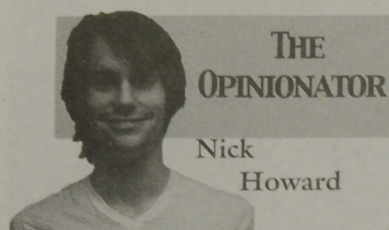


brunswickan opinion

The lesser of two federal evils



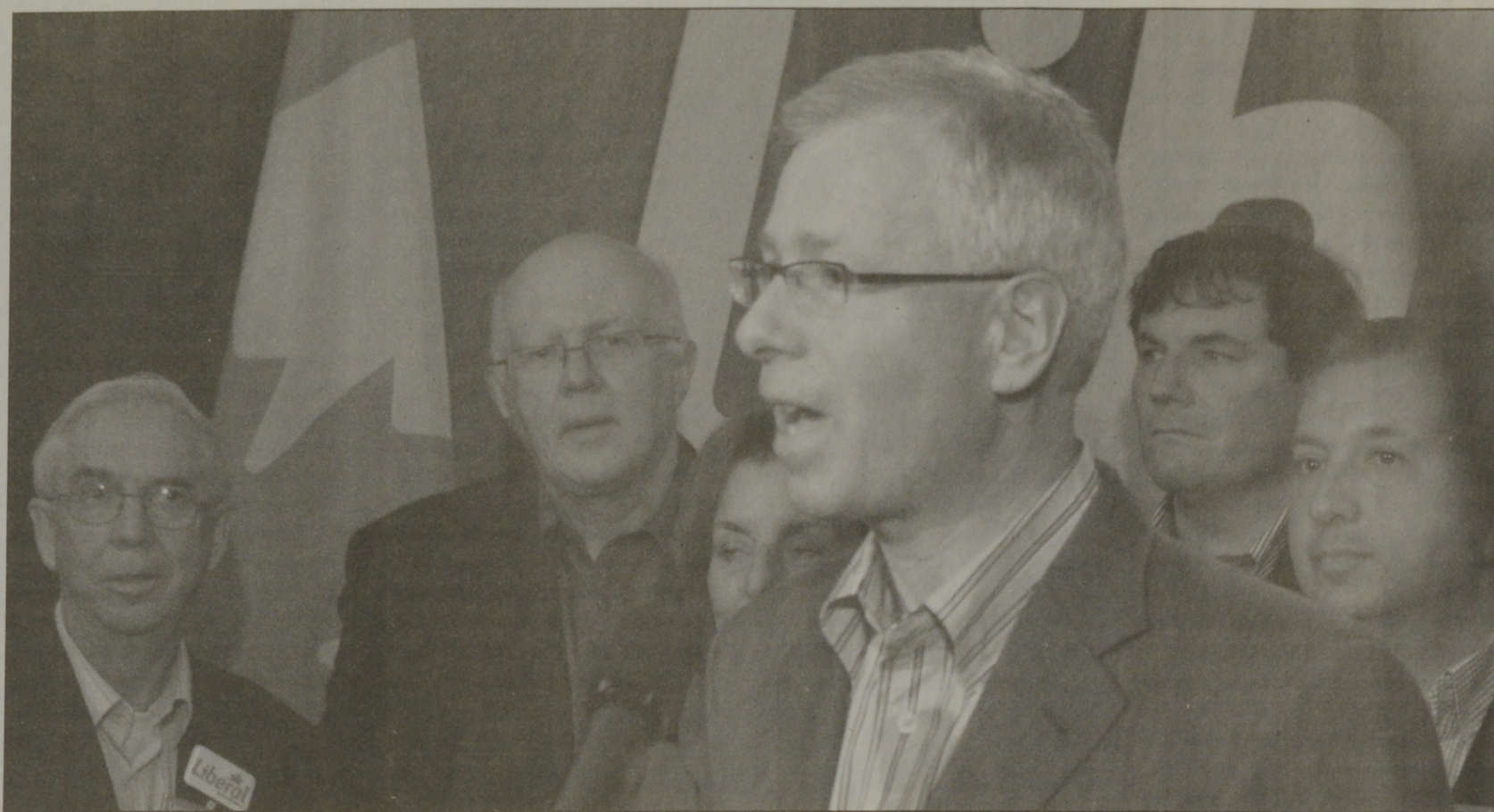
THE
OPINIONATOR
Nick
Howard

Canadian politics just became exciting. Questions about the Liberal Party's future have hung in the air since the most recent election. With \$3 million in debt and continued egotistical bickering over the party's leadership vacancy, the Liberals are as far from power as they have ever been.

Or so it seemed, until help arrived in the ironic form of Stephen Harper's pathological obsession with stabbing the Liberals in the back while they're down. But not to worry, the Bloc and NDP are there to help. The irony of "Canada's party" being helped to power by the mustachioed leader of Canada's background noise is just as rich.

This is a Shakespeare-quality drama: the underlings unify to topple the obsessive dictator bent on destruction. Unfortunately, Shakespeare didn't write many happy endings, which leaves this Canadian political drama ending in a question mark for now. Do they bicker and split, or do they keep it together for the sake of the children, making every decision laborious? Either way, it's more like TV than Canadian politics has ever been.

Canada doesn't exactly have a history of coalition governments, which is what we would have if Monday's proposed Liberal-NDP coalition agreement comes to fruition. In fact, the last one at the federal level was in 1917 in Robert Borden's government, brought on by a parliamentary drive for conscription. The choice ultimately



Stéphane Dion, federal Liberal Party leader, is being tapped to lead a potential Liberal-NDP coalition that, if approved by Governor General Michaëlle Jean, could oust Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government from power. Dion is shown during a whirlwind stop in Fredericton in October.

comes down to the Governor General, Michaëlle Jean.

If the Liberals table the non-confidence motion they wrote last Friday, the decision would be left to Jean whether to send Canada back to the polls or to give the Liberal-NDP coalition a chance. Just 48 days after an election, my bets are on the coalition; elections are large, expensive beasts and four in as many years is getting a bit ridiculous. As undemocratic as it might be, the Dion's Liberals and Layton's NDP trying to run a country together would be entertaining, if not efficient. I'm always up for a change, and Canadian politics could use a little shaking-up.

But how did we get here? The lack of an economic stimulus package was just the straw on Dion's back. I'd say that the Conservatives were playing it smart by holding off on bailouts. No, it was Harper's addition to Liberal blood that has carried us to this exciting and crucial point in Canadian governance. His latest strategy in this obsession however, has caused a backlash from other parties that Harper didn't anticipate. The removal of government funding for political parties (\$1.75 per vote), though aimed at speeding Liberal death throes, has escalated the already confrontation-laden house into an us versus them war.

What does it mean? Such a huge

change in the governance of our country obviously has many possible ramifications. A coalition means less diversification of opinion in the House – something that, without representative voting, Canada lacks in the first place. Of course, this doesn't mean that decisions will be made faster either, since bickering between the NDP and Liberals is a given.

However, it does mean another chance for Canada's centre-left. Some time in power might offer this side of Canada's spectrum a jump-start. This country could use an infusion of liberal idealism; if for no other reason than to stop the Conservatives from implementing policies which, for example, remove the rights for Civil

Servants to strike.

As always, it is a choice between the lesser of two evils. The ramifications of an inefficient coalition government are certainly serious. However, I don't think they outweigh frightening prospect of a four year, ultra-conservative (in Canadian terms) Conservative rule. Now, the only question that remains: what would one call the new centre-left union? My vote is for the New Libocratic Party.

The Opinionator is a weekly opinion column by UNB student Nick Howard, presenting a no-holds-barred approach to current events or anything that smacks of unquestioned perspective. He can be reached at nphowarri@gmail.com.

Discussion needed for the UNB woodlot

KERRI KRAWEC

SUBMITTED TO THE BRUNS

When I started to write a UNB Woodlot-focused series of articles for the Brunswickan, I began with the belief that information or knowledge could change a person's mind, and thereby change their actions (assuming that thought precedes action, which unfortunately is not always the case). The reasoning behind the articles went something like this: a thing has to be known before it can be valued; a known thing assumes value relative to an individual; the value ascribed by an individual is affected by their perception of a thing's use value

or exchange value. Following that reasoning out, I thought that by sharing information about the Woodlot and the people who use it, students would know more about the consequences of development and would share my concerns.

I am aware that no amount of preaching or cajoling can make a person care about the Woodlot, but I do think that information ought to be shared in order for an individual to make an informed decision. I know it's a tough time of year to get students thinking about something other than papers and exams, but I would urge you to consider a few questions with respect to UNB's development of the Woodlot: what are the ecological implications of the development

of the Woodlot? Will eco-system services such as air filtration, microclimate regulation, and noise reduction be adversely affected by development? And if so, do the benefits of development outweigh the consequences? Are the long-term interests of Fredericton better served by job creation now, or by providing a nature reserve and protected forest for future generations?

While I enjoy the thought that my articles have impacted your awareness, I am not so disillusioned as to think that I can do anything on my own. One person writing an article doesn't make a difference, but many people can. Creative solutions can be found, but it takes people to care about it enough to talk about it, and collaborate, and do

something. I know that I'm not the only person who is concerned about the Woodlot. The Woodlot has been mentioned in every one of my classes this term, either by professors or other students; "Save the Woodlot" signs are displayed in unlikely places; people were receptive to the pancake/Woodlot activism on campus recently.

History is rife with examples of individuals whose consciousness was raised concerning an issue that affected them, and who collectively met to address the issue. Though the analogy between political movements and environmental movements is imperfect, what fascinates me about both are the conditions under which people feel personally compelled to do

something. What would it take for you to pen a letter, write an article, make a sign, or engage in some other expression of independent thought? The thing with "activism" though, is that it's active. Activism isn't just about signs and protests (although those tools have their place); however it does require thinking and doing. Even though I can share my reasons for caring, they may not be the same as yours, nor should they be. Your own values and interests shape your perception of the Woodlot, which is what makes a discussion of this issue so interesting.

The Woodlot development hasn't been presented as a choice, but decisions about the type of development and the limits of growth are ones that

every community has the right to make. This development project affects more than just the University of New Brunswick's budgetary needs; it also affects current and future residents of Fredericton. I would encourage you to take some time over the holidays to think about what you expect from UNB, and whether our university is meeting your expectations. Check out the Brunswickan in the New Year for more information on a student-initiated discussion of the Woodlot, and make your voice heard.

This is the final article in a series examining UNB's Woodlot.

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Examinations will begin promptly at the time announced. Candidates should take with them their student ID cards, as identification may be requested. Candidates will not be permitted to leave the examination room until one-half hour of the examination period has expired. Other than normal writing instruments (such as pens, pencils, rulers and erasers), candidates must have the explicit permission of the examiner to use or have access to any examination aid. On completion of the examination, any unused exam booklets are to be left on the desk. Exam booklets used by the candidate should be handed to an invigilator. Candidates are then to leave the room promptly and quietly.

General information on UNB Examinations can be found in the 2008-09 UNB Calendar on pages 35-36 under section V.

Regulations on Deferred examinations can be found in the 2008-09 UNB Calendar on page 37 under Deferred Examinations, section C.

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