

## PM Harper Understands 'V For Vendetta'

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, January 02, 2010

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It is quite clear that Stephen Harper clearly understands a movie like *V For Vendetta*. It's not his arrogance that led him to [prorogue parliament](#) again by literally phoning it in to the governor-general. It's his understanding of our collective apathy about democracy.



OK, maybe it was partly arrogance that led him to phone it in, but in early December 2008 when he did it before, he ended up announcing the suspension of the legislature by standing outside Rideau Hall being sleeted upon by the weather gods, who were clearly politicizing his actions. Who wants to do that again.

The state of democracy in Canada is in a shambles. The last provincial election in BC in May 2009 saw voter turnout drop below 50%. Oh well.

Voter turnout almost dipped below 40% for the first time in Alberta's provincial election in 2008.

Last year there were rallies across the country opposing the impending prorogation. This year, Harper waited until the seriously sleepy time between Christmas and new years: pretty crafty. Even Hill-addicted journalists were tweeting from warm climates about the prorogation.

You can read all about the reasons why he pulled this move again all over the place. The Reform/Conservative Party has its reasons about consulting with businesses about the economy and such. There are Afghan torture scandals to avoid, Senate stacking to further, the Olympics alternate universe to embrace, and various other benefits and comparisons to pre-1982 traditions about the ending of legislative sessions.

No matter.

What is clear is that responsible government is no longer a given. Technically, elections legitimize governing bodies to do whatever within their power as they govern. Harper is doing nothing "wrong". Nor is his apparitional coalition partner, Michael Ignatieff.

The flagrant disregard for public accountability, combined with the public's inability to demonstrate any serious concern for political integrity means that there needs to be forces that can mobilize people to care about it all.

Those rallies last year were an encouraging sign, but until there is a vehicle to truly convey public will or outrage and to educate people about the dismissiveness of prorogation, we will continue to see politicians demean us--their employers--and justify our cynicism of their integrity.

It's a vicious circle that leaves them continuing to feel confident that they can get away with whatever they want and our voter turnout will continue to drop.

And while the overt fascism in *V For Vendetta* is not present in Canada today, the soft fascism of diluted democracy is becoming the norm. It's no wonder young [and older] people today are avoiding political parties and embracing other political mobilization avenues.

2010 has barely begun. The tragedy of the Olympics and its social, political and economic aftermath has yet to be fully visited upon us. We have a glaring absence of hopeful, inspiring, motivating political leadership in most of the country. We have but a few years to turn 180 degrees to avert climate breakdown and our political systems have never been so impotent in the face of such challenges.

On new year's day yesterday, some stranger asked me if I thought 2010 would be a good year. I said that if we don't start off being optimistic, we have no chance at all.

Stephen Harper's new year's resolution of avoiding accountability is a rough start. But I begin the year optimistically that we will emerge in 362 days in a better place.

If not, the first year of this pivotal decade will put us even further back from where we need to be.

I can't stomach that. Can you?