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November 14

Crunched by the numbers

We've heard the phrase "Paul Martin Juggernaut" so many times of late that we're beginning to wonder if "juggernaut" is the guy's last name.

Certainly, today's exclusive SES/Sun Media poll lends weight to the view the Martin-led Liberals will be unstoppable in the next election.

It shows the Grits under outgoing leader Jean Chretien would easily win a majority if an election was held today. The poll of 1,000 Canadians, taken Nov. 5 to 9, found among committed voters 49% would vote Liberal, 16% Tory, 12% Canadian Alliance, 12% NDP and 10% BQ.

But under Martin, the Liberal vote becomes even more crushing. The Grits would increase their support even if the Alliance and Tories succeed in uniting before the next election. In fact, this new Conservative Party would receive less support as a single entity than the combined vote of the Alliance and Progressive Conservatives, which stands at 28% right now.

That would be true regardless of whether the new party is led by the present Alliance leader, Stephen Harper, the Tories' Peter MacKay or New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord - the three names most commonly cited.

Under Martin, the Liberals would beat the new Conservative Party 55% to 25% if the Conservatives were led by Harper, 58% to 20% if led by MacKay and 58% to 21% if led by Lord.

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Small wonder that when people were asked who should lead the new Conservative Party, "unsure" (38%) and a "new person" (37%) easily topped Harper (14%) and MacKay (11%).

But despite such daunting numbers, the effort to unite the right must continue for the good of the country and to restore the healthy balance of having both a ruling party and a viable national alternative, which we have not had for 10 years.

Martin is still untested as a prime minister. He has raised expectations so high that whatever he does as PM is bound to disillusion some. When that happens, attention will at least begin to focus on the 10 years of political baggage his party has been burdened with in government.

Finally, the SES/Sun Media poll found that despite the strong Liberal numbers, even many of their own supporters are hungry for change, a fact that should be "of concern" to the Grits.

Indeed, the survey found a startling 40% of committed Liberal voters would consider voting for a new Conservative party once it becomes a reality and they see how it performs. Smart Liberals will be worried by that number. Smart Conservatives will take hope from it.

LETTER OF THE DAY

THE TORONTO firefighters are pretty much used to Sue-Ann Levy poking sticks at us, but her Nov. 11 column cannot be left unchallenged. Sue-Ann says the "powerful and greedy" Firefighters Union will now be demanding IOUs of David Miller.

Describing firefighters as "greedy" is disturbing, to say the least. Firefighters, on their own time, raise over \$400,000 per year for local charities. This is a tradition we support and encourage with our new recruits.

Although many contractual issues have plagued firefighters in the six years since amalgamation, our dedication to public service has remained constant. Public issues raised by firefighters continue to be about declining levels of fire protection, not contractual issues. These safety concerns have been echoed by the Fire Underwriters Reports and Coroners Jury Recommendations. Our contractual issues, while taking a toll on

the morale of firefighters, are forgotten the minute the fire hall doors open and the rigs roll out. Powerful, or professional?

While many in the media have commented on the Fire Fighters Association endorsing the candidacy of David Miller, no one from any media outlet, including the Sun, contacted us to ask us why.

David Miller has integrity, he made us no promises. He told us what he would do to restore the neighbourhoods of Toronto. He told us he would work with council to improve the level of fire protection and improve labour relations. Miller explained that fiscal restraint and good labour relations can and should go hand in hand.

Our decision to endorse David Miller had nothing to do with "power and greed." It had to do with restoring the pride this city used to have in itself, its employees and its services. In the end, we simply believed David Miller was the guy who could get it done.

Scott Marks

President

Toronto Professional Fire Fighters Association

(Fair enough. We look forward, along with Sue-Ann, to the modest wage demands, perhaps even a wage freeze, your union will be agreeing to in order to help Miller get us out of the \$344-million fiscal hole property taxpayers are now in)

LETTERS

JUST A quick note for our new mayor. As a homeowner in Toronto, my primary concern has become the homeless. If my property taxes go up one more time, I will be joining them.

C.A. Winkler

Etobicoke

(You'll be lucky if they go up just "one more time")

JEAN CHRETIEN'S legacy can be seen in the editorial cartoons of Andy Donato and his fellow cartoonists across Canada. Jean will not be missed. I just hope Paul Martin has a BIG hook and

gets rid of all the puppet cabinet ministers. There may be one keeper, John Manley. The arrogance that has been displayed by the likes of Copps, Collenette, Caplan etc. must end. The wine will flow the day Jean checks out.

Robert W. Ferguson

Markham

(Won't be missed? You kidding us? Cartoonists like Donato, Dewar and Dolighan are going to miss him like crazy!)

I WAS totally shocked when I read your Nov. 13 poll which showed so many Canadians were unable to recall or remember any memorable accomplishment by Jean Chretien as prime minister. As I look back over the past 10 years, I think Chretien's greatest achievement, his finest moment, was when he announced his retirement. The only other achievement that will surpass that is when he finally does retire. Yes indeed, Jean, it's time to move on.

James D. Lush

London, Ont.

(Don't let the doorknob hit ya)

HAS ANYONE else noticed that as Jean Chretien's retirement nears, our dollar seems to be going up? Hmmm ... maybe it's just a coincidence.

Brian Strasbourg

Oshawa

(You think?)

RE IPPERWASH inquiry into the shooting of Dudley George: Can someone please explain why the Ontario Liberal government is pursuing this vendetta against the former Conservative government? Considering Ontario is supposedly facing a \$5.6-billion deficit and this "investigation" will cost taxpayers millions of dollars and waste months of public officials' time, I can see no explanation other than spite. The OPP officer involved in the shooting was charged and convicted in 1997. I'd also be willing to bet 90% of Ontarians really don't care, or probably don't even remember the incident. During the election campaign, Dalton McGuinty said the time for divisive politics and finger-pointing was

over. I guess that's another promise he's already broken.

Derek Ramm

(Actually, the Ipperwash inquiry is one of the few promises he's kept so far)

IN HIS letter of Nov. 13, B.R. West of Mississauga asks the question, "Mississauga is debt free - why can't Toronto clean up its act?" According to West, what Toronto has needed for the past 20 years is: 1) A transit system with surface vehicles only, with unpadded seats and with doors riders have to push to open - not to mention a skeletal route structure; 2) 20% higher residential taxes; 3) A huge tax cash cow like (Toronto) Pearson International Airport. I'm thinking that if Toronto annexed the airport area alone, it would be a world-class city like Mississauga in no time.

Mark Chapel

Toronto

(Would Mayor Hazel be part of the deal?)

IN RESPONSE to the comments made by the newly elected Mayor of Toronto, David Miller, regarding his campaign promise to stop the fixed link to the Island, I quote: "The people of Toronto spoke very clearly ... They gave me an overwhelming mandate." Not so. Scary, isn't it, (for the city's budget and for taxpayers) that our new mayor simply can't do the math? Of course he won the election, but he did not get 50% of the vote, which means there was no "overwhelming mandate." I suggest Mr. Miller might want to reach out to those who didn't vote for him. There are more of us than there are those who did.

Helen Gurlesky

(Actually, he got 44% from a turnout of 39% - or support from 17% of Toronto voters)

I AGREE wholeheartedly with Linda Williamson (Nov. 13). America finally let "the girl next door" go to war and the end result wasn't so apple pie. Though Jessica Lynch is taking up a lot of the spotlight, you have to give her kudos for calling it like it was, a simple wrong turn gone horribly wrong in a war full of wrong turns. If you want a story about the first female combat PoWs, then Shoshana Johnson should be the story, because her story is just as interesting, if not more so than Lynch's. But Johnson isn't "the

girl next door," is she?

Merlin Blackwell

(Lucky for her she's not)

IF THE Toronto Star is so pleased about electing a tax-and-spend mayor and council, when will they be moving their printing operations from Vaughan back to Toronto?

Doug Lippay

Sunderland

(About the same time pigs learn to fly)

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