

Nov.21- Mental note... do not have editor wake me on Sunday morning for copy again. This is my slant on Canadian politics...

By-Elections Update...

Awhile back, I talked about these by-elections as a good way of measuring how the Liberals are doing. As predicted, they won 3 out of 4 seats on Nov.15th. The one they lost, in the riding of Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggan, they got crushed in getting only 16% of the popular vote. This indicator just serves to point out that although the Liberals are riding high in popularity polls, they are still hated in Western

Canada. The Liberals managed to get a star candidate, Henry Dayday (popular former mayor of Saskatoon) to run but when they said no to Western leaders looking for farm aid, they sent Dayday up the river without a hope of seeing the daylight of the political trough, known as Ottawa. That riding went to Dennis Gruending, of the NDP, and helped serve notice that the NDP are still a political force, in relatively socialist Saskatchewan. This is no new phenomenon here as Prairie populism has always been successful here. A few other things came out of these by-elections which are worth noting...

Judy Sgro managed to take the former trade Minister Sergio Marchi's seat with 74% of the vote in the York riding of Toronto. What is interesting here is that Sgro is a Paul Martin support. She won a tough nomination process (which is usually more difficult than the election itself in Red Toronto) using Martin organizers. This will certainly put her on the fringes of her party as Jean Chretien does not reward the feats of his rivals. This form of Realpolitik has its consequences though. Take Human Resources Minister Jane Stewart. This former pothead comes from a Liberal family that is close to Chretien (see Bob Nixon. former Ontario

Attorney General, Chretien appointed to kill the billion dollar helicopter deal Mulroney was pushing for and who also happens to be related to Stewart). As head of one of the largest portfolios in cabinet, she has an inordinate amount of money at her disposal (translation- ministerial slush fund). It came out/was leaked last week, that she had used some money for job creation in her riding of Brantford. Yeah, so?? Well when you are being groomed by Chretien to potentially take over his crown or at least give Paul Martin a run for his considerable moneys, then there is something deeper going on. And that is your standard smear campaign which both opposition and Liberals will be looking at if Stewart throws her hat into the leadership ring (when it becomes open). Ahhh.. the pleasures of back stabbing politics. But this is what you get when the opposition is divided and the only real challenges from the governing party is not too explode from within. The other interesting story to come out of this is renowned Human Rights activist Irwin Cotler. He got elected in the Montreal riding of Town of Mount Royal with an astounding 92% of the vote. What makes Cotler inter-

esting is that he comes into a party that is starting to turn to the left after successfully battling the deficit. They are looking for a more humane face in the government but whether or not they will take to this activist is a different story. He seems to believe that it is time for him to try to change things from within. What he'll probably find is a fat ringworm inside of the rotten apple known as the Liberal Party. Good luck to ya...

The Games People Play...

I have written before how incoming governments like to cook the books to make the situation they are walking into look a lot worse than it is. This week we got two tastes of this and the transparencies of these actions must be wearing thin on voters by now. In Manitoba, the NDP came in, had a look at the books, and voila a \$417 million deficit for the year was produced. The outgoing Tory Finance Minister Eric Stefanson had the gall to say that the province was on track for a balanced budget with the help of some rainy day funds they had set up while in power. Frankly, I think setting up these funds is prudent. Manitoba has been ravaged by the decline in farm prices and the increased aid they have been giving

out certainly has created this situation. But digging a little deeper one can sense that they are creating this because they know that they will have problems paying for their election promises. So rather than say there is no money, they cook the books which takes the focus off them and then when they cannot deliver on their promises they shrug their shoulders and point to the fiscal mess they inherited. Another deeper reason for doing this can be seen in New Brunswick, where Tory Premier Bernard Lord managed to create a \$227 million deficit where an 18.5 million dollar surplus existed before. He is using this as a pretext to review all 700 government programs there. While this is probably a good thing on the surface, here is the reality of it: the Tories have been shut out of power in New Brunswick for a long time. Liberals inhabit all kinds of plum government positions. What better way to reward your loyal supporters than using a program review to turf out these Grits and install your own loyalists? Now whether or not this happens I'll have to hold my breath in my damaged lungs. Translation: shouldn't be long before we see this....



MC Jean Chretien