where we go one, we go all” QAnon hashtag. So he uses his group, Canada Unity, to start organizing a convoy to Ottawa.

[01:00:05] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly into our new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at BestoftheLeft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted. No questions asked.

And now, we would usually be hearing from you, but I didn't receive any new voicemails over the last week while I was on vacation, which is certainly understandable. In which case you would usually be hearing from me, opining on some political topic or another, but that is not exactly what's going to happen today, because my vacation was so successful that I haven't had a single political idea in about a week. So I have nothing to talk about.

But I do have thoughts on my lack of political ideas, if that makes sense. So the secret, which will be no surprise to anyone, is not just going on vacation, but having the internet mostly blocked from me. I vacationed in this sort of out-of-the-way place. It was my sister's family. She has been to this place before, and asked if we wanted to come along. And we said, sure. And they found this place a few years ago and like it so much because there's no internet access. And I don't just mean wifi. Cell phone towers don't reach this place either in sort of a magic bubble kind of way, because you only have to walk about 30 yards outside -- it was sort of a cabin kind of thing. You only have to walk about 30

yards outside the cabin before you start getting a signal on your phone, pings with, you know, emails and texts and all of that. And what I found fascinating about that is that walking 30 yards is not a gigantic inconvenience, if what you need is important. But it *is* enough of an inconvenience to make people not bother to use the internet.

And so what that tells me, I mean, it just confirms what we all sort of already know, is that we use the internet the way we do at the levels we do simply because we can. We don't want to that much, but as long as it's completely effortless, well, then I might as well.

If all it takes is walking 30 yards to make someone say, eh, nah, nevermind. I don't need to look that up. I don't need to know that. I don't need to watch that video, whatever. That's an incredibly small impediment to decrease one's internet usage.

And so now I can already see the gears turning in some Silicon Valley tech bro's head, wanting to invent the device that is a micro internet blocker, not just wifi, but cell phone signals, they could put in your house to counteract the effects of all the other technology already have in your house. You could create a digital sanctuary, you know, a digital refuge -- that's probably what they'd call it actually. And you set this up in the room in your house where you don't want the internet to be able to get to you. And then you hang out in that room in the house. And then when you think, oh, I need the internet for that. Oh, I'd have to go into another room. Nah, forget it. I don't need it. And that's all it would take. You know, people have been going to those digital detox camps for years now. You know, I heard years ago about weekends away where you're not allowed to use your devices and you just hang out like an adult summer camp kind of thing.

But I'm betting that the draw to use the internet is a lot weaker than that. You don't need to drive a hundred miles into the forest. If you could just make it as inconvenient as having to walk into the next room, you could have a mini digital detox every day. That's what it seemed like anyway.

So now that I'm back and ready to wade back into the muck of politics, if you'd like to get a conversation started, ask a question, leave a comment, you can record a message at 202-999-3991, or write me a message to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and

participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together. And thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic design, web mastering and bonus show co-hosting.

And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at BestoftheLeft.com/support, through our Patreon, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from BestoftheLeft.com.