

Regrets? Super-Human Gordon Campbell Won't Tell

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, May 05, 2009

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If we have learned anything about new higher expectations of politicians in the 21st century, it's that they have to acknowledge they aren't perfect. [Obama](#) gets it, [Bush](#) and Campbell clearly don't.

It was astonishing to watch [Campbell interviewed on the CBC tonight](#). When asked at the end if he could do anything over from his eight years as premier, he said there were things but refused to give an example, instead embracing his "tough choices" mantra. What about drunk driving in Maui? Come on.

Sure, one political stance is to say it's a sign of weakness to admit you ever have made a mistake. It means you aren't resolute and it gives ammunition to your enemies. But none of that matters. We know they aren't super-human. Maui?

Bush admitted the Mission Accomplished banner on the air craft carrier was a regret, as was goading terrorists to attack by saying "bring 'em on." But Bush only admitted these things after Obama was elected and he was a lame duck president.

Obama, on the other hand, admitted on CNN just two weeks into his administration that it was a mistake suggesting Tom Daschle for Secretary of Health and Human Services because of his past tax problems.

Here's how Obama expressed himself:

"I've got to own up to my mistake. Ultimately, it's important for this administration to send a message that there aren't two sets of rules — you know, one for prominent people and one for ordinary folks who have to pay their taxes."

What kind of weakness lies in this statement? What kind of signal that the president is not resolute? How does this admission of an error bring any more ammunition to opponents than the fact that it was a mistake? Admitting it did not cause any further criticism of his nomination of Daschle. In fact, admitting he made a mistake probably defused the problem faster than otherwise.

Gordon Campbell is a dinosaur. Obama has led us all to have higher expectations from our public servants.

Last week, Gordon Campbell [tossed a loonie to a striking paramedic](#), saying "don't spend it all in one place." How many of us remember a drunk Alberta Premier Ralph Klein wandering into a homeless shelter demanding explanations for why they don't have jobs, then tossing some cash on the floor? He admitted to a drinking problem and 2/3 of Albertans forgave him. And while Campbell apologized for Maui, on the CBC tonight he couldn't bring himself to mention even that as an example.

Then Campbell parroted [an absurd line from liquor privateers](#) that an NDP increase in the minimum wage from \$8 to \$10/hour would raise the price of a 6-pack of beer by the same percentage. The arithmetic inherent in that analysis is pathetic and wrong. Campbell, who criticizes Carole James for lacking business experience though he himself has spent most of his adult life in politics, should have been able to do some arithmetic to conclude that the data is shoddy. Liberal apologists all over BC have been claiming that he was given wrong information. Right, I see.

Then on Sunday during the leaders debate, he [patronized Carole James](#) by admonishing her with his brilliant insight that his job is big and hard to get a handle on, implying that she might be too stupid to do the job. Polls indicate women are far more likely to support the NDP. So was he pandering to the sexist male element of his base to get out their vote by insulting a woman? I think so, but that's hard to tell, Perhaps we can make up our own minds when we think about why yesterday he cancelled an upcoming CBC radio debate with Carole James. That may be his backwards way of admitting that it's wrong to call someone stupid like that.

Finally, today he refused to tell a reporter what he wishes he could do over again, though he acknowledged there were things. He should have been infinitely grateful that he wasn't asked why he cancelled his CBC radio debate. Instead, he put on his bold, resolute hat and refused to discuss it and instead spun his tough choices. That's his prerogative certainly. But it says something about the man. This also helps explain why John van Dongen waited a week before telling the premier that he had his drivers license revoked. Clearly, there is a dysfunctional lack of humility in the Liberal Party.

It is simply sheer arrogance to refuse to discuss mistakes.

And in the 21st century, voters will not stand for it. We have seen Obama admit mistakes and British Columbians want and deserve that same kind of political integrity.

Gordon Campbell and his party are thoroughly incapable of delivering it.