

## Eric Kaufmann Q&A

What Happens Next – 02.20.2022

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Eric. Why does Trudeau and the media claim that a group of truckers are racist and misogynistic?

Eric Kaufmann:

Race, gender, and sexuality are central to their worldview. And the sacred values are anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia, and they are looking for any way to attach these sacred values to the drama that's playing out. They're desperate to find these sorts of connections to validate a worldview even if it makes very little sense.

Canada is this progressive, multicultural paradise, and what they're identifying against that bad, white settler male, misogynist culture.

Larry Bernstein:

You are highlighting that at its core, the conflict is about what it means to be Canadian, but this isn't what the truckers were focusing on. They wanted to end the vaccine and isolation requirements for crossing the border. Why do the truckers freak out the Canadian elites? Why did Trudeau go hiding in a cabin in the woods?

Eric Kaufmann:

(laughs) Well, this demographic rural, white working class, is rarely seen in an urban protest. Most of the urban protests are coming from the left. Those big rigs are kind of frightening, if you're sipping a latte at a café, looking at Prius's rolling by. I don't know how genuine the fear is or how much that is contrived and performative.

These truckers were draped in the Canadian flag.

Larry Bernstein:

It's interesting that you focus on the flag because the media focused on an isolated swastika and confederate flag as their symbol of choice.

Eric Kaufmann:

There were media stories suggesting that this was using that flag in a dishonest way, that was disguising their true motives, that they would all be waving the Confederate and Nazi flags. I think the tone really was one that, "You're kind of smearing this by using it."

Larry Bernstein:

Eric, in your book, *White Shift*, you discuss the idea of Canada as a nation state. The elites are uncomfortable with the white English origin of the nation and prefer an open society that can take in millions of people from around the world with open immigration. This is some kind of post nationalism, looking for a multicultural country. I would have thought that meant deemphasizing national symbols like the Canadian Flag?

Eric Kaufmann:

In a way, that is the logical end point, I suppose, of an anti-national philosophy of the kind that Trudeau is an example of Lennon-ism, not Lenin-ism-

John Lennon-ism.

Larry Bernstein:

I've never heard that before.

Eric Kaufmann:

Right? (laughs) So, it's this ... (laughs) no country, if you listen to Trudeau, Canada has no core culture or identity that idea of a post-national construct is very central to what he's about. It's an unstable one because its endpoint is the erasing of national identity. We are advancing this post national ideal further than anybody else. We're the most virtuous. And that's a form of pride we as Canadians have. So bizarrely, it is a form of nationalism peculiarly. But which aims ultimately to probably erase the boundaries of nation.

And then, we have a trucker convoy, which is really probably more representative of a lot of Canada, but it's the bad old Canada and it's coming to town. And it's reminding them of the other that they're trying to suppress and get rid of. All of these white working-class people coming into town and their big rigs is very much a personification of everything that is not kind of multicultural woke Canada.

Larry Bernstein:

The Ottawa Truckers actions reminds me of the uprising by the Yellow Jackets in France, where French working class people including truckers took to the streets outside of Paris and demanded change to a specific government policy. And the Yellow Jackets were viewed in complete disbelief by the French Parisian elites. And when the Macron government tried to speak with their leadership, they couldn't find them because it was a spontaneous decentralized movement.

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, I think you're right. I think there's a lot that's similar. I won't say entirely leaderless, but heavily decentralized. It's a blue-collar protest against elites and there's libertarian element to both, one group wanting not to have very high fuel prices and the other arguing against vaccine mandates.

Larry Bernstein:

Another similarity is the types of people that participate in this public protest. In America when the tea party took to the streets wrapping themselves in the American flag, the elites were in shock that these people even existed.

Eric Kaufmann:

(laughs)

Larry Bernstein:

And how dare these yahoos interfere with my travel plans to my weekend estate.

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah. Yeah. You're actually right. That the reaction is common. There's a real double standard depending on who is causing them grief. So, if it's BLM, native Aboriginal pipeline protest or their supporters, then it's a very different reaction. Is it something that the elite can identify as part of our vision of this kind of utopian multicultural Canada, or does it represent the other? And, let's face it urban protest is largely a progressive left activity. Very rarely do you get conservative groups protesting in significant numbers.

Larry Bernstein:

Trudeau and Macron reacted quite differently to these street protests. Macron tried to find common ground and quickly changed his policies, while Trudeau is ready to apply martial law.

Eric Kaufmann:

I think that's right. Macron is not woke. He's said many things that have got him attacked by the progressive left. He talks tough on immigration. Trudeau is really much different. Trudeau is sort of full throttle, a hundred percent, we're going to have as high immigration as we can. Everybody's a racist and misogynist. He's sort of never misses an opportunity to dress in foreign attire. He's talking about Canada having no identity.

Larry Bernstein:

There seems to be a fight between the Canadian elites who want unlimited immigration and oppose a national identity and the working-class Canadians who want limited immigration and think positively of the nation and its symbols.

Eric Kaufmann:

When I grew up in Canada in the eighties and nineties, there was nothing but French versus English. That's largely gone. These new cleavages around multicultural versus nationalism. Woke versus unwoke. The American style divides are more important. Quebec's separatists are down in the low thirties. The separatist threat from Saskatchewan and Alberta is higher there

than in Quebec. I think that's kind of a metaphor for the kinds of conflicts that are going to be gripping Canada going forward.

Larry Bernstein:

How does partisanship explain the public reaction to Trudeau's handling of the Ottawa truckers?

Eric Kaufmann:

Conservative voters are about split on the protest so it's not that defining partisan issue. However, views on Trudeau's handling on it are. Even Liberal and NDP voters, only half of them give Trudeau a passing grade. It's opinion toward Trudeau that really polarizes Canadians on party lines.

Larry Bernstein:

Canada has much higher vaccination rates than the US. The Canadian truckers are 90% vaccinated, so why is the Trudeau government doubling down on this group of workers? They've won, why are they turning this into a fight?

Eric Kaufmann:

There's a symbolic aspect to this; mask mandates have been sucked into politics of progressive versus conservative in North America. Trudeau's framing this as you've got anti-vaxx, racist misogynists on the one hand and then you have a moral progressive Canadians on the other with this secondary drama around the meaning of Canada, around progressivism, and this binary dichotomy between the good and the bad.

Larry Bernstein:

Why do you think that in the US there is real anger against whites who do not vaccinate but little venom for minorities?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, you make a very good point. The Sikhs around Vancouver have the higher rate of non-vaccination, and that will get minimal attention. Or if it does get attention, it's framed in such a way as this is very understandable because they have been racialized, therefore they don't trust. When it is a group that can be identified with that progressive, multicultural utopia we're building with our sacred values, then it's completely different attitude to anti-vaxx than towards the legacy population.

That reaction is much more on this symbolic level about what Canada represents and who represents the forces of darkness and the forces of progress.

The other important thing roughly 60% of the English Canadian electorate is voting for some left-wing party versus only 40% for a right-wing party, whereas in most countries such as Britain or the US, it's more like 50/50. And because it's 60/40, there are all kinds of electoral incentives to be crazier-

Trudeau needs to do to eat into the NDP vote by appealing to the woke left while sort of tacking economically to the center.

Larry Bernstein:

Last week, we had a discussion of the Joe Rogan controversy and his podcast with Robert Malone who challenges the vaccine orthodoxy, and that blew up and simultaneously Rogan was called a racist.

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, absolutely. It's the them or the other being defined on the basis of being white male working class othered, right? Rogan is slotted into that binary, he may have only ticked one box around anti-vaxx, the other stuff attaches to him. Misogyny and racism just automatic. It's all part of a package. We're the virtuous progressive ones. Because race and gender and sexuality are the sacred values, they have to be invoked wherever possible. You could stretch the evidence just so that you can invoke those powerful taboos about the violation, profanation of the sacred that is the common denominator here in this woke ideology.

Larry Bernstein:

You can't keep using the same taboos over and over again, because if you call everyone a racist or misogynist then it loses its power. Are we reaching that tipping point yet?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, one of the downstream ramifications is that you may mobilize the other side, they react. ... the deplorable moment with Hillary Clinton, and in Britain, you had Gordon Brown talk about a bigoted woman, that Gillian Duffy incident. These sorts of incidents seem to create powerful narratives to mobilize populists.

Canada has these extremely strong politically correct taboos. You cannot talk about immigration levels. We know from the European case and the Trump case that simply means that the mainstream conservative party can't touch immigration, which opens room for a populous right party like the PPC.

In Canada, because of several generations of indoctrination into multiculturalism, the population has shifted 60% on the left and inventing Canada as a left-wing country.

The backlash is, "Okay. They're not going to win power, but what they are going to do is entrench polarization." And that could show up in a vitriolic level of public debate that we're seeing now.

Larry Bernstein:

Positive Feedback Loops from Protests. The BLM movement was successful in one city and it spread like wildfire nationwide. Same with the Yellow Jackets in France. Do you think the Ottawa Truckers could serve as an example for anti-vaccine mandates across Canada and North America?

Eric Kaufmann:

There are going to be copycats, there's no doubt about it.

Whether this can sustain itself the way the Yellowjackets did, I'm skeptical. I just don't think the level of public support is there. COVID and the pandemic let's say it fades in six months, this is just then gone from the public space, and all of the populism that's been built upon that narrow issue will dissipate.

Larry Bernstein:

Immigration.

Eric Kaufmann:

Immigration, which is much more durable, and a question of the future of the nation, even the class divide that's much more durable.

Larry Bernstein:

You are a Professor at the University of London, tell us about Boris Johnson and Partygate.

Eric Kaufmann:

(Laughs).

Eric Kaufmann:

It's really tough, you talk to people here, and different people say he's done, other people say he isn't. I think it's all going to be down to the polls and what happens in the sort of local elections in May.

If his polling remains poor and the party gets thumped at the local elections, I think he's out. If, however, he hangs on and somehow the, the local elections aren't as bad as people think, because one of the things that's been happening is there's been a big change in the polls. So the Tories are now behind Labour.

But what's happened is a lot of those Tory voters and the old Brexit voters have simply gone into apathy. They haven't gone to Labour. And there's a question about if it came to a contest with Labour in a general election, would they hold their nose and vote for Johnson? Probably a lot of them would. We just don't know the exact number.

He was the politician that got Brexit done. So, he got good marks for that. He has been given reasonably good marks by the electorate for his handling of the pandemic. I don't think people fault him substantively.

The problem is he campaigned as he's the guy who represents the little guy against the corrupt elite, and then all these parties. He's refurbishing his apartment with all this fancy stuff and spending.

He came across as sort of high-handed and elitist when he was supposed to be the populist.

Larry Bernstein:

I end each episode on the note of optimism. Eric, what are you optimistic about?

Eric Kaufmann:

What am I optimistic about? I, I'm optimistic that this pandemic is going to fade in six months.

Or sooner. Yeah. (Laughs). I am sick of it, and it would be nice to talk about something else. (Laughs).