



## Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

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**President's message**

## The Shameful Double Standard



*by Joe MacDonald  
PAAC President*

Recent coverage by the media of the government relations profession and its "access" to government has moved from the realm of simple reporting of the facts to borderline hysteria.

For the most part, we have been treated to a long line of poorly researched efforts at "exposing" the supposed multi-layered, deep-rooted undemocratic conspiracy of the government relations industry to control government operations and policymaking.

With little in the way a quality research, and with little attempt to understand the nature of public affairs and the role of government relations practitioners in particular, the media has found an easy target in the age of "accountability and transparency". The media, however, does not stand alone - they have been superbly aided by the near-sighted efforts of some politicians. As such, this crusade to rid us all of the unholy lobbyist does a real disservice to the media, government, the public and the government relations and public affairs industry.

It is not enough, though, that government relations professionals be tarred with the same "Schrieber Brush." Now, with a Torquemada-like zeal, the champions of freedom and democracy cry out that there is something threatening to the democratic process when lobbyists and public affairs professionals participate directly in electoral politics. It is one thing to act as one of the "punditti", or to provide analysis about the people, the policies and the process of elections, but to actually work for the party of one's choice is going beyond the Pale. For some reason, knowledge of government and how it works is now a bad thing in politics.

No one would suggest teachers be prevented from working on campaigns, or doctors, lawyers or professional engineers. No one cries foul when lobbyists for Democracy Watch, environmental organizations or parent councils work for the candidates and parties of their choice. Simply because public affairs and government

relations professionals represent other interests should not preclude them from being involved in politics or to be held to a different standard.

What the political parties do is entirely up to them. Hiring ex-government relations practitioners just makes good sense because they have the skills, the experience and the expert background to make a significant contribution to any campaign.

The Public Affairs Association of Canada made our views known to the parliamentary committee reviewing the Federal Accountability Act. We supported the legislation and recognized the need for increased transparency in the system, but cautioned government of the negative affects increased administration burdens could have on small agencies and sole proprietors.

For anyone - the media or self-styled "guardians of the public interest" - to single out one industry for special regulation and limits on it's members' ability to participate in and access the political process is shameful at best and dangerous at worst.

Now, I'm happy to introduce you to and welcome these new members to PAAC:

- Adam White, President AITIA Analytics Inc., Toronto, Ontario
- Troy Tait, Government Relations, Athabasca University, Edmonton, Alberta
- Bernie Morton, Senior Associate, Sussex Strategy Group, Toronto, Ontario
- Katarina Mayer, External Affairs Manager, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Toronto, Ontario
- Chevanne Simpson, Cement Association of Canada, Toronto, Ontario
- Mike Cote, VP Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, Purolator Courier Ltd., Mississauga, Ontario
- Atul Sharma, Hill & Knowlton Canada, Toronto, Ontario
- Mark Buzan, Action Strategies, Gatineau, Quebec

## **Politics and the polls**

## Harper's Tories need suburban moms on side

*by Melanie Cummings, PAAC Editor*

For Stephen Harper the key to majority government is to be found among suburban, middle class, middle-aged women who live in Ontario's 905 area code, says Darrell Bricker, CEO Ipsos-Reid.

"If the Tories can't convince these people to vote for them, they won't win the next federal election - they are the key to victory," Bricker told the audience at the March 18 PAAC luncheon.

While he doesn't foresee an election until fall 2009, right now the "gender bias" favours the Liberals - to the tune of 33 per cent support. The Liberals, however, only wins over 27 per cent of men.

Overall, Bricker said the Conservatives gather 32 per cent of female voter support and 41 per cent of men's.

"The real problem for the Tories is young women aged 18 to 34," said Bricker.

Only 21 per cent of them are Conservative supporters, which is neck and neck with the NDP at 20 per cent. The Liberals, on the other hand, have the support of 31 per cent of women aged 18 to 34.

A far greater percentage of women in the 35 to 54-year-old set are willing to throw their weight behind Harper's Conservatives. In this demographic, 34 per cent would vote for the Conservatives while 32 per cent would vote for the Liberals.

"And by income levels, affluent women are more likely to vote Tory than Grit," added Bricker.

Minority government is working well for the Tories and they are currently too far away from ever winning a majority to want an election now, he added.

There is little incentive for the Conservatives, or the Liberals, to call an election, and according to a poll his firm conducted in March poll found more than two-thirds of Canadians, 66 per cent said there was no need for an election while 27 per cent said 'yes' to dropping a writ. Comparatively, in 2005 when the Liberals were in hot water over spending corruption at the Gomery Commission, opinions were far less divided: 57 per cent of Canadians told pollsters that the government should hold off on calling an election while 39 per cent were keen to head to the polls.

"Right now it's all saber-rattling in the House of Commons. There's no cause for an election," said Bricker.

Canadian confidence in the economy is typically the biggest influence in calling an election and to that end, most (39 per cent) agree the economy is healthy. However, 13 per cent think the country is heading into a recession, similar to the situation in the U.S.

After the Conservative government released its budget in February, their support remained stable while support for the Liberals dwindled. Nationally, 34 per cent of decided voters said they would back the Tories in a federal election, followed by the Grits with 28 per cent, the NDP with 18 per cent, the Bloc Québécois with 10 per cent, and the Green Party with nine per cent.

Currently the Liberals and the Conservatives remain in a statistical dead heat. Another election would only produce another minority parliament, added Bricker.

He projects that after the next election: the Conservatives will gain five more seats to hold 132 (which is 23 shy of a majority), the Grits will gain an additional 10 seats over their current composition with 107, and Jack Layton's NDPs and Gilles Duceppe's Bloc Québécois will each lose five seats, dropping to 25 and 43 respectively.

The Tories would have to win 64 seats in Ontario to win a majority, but this is "inconceivable," said Bricker. "The Liberals would have to collapse in Ontario for the Conservatives to win a majority."

He suggested Harper and his party focus their attention on "red meat issues" such as crime because it typically isn't one that divides the public by gender.

"For Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, the last thing they want right now is a federal election. Even if everything goes their way in a campaign, if they don't win a majority, it will still be seen as a defeat," added Bricker.

## Beware the Liberazi's Among Us!



*Book review  
by Stewart Kiff*

***Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left, from  
Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning***  
*by Jonah Goldberg*

Traditional conventional wisdom suggests that the political spectrum, far from being a straight line between left and right, is more of a circle. At the top of the circle, sit the liberal democracies. At bit on the left of the top of the circle sit European social democracies, such as Sweden. A bit on the right, sit the more conservative democracies like the United States. And at the bottom of the circle sit totalitarian states: to the left, the Stalinist U.S.S.R and Maoist China, and to the right, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Jonah Goldberg, however, finds this model problematic.

In his book *Liberal Fascism* Goldberg rejects this circular model on the basis that the political spectrum is only logical when considered as a straight line from left to right. Classic fascist states, he argues, clearly belong on the left side of the spectrum.

Upon reading this thesis I instinctively found it disturbing as if it seemed to go against the natural order of things. Of course the Nazi's and the Italian Fascists were on the far right. Are they not our society's very definition of the far right?

Yet why, asks Goldberg, if the Nazis were so far right on the political spectrum, did they brand *themselves* as socialists? Indeed, the very word Nazi comes from a shortening of the party's official name, *die Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, - German for the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Similarly, why did Mussolini, whose parents read *Das Kapital* to him as a child, consider himself a 'socialist' right up until the moment of his execution at which his acolyte shouted, "Long live Mussolini, long live socialism!"

Goldberg argues, with considerable backing, that fascism began very much as a left-wing movement, with the added embrace of

nationalism. In fact, Goldberg suggests that the first categorizing of fascists as right-wing only occurred after Stalin put out the directive that all opponents of the his rule of the Soviet Union, including Trotsky, were to be labeled as such in a bid for control of Germany.

Fascism, says Goldberg, was born of a "fascist moment" in Western civilization, when a coalition of intellectuals under various labels - progressive, communist, socialist - believed the era of liberal democracy was drawing to a close. Leaving little doubt with him that fascism was a project of the left.

Consider Cuba, prods Goldberg. Who can legitimately contest the fascist tendencies of its supposed leftist totalitarianism with its nearly lifelong military dictator Fidel Castro; its religion of fidelity to the state; the beatification of its martyr Che Guevara; and the brand of patriotism promoting "socialism or death"?

As to why he wrote the book, Goldberg, admits in part to a simple emotional impulse. As a conservative, he is tired of those on the left refusing to debate him on awkward facts, instead calling him a fascist, thus undeserving of consideration. The word fascist is more than just a modern synonym for evil; it puts a complete stop to all discussion. With its associations to the Nazi-ordered Holocaust, to be called a fascist is to be told your views are so repugnant they are not worthy of debate. (Ironically, the use of the label 'fascist' in modern debate is in itself becoming a fascist tactic to ending discussion.)

This book is of great importance, particularly as a healthy, open political debate is long overdue. With this book Goldberg has perhaps launched *the* political discussion that could rock our society's current thinking to its core.

With its clear writing, solid research and truly thought-provoking arguments, this book should be a must-read addition to every self-respecting political junkie's library.

Regardless of where you stand on the political spectrum, this book very much merits a look and a read it is one of the most startling polemics I have read.

**A Must Read.**

## Have your say

We welcome member input, whether it's a letter to the editor, a story suggestion or a proposal for a guest column. Feel free to **email your input or suggestions** to us. All submissions for publication on this site are subject to approval by the Editorial Board.

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