

Claire Hoy ? It wasn't a Tory disaster

The results are in. And according to most of the mainstream media pundits ? and Liberal and NDP officials ? Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Tories are doomed.

A Sunday Star headline over a column by former Canada Post CEO (among many other top-level jobs) R. Michael Warren, asked: ?Will Stephen Harper take the Tories down with him??

And another story in the rabidly pro-Liberal Star on the recent Liberal byelection win in Tioronto Centre was headlined: ?Trudeaumania good for provincial Grits.?

And so it goes. On and on and on. From coast to coast to coast as they like to say these days.

Total and absolute nonsense, but nonetheless currently widespread among the media/academic/politico elites.

And what ? you may ask ? has brought on this sudden horrid turn of events for Harper and his current majority government?

Well, it's because they did so poorly in the aforementioned four federal byelections last week. So, too, did the NDP under Thomas Mulcair, while the Liberals, under the apparently extraordinary leadership of Justin (The Younger) Trudeau, apparently has Canadians rhapsodizing for the return of his late (largely unlamented) father Pierre who, whatever one thinks of his policies, did indeed take the country by storm some 45 years ago.

So let us look at that, shall we.

The four byelections were held in two solid Liberal ridings ? one in Montreal, the other in Toronto, and two solid Tory ridings, both in Manitoba.

At the end of the night the count was Liberals two wins, Tories two wins.

So how, pray tell, does this status quo result mean the death of Harper and the imminent rise of Trudeau to national hero?

Easy. That is, if you're prepared to ignore the history of both byelections and the use of common sense in analyzing the results.

Indeed, it says here that anything short of a Tory sweep of the four ridings ? which was never, ever in the cards ? would have been greeted by a media anxious to prove that their obsession with the so-called Senate scandal is going to kill the Tories. (That's the ?scandal,? by the way, in which no public money has been misplaced, unlike the Ontario Liberal \$1 billion-plus boondoggle to cancel two generating plants to save their collective butts in the last election. No matter the much-reported police report on the Senate scandal says clearly that Harper wasn't involved, the media doesn't have the room or the patience for that sort of thing.)

But we digress. Back to the ?disastrous? byelections.

Anybody who has ever spent more than 38 seconds covering politics ? or even if you've never covered it ? should know that byelections results are rarely, if ever, indicative of anything other than the results in a particular riding.

While it is true that the Tory vote dropped in all four ridings, the response to that is three-fold: governments generally don't do as well as opposition parties in byelections; the Tories did hold on to both seats; and, most importantly, so what?

It is true that the Liberals won both Toronto Centre and Montreal's Bourassa ridings, both of which have pretty well been Liberal since the Ice Age. Perhaps longer.

It is equally true that the Liberals dramatically cut into the Tory edge in the two Manitoba ridings, coming particularly close in Brandon Souris, another riding that has been solidly Tory since, oh, I don't know, dinosaurs roamed the wild west.

But that had nothing to do with what's going on in Ottawa, and everything to do with the local Tory establishments totally botching the nomination process in the riding, so much so that some life-long Tories ? one of whom was hoping to get the Tory nomination, but then tried to run for the Liberals ? were furious enough to rip up their Tory cards and join the Liberals. Even so, the Tories won, which, in politics ? as in sports and many other areas ? is really the bottom line.

Another thing about byelections. Most voters aren't nearly as engaged in them as they are in general elections, so you can't legitimately compare the two. Indeed, the overall voter turnout in the four ridings was about 35 percent, compared to 61.1 percent in the last national election.

What actually happened last week is that the Liberals won two solid Liberal ridings and the Tories won two solid Tory ridings. The rest, as they say, is nonsense.

