

How Did the Conservative Party Come to This?



Wally Daudrich and Obby Khan campaign for MB Conservative Party leadership

He joked about setting polar bears loose on the streets of Winnipeg as a way to reduce homelessness.

He doesn't support pandemic shutdowns, or mask mandates and falsely claims that wearing a medical mask to protect yourself and others carries "health risks."

He describes himself as "pro-life" and claims that public schools are purveyors of pornography and that parents should assert their rights and take back their children's education.

He wants to "unlock" the natural resources of the north and says that one of the reasons he's running is to "fight wokeism."

One assumes that by wokeism, he's referring to anyone who fights for environmental justice, defends the rights of women and all people, regardless of gender choice, race or religious belief

His name is Wally Daudrich, and he's one of the candidates running for the leadership of Manitoba's Conservative Party.

Mr. Daudrich, by the way, doesn't have a medical degree, can site no evidence of pornographic material in Manitoba schools and has made his money bussing tourists around Churchill to whale watch and hang out with threatened polar bears from the safety of a giant tundra buggies.

His sole competitor in the leadership race is Obby Khan, an ex-football player and onetime owner of a juicing operation called Green Carrot, who got into a row with a newspaper owner for pointing out that he had been sued by a former business partner.



Spat between onetime colleagues, Obby Khan and Sun owner Kevin Kline, played out in the pages of Winnipeg Sun newspaper

Khan's platform, such as it is, is based mainly on platitudes about economic growth, eliminating "red tape" for business, building networks – IE. roads, as if we didn't have enough of those to maintain - and fostering corporate interests.

Not a peep about health care, dealing with a price gouging economy that's strangling so many families, the homeless crisis or any of the other socio-economic problems we face on a daily basis.

Bottom line? – there's not much for the average Manitoban in the Daudrich-Khan take on leadership, unless you happen to believe our educational system is corrupting our kids, that freedom means never wearing a medical mask or that trickledown economics is alive and well and living in Manitoba.

That said, there's lots to celebrate for frackers, the resource and construction industries and the top 20% who already own a whopping 68% of Canada's wealth.

So how did the Conservatives – the party of Sir John A MacDonald, Joe Clark, and even my least favorite of the somewhat saner Tories, Brian Mulroney - come to this? How did this long lived political party wind up being led by people like Alberta's Danielle Smith, federal leader, Pierre Poilievre and wannabe's like Daudrich and Khan?

Well, bear with me while I explain how Canada's conservative party morphed into a mini me version the American Republican Party.

It all started in 1987, when a disgruntled, bible thumping, hard right social conservative from Alberta, named Preston Manning, laid siege to what was then the *Progressive* Conservative Party (PCs).

Nursing a long held grudge against an Eastern Canadian establishment exploiting a resource rich West, Manning founded the Reform Party and set out to challenge the PCs with a new approach to conservatism. An approach that was not just fiscally conservative but socially conservative to boot.



Preston Manning: his Manning Centre mantra "Canada Strong and Free" was adopted by the Trucker Convoy

Manning won that challenge, eventually forcing a merger between Reform and the PCs. As a result, the Conservative Party deleted the word progressive from its lexicon and replaced it with social conservatism and an idea of individual freedom seemingly devoid of any sense of social responsibility.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

So, no surprise that conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre - the political progeny of Manning and Stephen Harper - supported a trucker convoy that paralyzed the streets of Ottawa and harassed its citizens for a month. All because the truckers believed that Covid shutdowns and medical mask mandates somehow threatened what they believed to be their "individual" rights and freedoms.

In fact Poilievre and his party - just like the American republicans - have consistently spouted false narratives depicting any progressive or socially responsible action, whether pertaining to women, diversity, protecting the environment or reducing carbon emissions as plots to restrict our freedom.

And the sad thing is some Canadians are buying in to that bogus narrative.

This, despite the fact that the Conservative Party is far more interested in protecting the rights of Corporations and their freedom to make huge profits, than in our rights to an adequate wage, a roof over our heads and a social safety net that protects us all.

So am I surprised the only candidates to run for leadership of the Manitoba Conservatives are Wally Daudrich and Obby Khan? Not in the least. Because both, in their own ways, are truly representative of what the Conservative Party has become.

