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Who Did Jagmeet Singh Really Sell Out?

The conservative party has taken to calling him “Sellout Singh. Why? Well, according to Pierre Poilievre, when Jagmeet Singh signed an alliance agreement with the Liberals, he sold out Canadians by supporting things like the Federal government’s carbon tax and is therefore culpable for everything from ballooning food costs and doubling housing prices to “unleashing crime and chaos in our once safe streets.”

Really? Chaos? Is that what you’re seeing on your city streets? Or is this “chaos” Poilievre describes more about fear mongering? Because here in downtown Winnipeg, what I see are more than a thousand vulnerable people living without homes. I also see price gouging grocery chains taking advantage of global inflation, and national developers making a killing on high-priced homes and condos, well out of most people’s reach.

The same big real estate developers who are among Poilievre’s biggest campaign backers.

Notice any disconnect here?

As to the carbon tax – well, let’s just say that I’ve spilled a fair bit of ink on that subject, so it’s pretty clear that I agree, for the most part at least, with a tax designed to fight climate change by weaning big industrial polluters off oil and gas.

Bottom line? - in my opinion, the conservatives are basically lying when they say that Jagmeet Singh sold us out.

So who, if anyone, has NDP leadership really sold out? Well, by ripping up the alliance agreement, Singh and his advisors have certainly sold out the Liberals.

And here's the rub - by divorcing the Liberals, it becomes much more difficult for the NDP to own what they did accomplish via that partnership. And those accomplishments are substantial: from increased support for a covid-battered health care system and a bill protecting worker's rights, to a Sustainable Jobs Act aimed at financially assisting workers to transition to green economy jobs.

Even more impressive are the social programs they launched - dental care, childcare and pharmacare - specifically designed to help cash strapped middle and low income Canadians and seniors.

Programs Poilievre voted against and will likely cancel should he gain power. Along with canceling our participation in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Kicking the Liberals to the curb also means that instead of placing most of his energy where it should go - into an aggressive attack on Pierre Poilievre and the conservative's current, alt-right style of politics - Jagmeet Singh has joined the "off with his head" chorus aimed at Trudeau.

So, what would happen if the NDP leader told the whole truth - that there were no doubt fierce differences of opinion and frustrations with the Liberal leader and his caucus, particularly over issues like a wealth tax, oil and gas subsidies and carbon offsets, but that he was choosing to stay in the alliance, because there was still a lot that could be achieved for the benefit of struggling Canadians, in the year prior to a federal election.

What if he put us, rather than the somewhat dubious prospect of winning, first?

And before you chide me for an excess of Pollyannaism, even I can admit that the latter question may be a little naïve. After all, politicians are in it to win it, right? Even if the chance of winning a majority is remote.

Because if Singh believes he can count on disaffected Liberals to win the next election, he may be dreaming in technicolour. Most people who ordinarily vote Liberal won't vote NDP. They're much more likely to hold their noses and vote conservative.

That said, what if the Liberals and the NDP presented a united front against the conservatives, attacking the hypocrisy of people like Poilievre, who are primarily interested in generating wealth for themselves and their corporate donors? What if they fiercely defended their own record and forthrightly admitted to their mistakes?

Maybe, just maybe, we could score another four years of a climate conscious, socially responsible NDP/Liberal minority government.

Then again, maybe that's just wishful thinking, given that Jagmeet Singh has already torn up the alliance agreement, and has even started parroting Poilievre on the carbon tax in order to put more space between himself and Trudeau. Which means, from where I sit, that he has opened the space Poilievre needs to win.

So maybe the best we can hope for is a minority conservative government and a vote of confidence that removes them from office as quickly as possible. Because if Poilievre does win a majority, I shudder to think what the next 5 years will look like, being led by a trucker convoy supporting Prime Minister who, despite how much he crows to the contrary, really has little or no interest in the day-to-day anxieties and struggles of ordinary Canadians.