

Canada: The Truckers Convoy, Observations from a Veteran Socialist

Wednesday 23 February 2022, by [HIEBERT Ken](#) (Date first published: 22 February 2022).

Ostensibly, the anti-vax movement is anti-tyranny and anti-fascist, and they sometimes portray the promoters of vaccine mandates as fascists. In reality there are far right and even fascist elements in the movement. But many of those participating are confused and do not have well formed political views. Knowing that - we progressives and socialists - must be careful in using the label “fascist” when dealing with people who views are in flux.

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There are regional tensions expressed in the so-called ‘Truckers movement’. Many people, especially from the Western provinces, view Ottawa (the national capital) with hostility. This hostility seems to include anyone living in Ottawa, among them food bank volunteers and poorly paid fast food workers. And it even extends to inanimate objects in Ottawa such as war memorials. One of the biggest reactions against the convoy followed the disrespect shown by some of their supporters at ‘The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier’. This incident must have cost them some support in the general population. And the anti-social behaviour of the demonstrators provoked hostility from many people in Ottawa who have had to live through it.

Those seeking to be leaders of the anti-vax Movement in Canada

There has been something of a land rush among various far right groups scrambling to put themselves at the head of this movement. The publication *Druthers* showed up in my small town on the British Columbia West coast. An [early issue](#) of their paper carried an article by Caitlin Johnstone (at p.4), whose name will be known to some readers of *The Left Berlin*. They declared their intention of publishing an issue this month, but their November issue is the last one appearing on their website.

A competing publication [Common Ground](#), is based in Vancouver, and has a reputation as a voice for peace and the environment, mixed in with New Age ideas and advertisements. Their latest issue had the headline ‘End the Circus of Coercion’. This is a remarkable statement for a periodical that in 2016 published an article praising the bombing of Aleppo.

Yet another strand in the far right is *The Epoch Times*, a well financed newspaper linked to Falun Gong. They have enough money to hire professional journalists and give themselves a veneer of dispassionate and objective journalism.

Left Wing responses in Canada on this movement

Left organizations and publications have responded to the convoy. The [first article](#) I saw was by Judy Rebick and Cort Russell. In my opinion Rebick and Russell put too much weight on the stumbles and errors of leading health officials. I suppose that could account for some of the confusion, but I believe there are much deeper reasons for the wave of irrationalism that has been part of this movement.

John Clarke was a long time leader of the 'Ontario Coalition Against Poverty'. He wrote "[Why Has The Fascist Canadian Truck Convoy Had Such An Easy Ride?](#)" In my view this article is long on denunciation and short on ideas as to what the left and the labour movement should do.

Perhaps the most useful articles I have read were on the website of 'Fightback', a Trotskyist group - that I am not close to ([here](#) and [here](#)). One of the strengths of their approach is that they have a perspective that does not write off all those drawn to this movement.

What explains this movement?

In the US some people see the Trump phenomenon as being fuelled by fear among some white people over the gains made by blacks and Latin American people. This leads me to ask if there is something similar happening in Canada. Are some people reacting against the growing power of First Nations struggles? If they are it would be hard to prove it, as even far right organizations are very careful what they say about First Nations people.

One exception to this is *The Epoch Times*, which took a sideways swipe at the First Nations struggle when they reported that the abuses suffered by First Nations children were not sanctioned by Canadian law. The simple answer to that is 'so what?' Are they suggesting the blame lies with First Nations people who failed to assert their legal rights?

A progressive Canadian doctor, Gabor Mate has suggested that some of the fervent attachment to bizarre beliefs we find among anti-vaxxers is fuelled by unresolved trauma. Certainly, I will agree that we cannot win among anti-vaxxers simply by appealing to reason. This does not mean that we must give up or resort to threats of violence.

A mass movement of support for hospital workers and for medical science can influence people by force of numbers. A mass movement does not rely exclusively on media outlets to get its message across, but can reach people in other ways.

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P.S.

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