

BC's Throne Speech: Already a Huge Disappointment

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, February 16, 2009

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The BC government is in a self-orchestrated bind. Later today they release their throne speech for this legislative session, 6 days late.

In a fit of transparent and predictable governing, which turned out to be only a veneer, the government committed to fixed election dates, throne speeches and budgets. Circumstances, however, can really cramp such a plan.

Campbell is just like Harper. The federal Conservatives couldn't even abide by their own October 2009 fixed election date legislation, for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the growing likelihood of an Obama presidential victory in the United States and the reality that Harper wouldn't even have been able to hold onto a minority government with such a left-ward swing there.

Squishy rationales have forced the same event in BC with the delayed throne speech, which is supposed to establish the tone and priorities for the legislative session.

Past throne speeches and budgets in BC have focussed on improving the state of children or the environment with little or nothing positive in those areas: more veneer and PR.

Last Tuesday's throne speech, if it were honest, would have had to talk about the lack of a solid excuse to cut short the spring legislative session since a regular length would have presented far too many question periods before the May election, for Campbell to be have to avoid.

His virtually non-existent public profile is still a result of his drunk driving episode in Maui 6 years ago.

An honest throne speech would have had to explain the necessity that on Friday the 13th, the election gag law came into effect, stifling the free political speech of hundreds of groups critical of the government [and maybe 6 groups who support them] all to prevent truth-based ads showing how much Campbell's mean-spirited, market-worshiping cuts and policies have hurt vulnerable British Columbians.

And if you do some calendar arithmetic, you'll see that reading a throne speech 3 days before the gag law comes in means 3 days of the worst press and multi-million dollar advertising spending imaginable.

Another reason to delay the throne speech is merely to cut down on the amount time the media can focus on it until the next big event, the budget tomorrow.

But the biggest reason to delay the throne speech is because it will have to introduce a package of economic policies that will make the neoLiberal MLAs vomit in their sugar-coated breakfast cereal on Wednesday morning: a deficit budget.

Like the Harperites, The neoLiberals are so ideologically opposed to deficits, effective social spending, communitarian economic policies or an economy that exists for citizens instead of for pimping workers for global corporate hyper-profit, that they've spent weeks now pre-emptively providing excuses for why they will have to go into deficit to mitigate the effects of the global economic meltdown on BC.

But none of this dream throne speech will come forth today. Instead it will be a superficial ramble full of platitudes about strong leadership in an economic crisis, looking out for the economically vulnerable and why the NDP will make you lose your job if they get elected.

The sad truth, though, is that in the government's attempts to justify breaking its own balanced budget legislation, a few weeks ago the finance minister released a sexy slide show tracking how bad the economy has been in the last 6 months.

But in their zeal to show how awesome their surplus budgets have been recently, they produced a graph that showed the last 2 NDP surplus budgets before they lost government.

This will hurt them in the end because Campbell spent his entire first term in office whining about how they inherited an NDP deficit when we know that massive neoLiberal tax cuts for the rich created the funding crisis that made a mess of BC's social fabric.

No throne speech today will help them when facts like these are swimming around. They'll need heaps of luck to keep government on May 12th.