

Politics: 1200 Words of Unadulterated Truths

by Jim-bean Lloyeah

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8:30AM EST:

It is a tough way to start a day being late for everything. I'm presently 23000 feet up enjoying coffee on a plane I almost missed because of a shuttle I did miss. And that is what I want to write about today... missed opportunities. The election is seven days away and I have to put my spin on it. But through 23 straight days of rain, I was unable to see through the thick fog that enveloped the Island from the rest of the country. Up here, the view isn't much better but I can almost feel the karma below me. So without further adieu...

THE WINNER AND...

Still undisputed ruler of Canada will be Liberal Jean Chretien. This is not easy to write right now when almost one in five voters is undecided. Barring some serious event that galvanizes this substantial voting block to go one way or another, most will vote in a divided fashion that will reflect how most Canadians will vote anyway.

But here in Canada, elections operate a little differently than in the US. Our "electoral college" is winning ridings not popular votes and that is why I can provide a reasoned prediction. There are 301 ridings in Canada contested by at least five parties everywhere (fringe or mainstream).

Whatever candidate wins the most votes in a riding wins the seat. If one party attains 151 seats then they can form a majority government. If not, then a combination of parties with at least 151 seats between them can work together to form a minority government. But the numbers indicate that this is an unlikely scenario.

The three backrunners are the New Democratic Party (NDP) led by Alexa McDonough, the Progressive Conservatives (Tories) led by Joe Clark, and the Bloc Quebecois led by Gilles Duceppe. Each has a different story in this election with varying degrees of sadness.

The NDP has 19 members presently and that number should decrease. They have bastions of support in the Maritimes (seven seats), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (eight seats), and a handful in BC. They are vulnerable because their Maritime support (like the Tories) was based primarily on dissatisfaction with Liberal reforms to Employment Insurance back in 1997 which took money out of peoples pockets. This irritation has healed with time and a repeal. Times are tough in some parts of Atlantic Canada right now and the shrewd voters that they are, they know that they could benefit more from being onside government rather than off. So enough should come back to the Liberal fold to decrease members for this party.

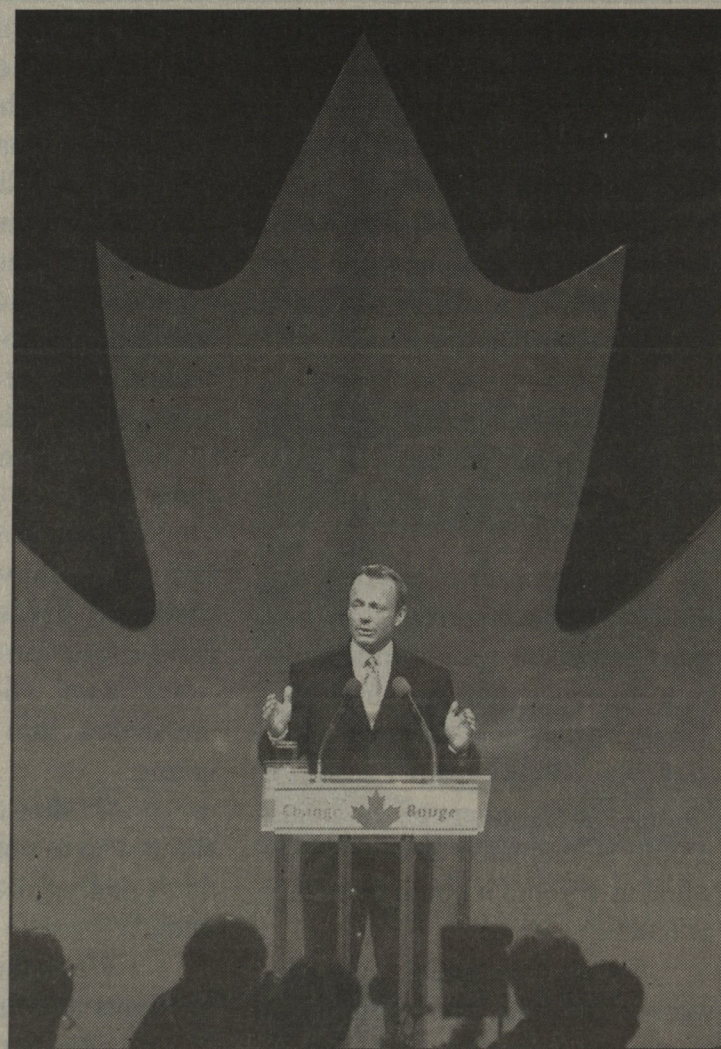
The NDP's other problem is in BC where they are vulnerable because their provincial namesakes are corrupt and a few months away from getting thrown out of office. This too should translate into Liberal gains in the Lower Mainland.

Joe Clark has done a superb job this election but is too far back to make a run. His MP's started to melt away when Chretien came calling and he subsequently lost four out of five Quebec MP's in this way. At the time of dissolution, the Tories had only 15 seats left. Joe will have a tough go in his own riding of Calgary Center. I think, in the end, Calgarians will choose a party leader over an opposition backbencher. This coupled with 2 Liberal cabinet ministers in the last bastion of the left left in Edmonton will be Alberta's three non Alliance MP's.

Joe has no hope of electing anyone in

Quebec. Prospects are thin out west and in Ontario which leaves the Maritimes but most of that support will melt the Liberals way. Frankly, I have a hard time identifying the 12 seats Clark needs to maintain party status in the House, which gives them access to funds and staff.

With support for sovereignty locked in at 40%, the Bloc will again send at least 40 members to Ottawa (they had 44 members when the election was called). But



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