

a weekend in Quebec shows that they are vulnerable. People aren't pleased with municipal mergers being forced upon them. This dissatisfaction with Lucien Bouchard and the PQ could translate into voters sending a message. If any Liberals get elected in the Quebec City region, where they've been shut in the past, then this SOS will have been sent out. I don't expect the Liberals to do any better than the 29 seats they already have primarily from the Montreal/Hull region.

The Alliance will take a majority of western seats (they had 58 seats at election time). They might even capture a couple of rural seats in Ontario if Mike Harris cuts his electoral machine loose. They will certainly increase their percentage of the popular vote as Stockwell Day has made some in-roads (or maybe a footpath is a better description) in central and eastern Canada.

Being the betting man that I am, this is the regional breakdown I see: The 32 Maritime seats will go something like 20 Liberal and 12 between Alexa and Joe. Quebec's 75 seats will be about 30 Liberal and 45 Bloc. Ontario's 103 seats will go about 90 plus Liberal, the rest Alliance. The Liberals should win a couple of Prairie seats in Winnipeg, "urban Saskatchewan," and Edmonton. The rest should go Alliance although the NDP should maintain

a somewhat reduced presence in the Prairies. The Tories would do well to elect one other westerner other than Joe. That leaves BC where the interior is Alliance and the Lower Mainland/Vancouver Island being split between the NDP, Liberals, and Alliance. Quick arithmetic and voila Chretien and the Liberals should get about 159 seats give or take about five (my margin of error).

But all this is dependent on one trend: That is the sense that people must choose between Liberals and other parties across the land for different reasons. One is the Nader factor. How many Floridians and indeed left leaning Americans would love their vote back? The slogan, "George Bush and Al Gore make me want to Ralph" has probably left Nader supporters doing just that. A close look at election results shows that if they had voted Gore, which would have been the majorities second choice, Gore would surely have won a few more states and be the undisputed champ. Canadians have always had a plethora of parties to choose from but they might be leery now because of events to the south.

The Maritimes want to be with the ruling government, especially Nova Scotia. Where they have seen Alliances' true colours and realize that if they fracture their vote, like in 1997, they open up possibilities for the Alliance.

Quebec is angry with Bouchard which is bad news for the Bloc Quebecois. Federalists will not split their vote with the Tories, like last time, because former leader Jean Charest is gone and so is his personal popularity the Tories enjoyed in Quebec. This throws more voters to the Liberals, which should translate into seats. Ontario realizes that the Alliance needs them. Most feel they have two choices and since the Liberals have treated them relatively well, they will go back to them. Voters out west are either Alliance or not. If not then most will vote Liberal to counter them.

As we get closer to the 27th, do not miss the opportunity to inform oneself of the voting options available. An educated vote is the second best kind. The best vote is a vote period. Don't miss the chance to exercise your democratic right because if you do

not then who knows whom your vote could have elected.

GONZO OUT


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