

News Notes

by Nick Stewart

World - In the US, President Bush is finding his presidency in trouble as his approval ratings have steeply declined and he finds himself trailing John Kerry, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination, in the polls. The presidential campaign promises to be dirty, with the Democrats questioning Bush's attendance record with the military in an early attempt to discredit him - Bush's former colleagues do not recall him showing up for work. By the election this November there will have been many punches traded below the belt.

National - The federal election we all expected this spring may be delayed as Prime Minister Paul Martin has been rocked by the sponsorship scandal within the Liberal Party under former PM Jean Chretien. The Liberals have fallen from 48 % to 35 % in just over a week. The Conservatives have risen from 19 % to 27 %. Suddenly it appears the election expected to be a Liberal landslide could become an actual contest. Many analysts expect Martin to delay the election to give his party time to attempt to put the scandal behind them as he emphasizes he had no knowledge of

the scandal, while opponents charge that as Finance Minister he had to know. If he can convince the public of his case, he will have effectively disassociated himself with the scandal plagued Chretien government and will likely regain support, but if he is unable to do so, he could lose the next election - a very risky gam-



Provincial - Over 1,000 jobs are up in the air as the fate of Polar Foods is unclear. The Provincial Government has poured an undisclosed amount of money (rumored to be at 20 or 30 million dollars) into the company, and now under budget constraints, wants to cut off financial support. Polar Foods responded by saying it could close and wipe out 1000 jobs if the government does not come up with more cash. Liberal Leader Robert Ghiz is demanding to know how many taxpayer's dollars have already gone to the struggling company.

One Student's View of Canadian Politics

by Allan Manley

Being a student of the political science most of my internet time is spent reading news, looking for signs of enlightenment among the leaders of the masses, and it was with great shock that I turned my eye to the homefront and noticed that the political landscape of Canada is changing. Not only is it changing -- you could say it is 'evolving' (that is a little shout out to the Georgia Department of Education that propose banning use of the word). With Paul Martin's triumph over Jean Chretien's retreat, the Liberal Party is going through a major change as power shifts from one side of the divide to the other. The Alliance successfully took over the PC party, anyone who calls it a merger has not stepped back to face the facts, thus the new party is just The Alliance re-deux, and will henceforth always be referred to as the Alliance by myself and many other poly-sci students. Even with all this turmoil the most startling insight has been the legitimization of the NDP. Jack Layton and his party are not only getting media face time, they are getting respect in the form of 15-20% approval.

The big news was the departure of Jean Chretien from the office of

Prime Minister. Every Liberal knew the day would come when Paul Martin would finally outlast his rival, and it has. What does this mean for the average Canadian? Well, it means that for the next little while Prime Minister Paul Martin will try and distance himself from the shadow of his predecessor and try to paint the Liberals as a new look party, despite the fact that it is still the same elected officials as were under Jean. Martin's efforts to try and make people like him will benefit the country for the most part, but should not be considered too altruistic. Martin's decision to run the next election with 50% of the Liberal party being composed of women is a great step for the fairer sex in politics. Martin now has to make his backers happy and neutralize any remaining opposition from Chretien loyalists. The removal of John Manley (no relation to myself), Sheilla Copps and many other prominent cabinet ministers was pretty quick; however, Martin will have to do some hard work to root out all resistance.

The result of the Liberal restructuring will have a profound effect on Canada's other parties as voters look away from the liberal party to

see what options are available. Before I go further I should tell you now that I feel quite confident in letting you in on the big secret. Paul Martin will win the next election as no other party appears able to step in and act like a serious contender for leadership. The Alliance will not get the support of eastern Canada easily, as the western party has maligned the Maritimes on too many occasions for us to forget easily. The Alliance is hoping that PC voters will vote the line and support their local favorite, even if they will end up answering to western leaders. This will not be as smooth as the west would hope. As for the NDP, while they are gaining in the polls and Jack Layton is reigning in the more leftist elements of his party, the NDP just do not have great support outside of large urban areas.

In regards to Belinda Stronach there is not a whole lot to say aside from that finally a Canadian politician is being called "sexy" again, I was really missing Trudeau mania. Belinda has been causing quite a stir, however, I feel it is more due to her new face on the scene as opposed to any kind of policy. With her bid for leadership of

the Alliance, Belinda came under immediate scrutiny and has been called everything from a "Paris Hilton wannabe" to a more amusing "every working mom." The last I have difficulty swallowing, as she is a gazillionaire. While it is refreshing to have a new face on the scene, I fear that is all she takes with her. Sincerely, I had hoped that a strong female candidate would arise; however, Belinda has left me wanting. She has no political experience, and I don't care how well your father's company has done under your watch -- to lead a national political party you need to have cut your teeth on a lower level -- or at least I should hope so.

That is my overview of recent Canadian politics. I know that many people would like to sing the virtues of Belinda Stronach and the benefits of the "partnership" between the Progressive Conservative and Alliance parties, maybe even extol the virtues of our new Prime Minister, revealing that he really is a better man than Jean. Well, I leave you to your extolling, singing and other such carrying on, at least for a few weeks.