

I Think GG Jean Supports Electoral Reform

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, September 29, 2010

<https://politicsrespun.org/2010/09/i-think-gg-jean-supports-electoral-reform/>

I think the soon to be former GG Michaëlle Jean supports electoral reform.

I can't prove it, but I think there is room in some of her outgoing remarks that indicate her deep understanding of the malaise in Canadian democracy.

But the Governor General has remained tight-lipped about that cold Dec. 4, 2008 morning at Rideau Hall, which some have suggested was a power move by Jean to show her interests were different than that of the PMO.

“In those hours, all of a sudden, people were frozen, time was frozen and everyone was wondering, ‘Hey, what might happen here? And why are they taking so long?’” Jean recalled. “History will decide . . . but I believe that, collectively, we participated together in something that will take us a step forward, maybe, in the necessity of understanding our institutional realities . . . and our political system.”

via [Outgoing GG sought to ‘send message’ before proroguing Parliament.](#)

What does it mean to understand our institutional realities? I think it means that we've had 6 years of minority governments [4 years as of that sleet day at Rideau] and a handcuffed Westminster parliamentary system that may have succeeded best in a 19th century reality of two motherhood political parties.

Today? The two motherhood big tent parties are not adequately representative of Canada. We have the Bloc, we have the Greens and NDP. We also have the Conservative party being the current manifestation of the Reform/Alliance party with its marginalized ideology.

Our electoral system, our political system, all the assumptions upon which our political institutions rest are variables now.

I like it this way.

We have actual debate and dialogue in the House. We have opposition parties uniting on an issue, right or wrong, to save the long gun registry. We have the same group of outnumbering MPs starting the process of endorsing the long-form census. [There is a joke about the word "long" here, but someone funnier than me will have to make it.]

We are seeing de facto electoral reform because we have been spared for over half a decade the tyranny of a majority government. In time, Canadians will expect more engagement from politicians since

majority whipped votes no longer guarantee anything.

When the GG sat around pondering for two hours, making the prime minister waste his time worrying about being WLM King, we were all wondering if she'd pull a Bing and shock the system.

It turns out that with almost two years of history to reflect upon, a bit of melodrama stalling let us know that the GG is not a rubber stamp and that there was reason to pause and reflect. Personally, I was hoping that she was going to deny proroguing parliament and Harper had to actually convince her, over that long time, to do it.

It also turns out that the stalling was all she needed to do to play her hand. It sanctioned the uncertainty in our current political institutions. It thereby empowered all the rest of us to explore new expectations of our public servants.

And we've seen that in recent months.

And we're not alone as the UK, USA and Australia are caught in electoral parity that cripples traditional power arrangements.

Everything is on the table now, and while GG Jean may never speak another word about her era and that sleet day in 2008, she has said enough already to make us all wonder the legacy of her two hour metaphorical walk in the snow.

Those two hours may end up being an historical trigger for great electoral reform to manifest.

I certainly hope so.