

# FROM GREENS TO RED TORIES, AND ALL THE COLOURS IN BETWEEN — REFLECTIONS ON THE 2004 ELECTION

James Allan Evans

From a summer's perch on the Gulf Islands off the West Coast, classics professor James Allan Evans reflects on the outcome of the 2004 election, from the relatively strong showing of the Green Party, to the election of former Conservative Bob Cadman in Vancouver as the only Independent, one who may in some circumstances hold the balance of power in a closely divided House. Why did an election that looked like a dead heat until the final days turn into a seven-point Liberal win over the Conservatives? "Was it the feral onslaught of the Liberals in the final days that turned around the campaign?" he asks. More likely, he suggests "it was probably the Conservatives themselves who gave the Liberal campaign its much needed boost" through statements of their candidates validating the exaggerated claims of Liberal attack ads, and the Conservative failure to counterattack "within the rules of rhetoric." Next time, he concludes, Stephen Harper "must regain the confidence of the old Progressive Conservatives who heeded Joe Clark's warning that Harper is a dangerous right-winger."

Depuis son perchoir d'été dans les îles du Golfe au large de la côte ouest, James Allan Evans se penche sur les résultats des élections, de la performance relativement forte du Parti vert, à l'élection à Vancouver de l'ex-Conservateur Bob Cadman qui, à titre de député indépendant, pourrait bien détenir la balance du pouvoir dans une Chambre divisée. Pourquoi une élection qui, jusqu'aux derniers jours de la campagne, semblait devoir être très serrée, s'est-elle transformée en une victoire des Libéraux par une marge de sept points devant les Conservateurs ? Les attaques sauvages des Libéraux dans les derniers jours de la campagne auraient-elles contribué à modifier la donne ?, se demande Evans. Il croit plus probable que ce sont les Conservateurs eux-mêmes qui ont donné à la campagne des Libéraux le coup de pouce dont elle avait bien besoin. La prochaine fois, dit-il, il faudra que Stephen Harper regagne la confiance des anciens Progressistes-conservateurs qui ont écouté l'avertissement qu'a donné Joe Clark lorsqu'il a déclaré que Harper était dangereusement à droite.

**T**he day before the June 28 federal election, I attended a rally for the Green Party at the Agricultural Hall at Miners' Bay on Mayne Island. Mayne Island, for the benefit of the ninety percent of Canadian who do not know it, is one of the Gulf Islands between Vancouver Island and the mainland, and Miners' Bay gets its name because the prospectors, many of them disappointed Forty-Niners from California, paused there to camp and get fresh water as they made their way to the Cariboo Gold Rush in 1858. Mayne is part of the Saanich-Gulf Islands riding,

which voted Reform/Alliance in the past two elections. Gary Lunn, the M.P., a relabeled Conservative, was generally agreed to be a good constituency man, and a hard man to beat. Nonetheless, the Green aficionados thought that if the Greens managed to elect a member anywhere, it would be here, where Andrew Lewis, an earnest, low-key candidate with a B.Sc. in biology and a diploma in ecology, was the Greens' man.

There was free coffee and cookies, and a pamphlet that outlined the "Ten Key Values" of the Green Party. They

included Non-Violence, Personal and Global Responsibility, Ecological Wisdom and seven other desirable qualities. One of the great advantages of a party with no chance of winning the election is that it can stand for generalized virtue, and no one can examine its past record and demand to know when it had been converted. The Greens wanted only enough votes to

Conservative. The reason why it isn't is an admonitory tale of ethnic politics. Chuck Cadman was the Conservative member for the Surrey North riding in Vancouver's urban sprawl, and justice critic for his party. He intended to run again in 2004, but at the nomination meeting a newcomer from the East Indian community, Jasbir Singh Cheema, turned up with

showed the Conservatives ahead of Paul Martin's Liberals by slightly more than two points. On election eve, another EKOS poll reversed the standing, but still the two parties stood at 32.6 percent for the Liberals and 31.8 for the Conservatives, with the NDP taking 19 percent. A COMPAS poll of June 25 gave the Liberals 34 percent, the Conservatives 33, the NDP 15 and the Bloc Québécois 13. Ipsos-Reid projected more seats for the Conservatives than the Liberals: 117 to 101. In the end, the Liberals took 36.7 percent of the vote. If the polls were as accurate as they claim to be, the Conservatives could have formed a minority government if the election had

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qualify for the federal funding of \$1.75 per vote, and they succeeded. In the next federal election they will make more noise, and filch votes from both the NDP and Liberals. Political parties do not have to elect candidates to exert influence, and even if no Green candidate wins, the Green presence will be felt.

When the voting was over and the counting done, the showing of the Greens was respectable. In Calgary, where almost 61 percent of the popular vote went to the Conservatives, the Greens garnered a share of 7.5 percent. In Edmonton where three-quarters of the voters cast ballots for the Conservatives, the Greens took nearly six percent. They took their highest percentile in Victoria where their share crept up to nearly 12 percent. In Québec City they were less than one percent behind the NDP. The campaign manager for the Greens on Mayne Island was elated by the result.

In the end, the Liberals captured twenty seats short of a majority. The NDP, which will support a Liberal government until its campaign chest is replenished, took nineteen seats. That leaves a Liberal-NDP informal alliance one seat short of a majority and that one seat could have been

some 1,500 instant members and grabbed the Conservative nomination instead. A coup by a herd of instant members at a nomination meeting is a not uncommon scenario in Vancouver's ethnic politics. The script calls for the candidate who has been routed by the instant membership horde to accept his defeat gracefully, or be labeled a racist if he does not. Cadman did not play the game. He chose to run as an Independent. The Conservative Party revoked his membership, and told him he would not be welcomed back into the fold. Even his health worked against him, for he discovered a lump in his groin and the diagnosis was cancer. While the other candidates were campaigning, he was undergoing surgery. But when the results were in, he topped the polls, far ahead of his nearest rival, the NDP candidate. The voters in Surrey North had risen in a grassroots revolt against the ethnic political game, and the Conservatives are now left to ponder their folly.

**W**hat went wrong? Up to the last minute, the polls predicted a dead heat between the Liberals and the Conservatives. An EKOS poll taken after the leaders' debates in mid-June

taken place a couple weeks before it did. It was the final days that doomed them.

Was it the feral onslaught of the Liberals in the final days that turned around the campaign? Faced with possible defeat, the Liberals notched up the temperature, and Paul Martin underwent a transformation into a tough and gritty campaigner.

The attack on the Conservatives became ferocious. It painted Stephen Harper as the Prince of Darkness and alleged that the Conservatives had a hidden agenda and spoke in code. Behind their mask, they were a coven of religious, right-wing extremists. Like the Chrétien government in the 2000 election, the Martin government turned its guns on the whole province of Alberta. So it poisoned the political atmosphere. So what? What was important was to win a majority; the campaign's pepper spray could be cleaned up after the election. As it turned out, the Liberals did not win a majority, which will make it more difficult to deal with the envenomed atmosphere they created.

In the end, however, it was probably the Conservatives themselves who gave the Liberal campaign its much-needed boost in the final days



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The principal antagonists in the minority 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament — (L to R), Conservative Stephen Harper, the Bloc's Gilles Duceppe, the NDP's Jack Layton and Liberal Paul Martin, shake hands at the June leaders' debate. When the bell rings next month in Parliament, they'll all come out swinging.

of the campaign. The Moncton *Times and Transcript* reported that Scott Reid, running for the Tories in the Ottawa region, intimated that a Tory government would reduce bilingual services in some areas of the country. Harper's damage control was swift, but the remark was grist for the Liberal mill. The *Western Catholic Reporter* carried a story about an anti-abortion rally on Parliament Hill where Cheryl Gallant, who had captured a seat for the Alliance in Ontario in 2000, drew a comparison between the recent beheading of an American man in Iraq and abortion. Harper did not reprimand Gallant, but he said that abortion was here to stay. He would not outlaw it. Conservative MP Randy White from British Columbia told a documentary

filmmaker in May that a Conservative government should use the notwithstanding clause in the constitution to checkmate activist judges and upset court decisions on social issues — not just the definition of marriage, either. The film was to be released in August, but a "third party," a.k.a. a mole, delivered a copy to a Vancouver newspaper. Harper told a Vancouver radio station that White's views were his own. But he launched no counter-attack. For instance, Liberal MP Paul Steckle attended the same anti-abortion rally as Cheryl Gallant, where he said — so it was reported — that Canada would have 3.5 million more people now if it were not for the abortions of the past thirty-five years. The rules of rhetoric that the lawyers of ancient Rome had to master included

a smoke-screen tactic called *tu quoque*, meaning "you do what you're accusing me of doing." It highlights your opponent's hypocrisy, and although hypocrisy is not one of the seven deadly sins, it makes a good talking point. Paul Steckle provided a splendid opening for a *tu quoque* defence. It didn't happen.

**T**he lowercase "c" conservatives, the backbone of the old Progressive Conservative Party, failed to rally to the new Conservatives of Stephen Harper. It did not help that Joe Clark exited politics, grumbling that Harper was a dangerous man and endorsing Paul Martin. Harper failed to blunt the suspicion that the Canadian Alliance-Progressive Conservative union was really an Alliance takeover, and that

the tail that would wag to new Conservative dog was a rump of neo-conservatives from his home town. The nexus of Canadian neoconservatism is Calgary, where a new biweekly, the *Western Standard* (does that title remind you of the *Weekly Standard*, the neoconservative organ from Washington DC?) appeared at the end of last year. The issue that appeared on the eve of the election contained a hagiography of Stephen Harper by Ted Byfield, the founder of the now-defunct *Alberta Report*, which was the voice of the Right in Alberta. Byfield wrote that Harper was a leader right-wingers should heed, even though his drawl might put you to sleep. "The Right has finally found a winner," he concluded.

The neoconservative embrace must have reminded Canadians that if Harper had been prime minister when the imperial call to arms against Saddam Hussein came from Washington, Ottawa would have responded "Aye, ready!" Iraq's W.M.D.'s were a fantasy of the American neo-conservatives, though to be just, it was a fantasy that was widely shared in Washington. The neo-conservative Paul Wolfowitz predicted with the complete confidence which is a mark of neoconservatism that the Iraqis would greet the American invaders with flowers, and the young troops who are recruited largely from the lower-income groups in the United States were unprepared to find themselves greeted with bombs rather than blossoms.

When the Chrétien government would not join the "Coalition of the Willing," there was an outburst of neo-conservative expostulation in the *National Post*, which lamented what it fancied was endemic anti-Americanism in Canada.

But the Iraq adventure of George W. Bush and the neoconservatives of the Pentagon did affect the way

Canadian voters looked on the Canadian subsidiary of the US neo-conservative crowd, which had embraced Stephen Harper, and Harper suffered for it.

No commentator, as far as I know, has remarked on the Iraq effect on Conservative fortunes. However the Iraq invasion turns out in the end, for the immediate future it has diminished US prestige in the Middle East and increased the rift between Islam and the Western world. By June 2004, as the election campaign neared its

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conclusion, the Bush administration's Iraq policies were looking more and more like a series of blunders, and Stephen Harper had supported them. How competent would Harper's Conservatives be if the direction of Canadian foreign affairs were in their hands? It was a question that must have occurred to Progressive Conservatives of Ontario whose confidence Harper had to capture in the little time available if he was to win.

In the end, however, the great surprise of the election was that the

biggest erosion of Tory support was in British Columbia and in Harper's adopted home province of Alberta. In B.C., Alliance and Progressive Conservative voters together numbered 947,132 in 2000; in 2004, the Conservatives got 625,071 votes. In Alberta, the Progressive Conservative and Alliance total was 908,607 in 2000 and 783,379 in 2004. In Ontario, Progressive Conservatives and Alliance together took 1,693,647 votes in 2000 and the amalgamated Tories took only 100,923 fewer in 2004, a loss that is less than in Alberta and British Columbia in absolute terms, and markedly less in relative terms.

The voting scoreboard had one other surprise, to me, at least. The Conservatives fared poorly in the big cities. Canada's multi-cultural cities may have plenty of small "c" conservatives, but neoconservatism has no great appeal. The cities which were the exceptions to the rule were Calgary and Edmonton; in the latter, the Tories took 75 percent of the popular vote. But Calgary and Edmonton are in Alberta and Alberta marched to a different drummer. Alberta is the home of western alienation.

Western alienation is descended from a long line of grievances. A century and a half ago, rural Upper Canada hated smug Toronto which was expert at protecting its own interests. When Britain gave Rupert's Land to the new Dominion of Canada in 1870, the demonized portrayal of Toronto moved west with the settlers from Ontario. The CPR may have bound the dominion together from sea to sea, but it gave the West a new grievance. Freight rates. When I moved to Vancouver in 1972, freight rates explained why merchandise was more expensive in the West than in the East. Once the Vancouver marketplace became more competitive, the

price differential disappeared, which left me with the suspicion that the freight rates were never the whole reason. Yet Toronto remained a nexus of evil. My colleagues at the University of British Columbia hastened to enlighten me of that fact as soon as I arrived. Anyone bearing the Toronto taint was a special case who had no right to the same treatment as newcomers to the faculty from other parts of the world. An associate dean from

Credit government in 1935 to fight Eastern control of their economy and remedy the Great Depression with a mixture of religious fundamentalism and radical monetary theory. The Albertan soul was already wrathful against Ottawa when Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government brought in its National Energy Program in 1980. Brian Mulroney buried the NEP but his courtship of Quebec nationalists drove home the perception that the West did

Conservatives won 99 seats; they would have broken into three figures had it not been for the debacle in Surrey North where the Conservative Chuck Cadman was elected, but as an Independent. By the next election, they can become a realistic alternative to the Liberals.

To do so, Harper must gain the confidence of the old Progressive Conservatives who heeded Joe Clark's warning that Harper is a dangerous right-winger. Canadians do not like extremists. Harper should push Peter MacKay into a more prominent position, for he, if anyone, will be able to prove to the Progressive Conservatives that the Alliance has not hijacked their party, but rather that the amalgamation was a meeting of minds.

The great surprise of the election was that the biggest erosion of Tory support was in British Columbia and in Harper's adopted home province of Alberta. In BC, Alliance and Progressive Conservative voters together numbered 947,132 in 2000; in 2004, the Conservatives got 625,071 votes. In Alberta, the Progressive Conservative and Alliance total was 908,607 in 2000 and 783,379 in 2004.

the mini-empire of the Dean of Arts opened a conversation with me once on the evils of Toronto as he sat beside me at a luncheon. When I protested that I did not come from Toronto and had no connection with it apart from a B.A. from U of T, he demanded to know where I came from. I admitted to a birthplace which is now just beyond the outer border of the penumbra of Toronto's urban sprawl.

"Same thing," said he.

The conversation lapsed. The late Professor Frank Underhill who taught Canadian history at the University of Toronto until 1955 used to say that abomination of Toronto was the one great common denominator of Canadians. However, I learned to tune in, and in due time could pass for a standard western alienation wonk in mixed company.

But modern western alienation has nothing to do with freight rates. Alberta has taken it over, and Alberta is different — different even from Saskatchewan, though the two provinces shared a date of creation, 1905, and Ottawa retained control of crown lands in both until 1930, though only Alberta continues to resent it. Albertans elected a Social

not matter. What mattered was the political quadrille between English and French that has gone on ever since Britain introduced representative government in Lower and Upper Canada in 1791. But the West has examined the present-day demography of the country, and realized that the West does matter if it can only find a political vehicle to bring its influence to bear. Preston Manning's Reform Party was a first effort.

**T**he trouble was that Reform's platform was an incoherent mish-mash. It was as if a number of disparate political groups threw their wish lists into a melting pot, where they failed to melt. Reform became Canadian Alliance led by Stockwell Day, whose 2000 election campaign is remembered now for the date he assigned to the age of the dinosaurs. But with Stephen Harper and Peter MacKay, the amalgamated PC and Alliance parties have found leaders who can give some coherence and discipline to a resurrected Conservative Party. The Liberals rushed the election partly to deny them enough time to do it, and under the circumstances, they did remarkably well. The

And Western alienation? Since I have spent most of my academic life as a historian of ancient Greece and Rome, allow me to point to a lesson from classical Athens. The fifth century BC ended with a long, expensive struggle between tough, reactionary Sparta and Athens which was both a democracy and an imperial power. Athens had to tax themselves to pay for the costs of war, and it was the wealthy Athenians whose pocketbooks were emptied most. They became an alienated group which included some high-powered intellectuals, and when the war ended with the defeat of Athens, a camarilla of them seized power. They began as reformers and rapidly earned the label of "The Thirty Tyrants." Their leader was a relative of the philosopher Plato who is much admired by neo-conservative political scientists. The moral of the tale is: Beware of alienated political groups that want power. They do not have the common good in mind.

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