

## What is true is essentially beside the point

Heading into a highly charged meeting Monday between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Liberal Leader(less) Stephane Dion - one that Dion had said he wouldn't participate in - Liberal MP Dominic LeBlanc (Beausejour) made the following public statement:

"It would be completely out of character for Mr. Harper to compromise or co-operated. He refuses to understand that a minority government has to work with the opposition. Instead, he tries to bully them."

There are two main observations to make about that argument.

First, the idea that Harper is a "bully" who will not listen to any other viewpoint is one that all the opposition parties have been trying to make since the onset of this minority government.



**National  
Affairs**

**Claire  
Hoy**

Second, it's obviously not true. Why? Well, since the Harper minority long ago beat the Canadian record for longevity of minority governments, how can it legitimately be said that Harper doesn't understand the numerical realities of keeping a minority government alive?

Not to worry though, for the fact is that with a federal election apparently about to be called for early October - although at the time of this writing it had yet to be officially launched - what is true and what is not true (and this goes for the Tories as well as the opposition parties) is essentially beside the point.

Once they're into an election, all bets are off. It's down and dirty and may the toughest scrapper win.

As things stand, it appears relatively obvious that Harper will win, but it remains a real question whether or not he can win a majority. Most commentators say he can't. This one says it's certainly not guaranteed, but it's there for the taking.

Consider that a weekend Angus Reid poll put the Conservatives at 36 per cent, eight points ahead of Dion's Liberals and double Jack Layton's New Democrats. That's just shy of majority territory, but given the fact that a) -public opinion polls routinely underestimate Tory strength for a variety of reasons; and b) -overestimate Liberal strength; and c) -the Tories almost always increase their support during election campaigns; it's no wonder Harper is anxious to pull the plug.

Another thing about the aforementioned poll: for reasons unknown to anybody in the real world, it tells us that the Bloc Quebecois is at nine per cent "nationally" even though the Bloc, as we all know, only exists in Quebec. It likely isn't doing well in Saskatchewan or Newfoundland, but it's silly - and pointless - to report its "national" numbers when it's only running in one province.

That being said, however, polls have consistently shown that the Liberals - apart from the English-speaking enclaves in downtown Montreal - have essentially lost their historic base in Quebec, which has now become a two-way battle between the Bloc and the Tories. What that means is that the Tories stand to pick up several seats in Quebec, a reality which certainly could help them edge ever close to a majority. Add to that the probability that the Tories can pick up seats in Ontario and the Liberals are in danger of losing most of the few seats they hold in the West - thanks to their idiotic strategy of punishing the West for the heinous crime of being oil producing provinces - and Harper has more reason than the other leaders to be optimistic about an election outcome.

The main reason, of course, why the Tories have an excellent chance of capturing a majority is that the Liberals are led by Dion, a weak choice for leadership even before he decided - to the chagrin of many in his own party - to make his carbon tax policy the hallmark of his campaign.

At a time when high-energy prices are getting up everybody's noses, Dion's strategy is to offer Canadians even higher energy prices. While airlines are laying off thousands of workers because of high jet fuel prices, Dion's answer is to slap even more taxes on jet fuel to make it even more expensive. And so it goes.

If it weren't for the fact that two major factions within the Liberal party - the Michael Ignatieff crowd and the Bob Rae troops - want an election because they want to take over the leadership after Dion loses - you can bet that the party would have stopped Dion from offering up such a losing policy as his major electoral plank.

Just as Jean Chretien enjoyed electoral success, not so much for what he accomplished but because his main opposition, the Conservatives, were badly divided among themselves, Harper too is ready to win a majority against a Liberal party hampered by both a weak leader and an internal struggle for post-election control.

No wonder Harper wants to bring it on. Who wouldn't?

# Now we focus on things up here

From page 6

While the convention was on, that time belonged to the Democrats. Once it was over, the time was fair game, and McCain made good use of it. The Democrats were probably hoping Obama would still be the main talking point for a couple of more days. But McCain threw Sarah Palin into the mix.

I think I'm in very good company, as a member of one of the largest groups in the world. Before noon Friday, I had no idea there was someone on this planet named Sarah Palin. I guess I knew Alaska had a governor, but I couldn't have told you who it was. Despite the attention she's been getting

over the last couple of days, it's only my status as a fan of Monty Python that enables me to keep her name in mind (remember Michael Palin?).

I knew McCain was going to pick a woman. Indeed, I think he had to.

The thought had occurred to me, from time to time, that he might even pick Condoleezza Rice, although such a move would have been dangerous. The current president is very unpopular, and McCain has to do all he can to distance himself from that administration if he has any hopes of forming one of his own. As well, it would have been impossible to keep such a choice under wraps. Rice would have been obligated to resign her current job before joining the

ticket, and that wouldn't have been a secret for very long.

By picking a woman, McCain makes himself eligible for some of the traditional Democratic vote, namely from feminists. As well, he can draw in some of the disgruntled Hillary supporters too.

I have always believed, and will continue to maintain until I see Obama elected in November, that the first president who is not a caucasian male must be a Republican, because such a person will be able to draw off traditional Democratic (liberal) support. Such was the case in the United Kingdom, with Conservative Margaret Thatcher. Ditto in Canada, with Kim

Campbell.

There have been suggestions that Palin lacks experience, but I think it would be unwise for Obama to voice them. He isn't exactly brimming with experience either. And Palin has at least headed a state government for a couple of years. How many governments has Obama been head of?

So the field has settled down and observers like me sit back and wait to be entertained, as time permits. It looks like Harper is getting ready to add to my workload with his election call, meaning I might have to work during a campaign, rather than just watch from the other side of the border.

Oh well, working on elections is fun too.

## Our Readers Write

### Many contributions have been made by Ed Taccone

I first met Ed Taccone about nine years ago when we both joined the Caledon Agricultural Society Fairboard as volunteers.

Little did we know what we were in for as eager volunteers to a 138-year-old society. It would be hard to count the number of hours Ed has volunteered at the Fairgrounds, but it would be in the hundreds yearly, along with a full-time job elsewhere.

There is not a place on the Fairgrounds that Ed has not improved. He brought in sea containers for storage of tables and chairs that used to be piled up all winter in the Heritage Hall. He brought in a trailer for us to hold our meetings and a flatbed trailer for a showmobile.

With a small group of volunteers over the years, he has built stands for the audiences to watch shows, installed fences, paddocks and water taps for the cattle and horse shows, built a showmobile with a full stage, opened a new serving window in the foodbooth, rebuilt the secretary's booth, and repaired the bandstand.

When the Heritage Hall was being refurbished, it was Ed's cherry picker that allowed him and others to get close enough to the high ceiling to brush it clean. Ed brings his own lawnmower to the Fairgrounds all summer to keep the grass cut for continuous events held there. Each Halloween, the Hall is turned over to several service groups who raise money running a haunted house. Each year Ed has dressed up in costume to be a part of this charity event.

Ed is also able to get sponsors for large expenditures on the grounds. The Glassford Pavillion finally

has had the old dirt floor replaced with a concrete one, thanks to Ed and his small band of helpers.

Ed never misses an event or a chance to help others. He not only volunteers his time, but often his home for meetings, progressive dinners, and parties. He supports every event and is first to donate prizes and items to the Strawberry Festival silent auction and the car shows. He always has two or three cars in the fall fair parade. He continues to come to the winter jamborees and volunteer his time serving beverages. Ed also has a very good rapport with everyone, from the

mayor and the councillors to the young children on the playground.

I have left his most recent achievement and his best for last -- the new handicapped playground on the Fairgrounds.

Ed was instrumental in seeing this from start to completion and it is continually in use by children in the community. Every

Wednesday evening for many months, Ed and several helpers made and graded the ramp and the handicapped parking spaces, put things together and generally got it in good working order.

As president of the fairboard for the past four years,

Ed has never refused to help others and volunteers his services, his time, his equipment and his money to make the Fairgrounds and fairboard better. Besides a full-time job, Ed has a great family and takes time away from being a husband a father and a grandfather to make the Fairgrounds a better place. We are proud and humble to be able to call him our friend.

You will be highly missed by the Fairboard. Good luck to you and what a great help you will be to the next group you decide to volunteer with.

Marion and Bill Mason,  
Caledon

### Conservatives cloud the issues

A comment made by David Tilson in your article entitled "Nominated candidates are split on likelihood of quick election call," illustrates beautifully a major problem with Stephen Harper's Conservative government: constant obfuscation of the facts.

Mr. Tilson was quoted by the Caledon Citizen July 24 as saying that he "guarantees" the Liberal Green Shift will raise prices at the pump, which is not true (there is already a 10 cent tax on gas at the pumps and the Liberals are not going to raise that). Now Mr. Tilson seems to freely admit the Liberal plan is not going to tax gas at the pumps, only that too is framed as a criticism - "what kind of environmental plan is that?" he asked Aug. 28, claiming vehicles are the major cause of emissions in Canada (it's actually big industry - which is what the Liberal plan is specifically targeting and what the Conservative plan does not target enough).

This sort of confusing and ever-changing rhetoric has

become a hallmark of the representatives of the new Conservative government under Stephen Harper. All the while, important issues fail to be properly addressed and progress falls by the wayside.

My friends, this has got to stop. There is work to be done in Ottawa. Being an MP and representing the people of your riding is more than being photographed with big cheques. It's about the quality and standard of

what you achieve when you've won. It's about being able to demonstrate you understand the issues and having a clear and communicative dialogue with your constituents about them. It's about balancing the will of the people, all the people, all the parties, and working with each other like grown ups to run this country. We are better than what we have been.

Rebecca Finch,  
Federal Liberal Candidate,  
Dufferin — Caledon

### Network holding fund-raiser this month

The Bolton and District Childcare Providers Network is having a fund-raising garage sale.

Help us to raise money to purchase much-needed specialty highchairs for the Parent Child Centre in Bolton. Our goal is to raise \$800.

To donate financial help or items, please contact Kathleen Baggio at (905) 860-0081.

The garage sale will be held in Caledon East. Check the papers for official notice first week of September, but the current date of the sale is Sept. 13, with a rain date for Sept. 20

Please, go through your basement/closet/garage and donate your quality items.

Kathleen Baggio,  
Bolton and District  
Childcare Providers Network