

# The Liberals peak early

## Grits getting a free ride?

**A**t 36 per cent in the polls, the Liberals now stand at the top of the polls. They had best enjoy the view: this is probably as good as it gets. The grits are unlikely to take votes from either the Reform Party or the Bloc Quebecois, while the NDP carcass has been picked clean. On the other hand, between Reform and the Bloc, the Tories have about 25% of the electorate in which to hunt for votes.

More to the point, it may be that before long somebody in the press will wake up from the hypnotic trance Liberal leader Jean Chretien has had them in until now. While the media have kept the Prime Minister under constant pressure to spell out the details in her program, no one seem to have noticed-or no one seems to care-that the Liberal leader has been even more vague. To put it simply, the Liberals have been getting a free ride.

Thus, the Tories have taken a proper lashing for suggesting social spending would have to be cut, without saying where or how much. But what has Mr. Chretien said? He has said nothing

on pensions. He has said nothing on Unemployment insurance. He has said nothing on social assistance.

What, then, is Liberal social policy? We know that they loudly opposed every single Tory trim of the last nine years. Are we to assume that they would reverse all of these measures- restoring say, unemployment insurance benefits to those who quit their jobs without cause? Or was all of that deathless rhetoric just for show? Perhaps the Liberals would maintain social programs just as they are. Or would they? Mr. Chretien will say only that he wants to keep social programs "in the best shape possible." What does that mean?

Or take taxes. Mr. Chretien betrayed his own conscience the day he declared he would scrap the GST, without saying what he would replace it with. And what about the 500 jobs in Summerside, and 500 spin-off jobs for the rest of P.E.I.?

But this is not the only tax question we find him ducking. Where the Prime Minister has

taken a solemn vow that she would not raise taxes, Mr. Chretien carefully avoids any such commitment. Since he is also proposing to add more than 100 billion dollars to the federal debt over four years, we might well ask how he proposes to make the payments on this mortgage. No one has.

The chief source of this immunity is, of course, the Liberals' election manifesto. Mr. Chretien carries this wherever he goes, to show that he has the "plan" with the "specifics." Of course anyone who reads this thing knows it is nonsense. The Liberals' economic plan is the Tories' April budget: the same spending estimates, the same growth forecasts, the works. This plan is specific on some things. For instance, it specifically shows that the Liberals are not promising what Mr. Chretien says they are promising: to "kickstart" the economy.

More troubling is the media's apparent willingness at every turn to give the Liberals the benefit of the doubt. Just as the figures from Statistics Canada are seasonally adjusted, so party pronouncements are "Liberally adjusted" to correct for their obvious failings. Least credible of all is the sort of comment often heard to the effect that well, Mr. Chretien doesn't mean any of what he is saying: that he wouldn't really let inflation rise, as he said he would, or abrogate the Free Trade Agreement, and that of course he'd have to cut spending. Is that the best we can hope for: that Mr. Chretien is lying?

The media have not just spun on this one- they've been rolled.

CHRIS NICHOLS

## Dear John advice from a slightly different perspective

For those of you out there who are wondering who Dear John is, here's a brief background. Dear John is an advice columnist willing to answer all of the questions that keep you up at night watching reruns.

Dear John,

*This is my first year at University and my first time being so far from home. My problem is I blew my student loan money on going out and buying stuff. I don't want to admit to my parents that they were right, I can't handle being on my own. What can I do????*

*Broke at Blanchard*

Dear Broke:

The way I see it, you've got two options... 'fess up to your folks or get a job. For now, just tell them you got the job for spending money, then when you get home for the holidays tell them the truth, its the mature thing to do. Even

if your friends know better, let your parents think you are a "mature responsible young adult". NOT!

Dear John,

*My roommate is driving me crazy! She doesn't know how to boil water...literally. She lives on frozen fast food and uncooked Mr. Noodle. She rearranges our bedroom every other day- yesterday I found my bed in the closet and I still haven't found my desk. Why on earth did I get stuck with this... this... Frankenstein of a roomie? Are all Canadians like this? Did my parents set this up as punishment for not eating all my broccoli? How do I exterminate this pest? If I murder her, can I plead insanity?*

*Southern Yankee*

Yankee:

Well, I don't know the insanity part...after all you are American. Try getting her back in little ways to make her think she's the one who

is crazy. For example pull the fuse of the stove so she can't use it and only put it back when you want it. C'mon get imaginative! Get your other roommates and neighbors in on it.

Dear John,

*I'm hoping you'll accept this letter, print it and help me out. Tall, attractive male, 22, seeks female 19-22 for entertainment at bachelor party. Qualifications: 36C-28-34, must be able to gyrate to country music, be outgoing and physically fit. Job will pay \$100 for the evening. Please send applications with picture to Radar care of Dear John.*

*Best Man*

Dear Best Man,

Don't you know that you are politically incorrect? You should accept applications from both males and females fitting the qualifications.