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When 'Freedom' Means the Right To Vandalize

ON SUNDAY THE Canadian police finally cleared away anti-vaccine demonstrators who had been blocking the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit and Windsor, a key commercial route that normally carries more than \$300 million a day in international trade. Other bridges are still closed, and part of Ottawa, the Canadian capital, is still occupied.

The diffidence of Canadian authorities in the face of these disruptions has been startling to American eyes. Also startling, although not actually surprising, has been the embrace of economic vandalism and intimidation by much of the U.S. right — especially by people who ranted against demonstrations in favor of racial justice. What we're getting here is an object lesson in what some people really mean when they talk about "law and order."

Let's talk about what has been happening in Canada and why I call it vandalism.

The "Freedom Convoy" has been marketed as a backlash by truckers angry about Covid-19 vaccination mandates. In reality, there don't seem to have been many truckers among the protesters at the bridge (about 90 percent of Canadian truckers are vaccinated). Last week a Bloomberg reporter saw only three semis among the vehicles blocking the Ambassador Bridge, which were mainly pickup trucks and private cars; photos taken Saturday also show very few commercial trucks.

The Teamsters union, which represents many truckers on both sides of the border, has denounced the blockade.

So this isn't a grass-roots trucker uprising. It's more like a slow-motion Jan. 6, a disruption caused by a relatively small number of activists, many of them right-wing extremists. At their peak, the demonstrations in Ottawa reportedly involved only around 8,000 people, while numbers at other locations have been much smaller.

Despite their lack of numbers, however, the protesters have been inflicting a remarkable amount of economic damage. The U.S. and Canadian economies are very closely integrated. In particular, North American manufacturing, especially but not only in the auto industry, relies on a constant flow of parts between factories on both sides of the border. As a result, the disruption of that flow has hob-