

National affairs by Claire Hoy ? It was indeed, all about him

Throughout the marathon election campaign, Stephen Harper kept insisting ?it's not about me ... it's about the economy.?

Well, as the huge Liberal majority sweep makes clear, it was, indeed, all about him.

From the outset, about one-third of the voters made it clear they were sticking with Harper ? a hard man to like, even though, in my judgment, he was overall a good prime minister ? which left the other two-thirds to duke it out between Justin Trudeau's Liberals and Thomas Mulcair's NDP.

Monday night, when the verdict came it, there was no doubt that many who had been parking with the NDP opted for Trudeau as the best bet to beat Harper.

Like so many Canadian elections, it wasn't as much a question of endorsing the new guy as it was a question of booting out the bad guy.

So here we sit, the Liberals with 184 seats, compared to 99 for the Tories and a paltry 44 for the NDP, a far cry from the 102 they won last time out under the leadership of the late Jack Layton. The so-called ?Orange Wave,? apparently has gone out to sea.

Readers will know that your humble correspondent has never been accused of being sympathetic to the Liberals, particularly to a Trudeau-like Liberal who believes that it makes good economic sense to whip out the automatic cheque-writing machines and flood the nation with government (i.e. your) money.

It was Justin's father Pierre who, despite some noted accomplishments in other areas, actually started us down a long path to enormous debt, a path which dragged us down as a nation for decades after he'd left the scene.

Now, like father, like son, Justin has promised to do exactly the same thing. But then again, he didn't hide his intentions and the public voted for him ? a little over 40 percent of the voters anyway ? so he can't be faulted if indeed he does what he says he would do if elected.

As for Harper, who says it was ?a great honour? to have been prime minister for 10 years ? and no doubt means it ? he has already announced he's stepping down in favour of an interim leader until the party can pick a new leader.

Mulcair, on the other hand, says he'll stay and fight, even though he's in a terribly weak position to actually have much of an impact. The Tories, from where I'm sitting, simply ran a terrible campaign. Trudeau, on the other hand, came out swinging from Day One and never stopped.

Much of the final results were actually determined by the expectations going into the campaign. Because Mulcair had been so effective as Opposition Leader in the Commons ? a forum, insiders tend to forget, witnessed by only a tiny fraction of Canadians ? people expected him to fare well in the debates and the campaign itself.

Harper, a known quantity, was expected to debate well, but 10 years of making new enemies had him behind the eight ball from the outset. His best bet was to hope his two opponents would cancel each other out and he could hold on to a minority. Obviously, that didn't happen.

Which brings us to Trudeau, our new prime minister-in-waiting. He was ? how can we put this? ? a tad flighty at times, musing for example how much he admired the Chinese form of government (a Communist dictatorship yet) and as a result wasn't expected to perform well on the big stage.

But during the first debate ? and during the subsequent ones as well ? it was Trudeau, not Mulcair, who stood out as the obvious choice for the anti-Harper crowd and he is full measure for the historic victory he won.

Trudeau credits his win for his appeal ?to the better angels of our nature.? Nonsense. Politics is a blood sport and has nothing to do with angels, better or otherwise, and everything to do with demonizing your opponent, something Trudeau did very well while at the same time claiming to be positive about is negativity.

There's an arrogance about Liberals and their supporters that you do not find among most Tories and New Democrats, the feeling that Canada isn't really Canada unless the government is doing the things that they believe it should do.

Well, it's their turn again, and for those of us of a certain age who have seen it all before, no doubt their day, too, will come and no doubt whatever they do we'll survive as one of the best places on earth to live.

