

ECONEWS

Issue 214

Promoting the Vision of a Sustainable Vancouver Island

JUNE 2011

CONSERVATIVES IN STUNNING DEFEAT

Yes, that should have been the headline, when 60% of Canadian voters clearly rejected the Conservative Party and said NO to a Tory government.

But did the media report it thus? No. For the past few weeks we've had to put up with a nauseous stream of journalists and columnists saying things like "Canadians have clearly stated that they are fed up with minority rule, and want a stable Conservative majority." Well, that's a puppy-faced, reality-denying, fool-the-public lie.

Canadians did nothing of the sort. 60% of Canadian voters voted for a more intelligent, progressive, forward-looking, compassionate government.

And note this: the Conservative majority is 14 seats, and in the 14 most closely contested ridings where they won they did so by a combined margin of just 6,201 votes - that's 0.04% of the popular vote. <http://on.fb.me/mattpeters> The Conservatives increased their share of the total vote by only 1.97%.

So now we have to look ourselves in the collective face and ask ourselves - what next? How do we get out of this wretched hole that sees our country being governed by a right wing government that has no popular mandate to do so?

If we had voted using the kind of fair, proportional system that is used almost everywhere else in the world, Parliament would look like this:

	VOTE SHARE	SEATS
CON	40%	123
NDP	31%	95
LIB	19%	59
BQ	6%	18
GRN	4%	12
	100%	308

With such a result, the NDP would have formed a coalition government with either the Liberals or with the Bloc plus the Greens.

We can't afford to fool ourselves, however. The chances that the Conservatives will bring in proportional voting are about as good as the chance that the Arctic ice will stop melting.



Proportional voting has been defeated twice in BC, once in Ontario, and also just recently in Britain, because it's so easy for NO campaigners to whine and fear-monger that "It's so complicated! Nobody can understand it! It'll produce unstable governments!" ignoring the fact that most European nations have had proportional voting and stable coalition governments for years.

The only chance of a change is if the NDP were to win a majority in 2015, over-ride the instinct to retain first past the post, and legislate proportional voting as their platform has said they would for years.

For this - Plan A - to happen, Jack Layton will have to do a great job as leader of the Opposition, Liberal and Green supporters will have to switch their votes to the NDP en masse in 2015, and Bloc Quebecois voters will have to continue to support the NDP instead of reverting to form.

For this to happen we would also need the Green Party and the Liberals to remain very weak, so as not to draw votes away from the NDP. We would need Elizabeth May to do a fabulous job personally as Canada's first Green Party MP, but not build support for the Green Party, and Bob Ray not to succeed in rejuvenating the Liberals.

There is also Plan B. The right wing parties faced the same dilemma in 2003 when their vote was split. They did the only intelligent thing, and merged to form one party.

As a diversion in my chain of thought, it is worth noting that here on southern Vancouver Island we successfully elected all four of the most progressive electable candidates - Denise Savoie (NDP), Elizabeth May (Green), Randall Garrison (NDP) and Jean Crowder (NDP). Denise and Jean won because of their excellent record as MPs, but Elizabeth and Randall won because we no longer split the vote.

Specifically, there were local polls by Oraclepoll in their ridings five days before the vote which indicated which way the tide was turning, and persuaded many people to switch their votes to Randall and Elizabeth (some using www.votepair.ca). Far more than local projections of national polling, these local polls gave us trustworthy local information.

So back to Plan B, which is that Elizabeth May persuade the Green Party to approach Jack Layton and the NDP with a view to a merger, to form the Green New Democrats, with a pledge that when elected, they would put proportional voting in place for the 2019 election. They could then remain together as one party after 2019, or revert back to two parties.

There is also Plan C - that the Liberals approach the NDP to do a merge, or vice versa. There is so much historical pride in the Liberal ranks, however, that I fear they would prefer to remain in the wilderness and watch Canada be destroyed by years of Conservative rule than agree to merge with the NDP and form the Liberal New Democrats.

One way or another, *something has to change.*

Guy Dauncey