

Dion's environmental free ride over?

Back in the 1970s, most major media outlets - newspapers, magazines and television stations - were publishing horror stories about the impending new ice age.

That's because the world had witnessed about 25 years of global cooling, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere, and the fear was that unless we turned it around we'd all turn into human popsicles.

Obviously, it didn't happen. Nor did we all succumb to the dangers of "acid rain," an environmental plague which was all the rage in the early to mid-1980s.

Now, of course, the fear mongering over global "cooling" has been replaced by fear mongering over global "warming."

Once again, it's not based on nothing. There is widespread agreement that our world is currently experiencing a prolonged period of overall warming.

Since the earth began - most scientists date it around 4.5 billion years ago - there have been several lengthy periods of global warming and cooling, long before humans even existed. And if you don't think this is true then ask yourself this: what caused the great ice age and how did the glaciers melt if the pre-human world enjoyed constant temperatures?

All of which brings us, of course, to the current kaffuffle over three Tory ads attacking Liberal Leader Stephane Dion's self-described title as an environmental champion.

The Liberals - as you would expect - are crying foul. This same party which has systematically attempted to smear Tories by accusing them of harboring a "secret agenda," now complains that the Tories are showing "desperation" by revealing to the public just how empty Dion's claims to environmental nirvana really are.

In case you haven't seen the ads yet, the best part about them is that they use fellow Liberals - during the recent Liberal leadership contest - to underscore just how poorly the Liberals handled the environmental file while in office.

Mind you, some would say - with considerable justification - that the environmental issue hasn't exactly been a strong suit of the Tories either. The difference, it's fair to say, is that the Tories haven't set themselves up to the public as environmental champions. The Liberals have.

One ad, for example, shows current deputy Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff attacking Dion on the Liberal government's failure to meet the Kyoto targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"We didn't get it done," Ignatieff says.

They didn't either. While former prime minister Jean Chretien actually scolded the Americans for not signing Kyoto, the fact is that the American record on slowing down greenhouse gas emissions was far superior to our own record, and this when Dion was the minister of the environment for much of the time. Dion's reputation - blithely repeated by a fawning media - as a great environmental crusader flows not from his actual accomplishments when he held the job - since the facts show he was a disaster - but because he showed up at the convention wearing a green scarf and claiming to be an environmental crusader. Dion even claimed that it was "unfair" of the Tories to attack the Liberals on the environment because when the Tories were in opposition they fought the government every step of the way, attempting to "nullify" Liberal initiatives and policies.

What nonsense. The Liberals, throughout the 1990s and beyond, enjoyed strong majority governments.

The Tories, whatever their goals, didn't have the votes to stop them.

Conservative MP Jason Kenney, who unveiled the ads to reporters last weekend, made one significant observation, saying that "Stephane Dion's free ride on the environment is over."

Let us hope so.

As things stand now, public opinion polls show that the environment has shot up at or near the top of those things which worry Canadians.

And, as we said earlier, the Tory approach to environmental issues hasn't exactly inspired confidence among environmentalist either.

But Dion's reputation as an environmentalist simply doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

Sadly, he hasn't had much scrutiny to stand up to until now.

The media - as it too often does - falls for the rhetoric while ignoring the reality. If a leader says he believes in something, they all rush breathlessly to report it.

Just because Dion named his dog "Kyoto" does not change the fact that, apart from signing the Kyoto Accord, Dion, as environment minister, completely failed to live up to the greenhouse gas emission cuts he promised to make.

No amount of partisan jingoism can change that fact.

On the other hand, now that the Tories are raising the issue, they too will have to do more than talk a good game.



**National
Affairs**

**Claire
Hoy**

Huge gifts vs. huge profits

The world is kind of funny, despite the lack of uproarious laughter from the stands.

By "funny" I mean more than adequately strange, unfair, inequitable and often really odd and cruel.

But, as in all things, there is a bright side to our existence. It lies in the hearts and minds of our fellow human beings. Well, at least some of them.

Fortunately, there are many fine examples of these throughout our society, and in the pages of our recent history.

One of the most famous was John D. Rockefeller Jr., who donated more than \$537 million in his lifetime to countless causes and organizations in the arts, education, science, to churches and conservation efforts. He purchased and donated land in New York for the United Nations Headquarters.

Another was industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie is best known for donating money to build more than 2,500 libraries across the United States, Canada and around the world. In New York, 31 of the 39 original libraries are still in operation. When he died in 1919 at age 84, he had given away roughly 90% of his fortune - \$350 million (billions in today's dollars).

He stressed the need for the wealthy to be responsible and honourable to those less fortunate, and set the stage in his 1889 essay on wealth.

The duty of men of wealth, he wrote, was to set an example of "modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance ..." As a matter of this duty, the wealthy are bound to administer money "is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community ... thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for the poorer brethren ..."

This insightful man also coined the phrase *helping those who help themselves*. He also stressed there's no use in dying with millions in the bank. Leaving it for the public good is all that really matters. "... yet the man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth ... will pass away 'unwept, unhonored, and unsung,' no matter to what uses he leaves the cross which he cannot take with him."

Another famous giver was George Eastman, founder of Eastman Kodak. It's estimated he gave away a little more than \$100 million. In 1924, he wrote four cheques totalling \$30 million. He is quoted as saying, as he laid his pen down, "now I feel better."

He also shocked the industrialized world by introducing employee profit



Mark Pavilons

sharing, retirement, life insurance and disability benefit programs - unheard of at the time.

We have some unsung heroes here in our own community. While they may not be on the level of Rockefeller, Carnegie or Eastman, they give generously and support the Caledon community.

These are things which make us feel good about being paid-up members of the human race. What makes us want to rip up our membership cards are stories of greed, selfishness, and corporate gluttony.

Let's look at Canada's six biggest banks, who combined earned more than \$19 billion in profits in 2006 - the best year in Canadian banking history.

The Royal Bank posted the highest profit ever in 2006 for a Canadian bank; a whopping \$4.73 billion, up 39% from 2005.

TD Bank more than doubled its 2005 profits last

year, raking in \$4.6 billion.

Scotiabank made a record \$3.55 billion in fiscal 2006, up 13% from the previous year.

CIBC only made \$2.64 billion in '06, bouncing back from a loss in 2005.

The Bank of Montreal made \$2.6 billion in 2006, marking its fourth consecutive year of record earnings.

To celebrate such an achievement, BMO is cutting a reported 1,000 jobs to "improve customer service and improve the bottom line."

What? I can understand the bottom line part - fewer people means fewer salaries and benefits. But how can fewer people translate to better customer service?

"BMO's biggest competitive advantage is our people ..." according to outgoing president Tony Comper.

What? So, let's slash the biggest advantage and see what happens.

But, BMO assures us these cuts aren't staff who normally deal with customers anyway.

Sure, it's easy to criticize such huge, lucrative conglomerates. But let's not forget that behind these faceless skyscrapers are people - men and women who sit on the boards, shareholders and you and I - the customers and investors.

So, while we shrug our shoulders and mumble something about the banks doing this and that, let's remember it's people making those decisions.

Such harsh and uncaring strategies to increase profits would likely send Rockefeller, Carnegie and Eastman spinning like tops in their graves.

I'd like to remind everyone that these men were very accomplished and wealthy businessmen, who would give the likes of Gates and Trump a run for their money today. It was their giving that made them legendary, not necessarily their business acumen.

They were way ahead of their time in many ways - their compassion for their fellow human beings was front and centre.

They had no trouble maximizing profits and, at the same time, taking care of their employees and giving back to the greater community. They made the world a better place.

Could the same be said of our top entrepreneurs of today? I hardly think so.

It's a known fact that the most generous givers in terms of money and volunteer time are average citizens - those with limited resources.

Some of us fully understand and appreciate the legacy left behind by philanthropists.

Carnegie believed "the man who dies thus rich dies disgraced." What has happened to our society that we've placed profit above all else? Today's movers and shakers have obviously found a way to take it with them!

An Evening of Stewardship for Landowners on the Oak Ridges Moraine

An Open House presented by Halton-Peel Woodlands & Wildlife Stewardship and York Environmental Stewardship on behalf of all partners involved in the Caring for the Moraine Project: Western Headwaters Area

Where: Schomberg Arena Hall

251 Western Ave. Schomberg (west off Main St., south of Hwy 9)

When: Thursday February 22, 2007 6:00 — 9:00 p.m.
Presentations begin at 7 p.m.

Hear: Landowner perspectives on stewardship on the Oak Ridges Moraine
Talk to: Representatives of organizations offering stewardship programs and services
Learn about: Forest, stream, wetland and grassland stewardship, protecting your property's natural features for future generations, where to access technical and financial support, and more

Open House: Meet representatives of the Caring for the Moraine Project: Western Headwaters Area partner organizations:

- Credit Valley Conservation
- Halton-Peel Woodlands & Wildlife Stewardship
- Lake Simcoe Region Conservation
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Nottawasaga Valley Conservation
- Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation
- Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust
- Oak Ridges Trail Association
- Peel Region
- Toronto and Region Conservation
- Town of Caledon
- Trout Unlimited
- Wetland Habitat Fund
- York Environmental Stewardship
- Other local partners

No Cost to Attend - For further information call: Greg Bales, Stewardship Coordinator - Halton Peel Woodlands & Wildlife Stewardship at (905) 713-7410