

Why I Joined Team Mulcair

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, September 07, 2015

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After years of concern about what a second Harper majority government would do to eradicate the rest of what I love about Canada, I've been able to reject fear and embrace change. But it was a long process that required coming to terms with Tom Mulcair. And I did.

And so should you, which is why you should also be able to let go of any urge to vote for the Liberal Party.

As trade unionists we should be voting not only in our interests, but in the interests of the country. The great thing about being in the working class is that those interests are largely aligned.

We should not be fooled into thinking that terrorists are on the verge of blowing up our hallowed hockey arenas and legislatures. That's Harper's fear we need to continue rejecting.

We also should not be fooled into thinking that the Occupy Movement was irrelevant. As a political economist, one of my hobbies is to monitor right wing, neoliberal institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

But what I've tracked very closely is that all three right wing organizations, and many others, have started insisting that economic inequality is a huge threat to global stability: the core idea in the Occupy Movement.

But how do all these ideas lead to our fall election?

Stephen Harper's Conservatives are bad for Canada and Canadians.

And the trick has been in how to actually get rid of him, considering how much his party has cheated in and between the last few elections.

A luring notion has been percolating since the 2011 election: some sort of electoral co-operation, if necessary. And why not? Our current first-past-the-post electoral system continues to reward majority governments with absolute power to parties that get less than 50% of the popular vote.

And the big idea was to look to the Liberals and NDP to oust Harper's Conservatives. The NDP's Orange Crush brought the party to official opposition status. Jack Layton had just died. Ignatieff drifted back to Harvard and a younger Trudeau emerged as a contender to lead the Liberals into a new era.

And many people examined Mulcair, and found his personality, leadership charisma and appeal lacking. After all, Jack Layton was a beacon of optimism.

The NDP leadership race came down to Cullen, Topp and Mulcair.

Nathan Cullen touted co-operation with the Liberals to save Canada from Harper. Leadnow.ca, the powerful citizen mobilizer group, embraced that goal as well.

Brian Topp had never been elected and was running to become leader of the opposition, which was a stretch despite his history as a campaigner.

Tom Mulcair was successful in helping deliver Quebec, which had already warmed to Jack Layton, and was an experienced, effective parliamentarian.

I supported Cullen and a co-operative approach, with the hope of achieving electoral reform as well.

But I joined Team Mulcair this past spring. And I had a number of compelling realizations as I changed my mind about how to save Canada, which I present here, chronologically:

1. The political economist in me was impressed with Mulcair's ability to litigate and coherently attack Stephen Harper's anti-Canada agenda during question period in the House of Commons. Justin Trudeau has been largely ineffective in parliament.
2. Starting in mid-2014, the NDP started releasing its election platform, well over a year before the fixed election date of October 19, 2015. After hearing little from the party about what policies the Mulcair-led policy would champion, I was impressed. There was action on climate change, an inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, economic equality policies, treating veterans with dignity, and many more. Meanwhile the Liberals had little to offer that was inspiring at all.
3. Then, last Spring, Trudeau criticized the NDP for providing parliamentary office space for its staff union, but this nasty turn should not have surprised unions so much. Last decade, the Liberal Party promised to vote for federal anti-scab legislation. Then, they voted against it. The Liberal Party is

not the party of unions or working people.

4. Also last spring, as Mulcair continued to expand his personality and charisma, and win over NDP activist friends of mine who found him more engaging and inspiring than I ever had, the NDP stood strong and voted against the fascist bill C-51. Trudeau voted for it, despite claiming it was bad, but that he'd fix it once in power. In wanting to avoid alienating the right wing of his party, he alienated the many of the rest. This fence-straddling is typical for this party historically. But no more free pass for the party that campaigns from the left and governs from the right. I'm done with that kind of lying.

And by the summer, the Liberals were dropping in most demographics, the NDP was ahead of the Conservatives almost everywhere and voting Liberal anywhere in the country became impotent.

Looking back, the NDP won 103 seats and came second in over 100 ridings in 2011. Trudeau is missing. Mulcair has come into his own. Alberta inspired the whole country by embracing the NDP for change provincially. And Harper has driven our economy, rights and freedoms into the ground.

The NDP are fully capable of ridding us of Harper's Conservatives for good.

That's why I joined Team Mulcair. And so should you.

A version of this piece shows up in the Labour Day 2015 issue of [Our Times](#) magazine.