

The Poilievre-Peterson platitudes

By Bill Kilpatrick

For those who were looking forward to the second part of my look into the 'unwellness industry' I'm sorry to disappoint, but given the current political crisis in Canada, what with the resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and all, I felt that an examination of the Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre's Dec. 21 interview with right-wing talking head Jordan Peterson, was more pressing. Given that polls have Poilievre way in the lead, and he will probably be the next prime minister, I figured it was time to take a deeper look at who he is and what he stands for.

The interview, which lasts for over an hour and a half, saw Peterson critically examining many of the points that Poilievre raised and challenging him on his behaviour in parliament and his policy choices?just joking? he did no such thing, in fact he states at the beginning of the interview that he hopes Poilievre becomes the next prime minister 'God willing.' This was not an interview this was basically two ideologues echoing each other's points for one hour and 41 minutes. Peterson claimed that an interview that lasts for over an hour and a half will give people a chance to see how 'someone responds spontaneously and emotionally and cognitively to complex and challenging questions in a manner that's not rehearsed'? However, as the interview begins Peterson talks about a discussion that he had with Poilievre regarding the topic of the number of political events that Poilievre attends. Then Peterson says that Poilievre 'made allusion, when we were driving over here, that the weekends are particularly packed...' So, here's my first issue, not only do I not believe that this was not rehearsed, but I'm pretty positive that it was very much scripted, but made to look spontaneous. One only need to observe the constantly changing camera angles to conclude the same. If it was spontaneous there would have been one camera from one angle the whole time. Much like question period in parliament, it looks spontaneous, but both parties have all the questions and answers in advance. I have no doubts that Poilievre knew what was going to be discussed and that he and Peterson colluded to make this masterpiece of propaganda, meant to put Poilievre in the best light possible.

While there is no way to go over all the topics that were discussed there were a few points that raised some red flags for me. We live in a complex world that is constantly changing and we need a leader that is willing to change with it, take in new information, change their mind, adapt, and do what's best for all Canadians, not just the wealthy. Poilievre is not this man. Peterson asks Poilievre, 'Why should Canadians believe that the vision you just laid out is something you hold personally dear and not merely a set of carefully calculated campaign slogans'? Poilievre's response speaks to who he really is, he says, 'Well, look back at everything I've done for my entire political career to the time I was a teenager. Some people even dug up my old university essays and I've been saying precisely the same thing the entire time.' This is not reassuring to me. If your thinking has not evolved since the time you were a teenager, then how much thinking have you actually done? This is not something to be proud of, this is the hallmark of an ideologue, someone who is incapable of changing their mind and will make decisions not based on evidence and facts, but by his ideology and pre held beliefs.

Peterson calls Poilievre 'consistent,' for holding the same beliefs he had when he was twenty, but he is not consistent he's closed minded and inflexible. Later in the interview Peterson asks him, 'Tell us what you've learned, what you've heard [talking to working class Canadians] over the last couple of years and how that's shaped you and changed you 'as you've shifted your career up the political hierarchy? you've listened to all these people so what have you learned and what has it made you convinced of, let's say'? No point in putting his answer here, because if he says he's changed his mind talking to Canadians then he's lying about his previous answer, and if he says that he has not changed his mind talking to Canadians, then he has not been listening to Canadians. Since he wants to get elected, he's going to pretend that he's listening when his mind is already made up.

Poilievre says, 'When I was 20 I wrote an essay, as prime minister I would, the essay was called Building Canada on Freedom, the entire piece was about making the government small and maximizing personal freedom. That's basically what I'm doing now?when I launched my leadership race I literally had the same language in my leadership launch speech that I had put in that essay 22 or 23 years earlier. When I was part of the Harper government we basically fought for and did the same things then that I'm proposing to do now.' Not a new thought or idea here, which only reinforces my belief that this man is an ideologue. And to be clear, when I say ideologue, I mean a free market ideologue.

Poillievre speaks about how unaffordable things have become, how young people will never be able to own a home, and how things need to be affordable again like they used to be. He says that his government will "make the right, albeit difficult decisions," that will allow young people to "once again be able to do what their parents did, which is to say "get a house, start a family, live in a safe neighbourhood?" How does he propose to do that you might ask? He stated multiple times in the interview that he would "unleash the power of the free market," which means the same thing it meant under Harper, which was privatize government businesses, cut regulations that help protect Canadians, lower taxes for the rich, take away the power of unions, essentially all the same economic policies that have been implemented by every government since Brian Mulroney, albeit at different speeds. Just look around, have those policies that Poillievre is advocating for made things better for Canadians?

You know when people refer to the good old days, those times when they could afford a house, and a car and a family, that was the 1960s and 1970s when economic regulations were at their height, taxes for the wealthy were high, and government businesses were respected and highly sought after jobs. Poillievre is not advocating to go back to that in fact he made a very cryptic comment that "help is the sunny side of control." Which to me can be interpreted as when his free market ideological policies make things worse, as they have been for the last 40 years, don't look to his government for help, because in his world "maximizing your freedom" means you'll be on your own. For Poillievre to weaponize help and view it as a means of control shows just how twisted his thinking really is. Help is something you offer to someone when they need it, help is offered to be kind, help is something we all need at some point and help is something that we all will need if Poillievre gets in. Don't get me wrong, I too was happy to see Trudeau go, but what we don't need as Canadians is a return the very policies that brought him to power in the first place.