

Awkward-Yes; Unholy-No!

re: Tories Launch Anti-Coalition Ad Blitz

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The coalition between the Liberals and the NDP has been called an unholy alliance. Most recently by Preston Manning, who makes this claim because the coalition relies upon an agreement from the Bloc Quebecois to support the coalition on confidence motions for 18 months.

What right does a party have to rule? Convention has allowed the party with the most seats to form a government. When that party has more than 50% percent of the seats, this is usually a straight forward affair. The last two governments have not reached the benchmark.

Stephen Harper formed a government from a party that did not possess a majority. What right does he have to do this? The right is not the right of election, but of the willingness of the House to grant him that privilege. A right they are now poised to take from him.

That they intend to do this does not an unholy alliance make. If it did, then the vote of Conservatives, Bloc Quebecois and NDP that brought down Paul Martin's Liberal government was an unholy alliance. What makes this unholy in Manning's perspective is what this alliance intends to do. Rather than install the Conservatives into power it threatens to demote them.

It has been assumed by many that any alliance that includes the Bloc Quebecois is by definition an unacceptable one. Why must this assumption be accepted? Are not the Members of Parliament that comprise the Bloc Canadian citizens too? Are they not duly elected to the federal Parliament in the same way as Stephen Harper, Jack Layton and Stephan Dion? Do they not represent Canadians in the House?

The Bloc Quebecois, regardless of their particular partisan interests, still have interests for their constituencies that are identical with those of any other Canadian. They too want good government, welfare and justice. They too seek a stable economy and good social infrastructure. They want to see their culture protected and their values represented; values and culture that in most important points are overlapping with that of most other Canadians.

To assume that because as a Party the Bloc Quebecois exists to promote separation that it is some how predisposed to evil and determined to destroy the rest of Canada is wrong headed. In one particular element, that of unity, it differs with Canada. And if the stars were so aligned that to promote the Sovereignty of Quebec might bring about an independent Quebec, they surly would pursue that option. But when that option is far from

the minds of most Quebecers and other needs are more pressing, the Bloc will not be less competent than any other Party at representing what's good for its constituents.

The alliance between the Coalition of Liberals and NDP with the Bloc Quebecois is a *de facto* unholy one. To be sure it is politically embarrassing to have to rely on the Bloc to secure a government, but just because it is embarrassing does not make evil or wrong. The reverse may be the case. What if the failure to form this alliance means that things in Ottawa would continue as they have? Experience and actions up to this point lead us no reason to think otherwise.

Can we honestly think the status quo is better than a cooperative alliance and coalition between normally opposing forces? Can we reasonably suppose that continued brinkmanship and bullying by a belligerent, despotic Prime Minister's office is preferable to an attempt at harmony between the majority of Parliamentarians?

There are advantages of this coalition and alliance that make it a necessary good and a failure to form it a sin of omission. The coalition pledges the parties to focus their attention on making a positive contribution to identifiable conditions. It is known that the economy is trending towards difficult times for Canadians and there is a determination to face that head on. The coalition also pledges the parties to either avoid or compromise on those decidedly partisan elements that only represent fractional constituency.

Another valuable contribution of the alliance with the Bloc is that it amounts to an agreement by the Bloc to support Canada. Drawing their attention away from purely separatist causes establishes a process that rebrands the Bloc as a party that is federal and not just Quebecois in its orientation. It removes the separatist agenda as the *raison d'être* of the Bloc and moves it to that of good and fair representational government.

The Conservative mantra that this is an unholy alliance is itself an unholy mantra because, like so much about what the Conservatives have done in the last several years, it is partisan oriented and deliberately divisive. It attempts to push the Bloc further into a separatist position and force them to stay there. While others are drawing them out of this position and into main stream Canadian politics, Harper and his cronies are seeking to keep Canada divided and on the brink of self destruction.

We will hear over the next few days deceptive attacks by the Conservatives about how dangerous this alliance will be for Canadians. They will attempt to brand and define each party negatively, falsely caricaturing their positions and policies and contrasting them with each other to suggest that the alliance is itself inherently fractious. Some of what they say will be true. They are distinct parties with very distinct and purposes. It is the Devil, however, who take truths and constructs lies from them. Distinction and difference does not necessitate animosity and fractious relationships. That's only true when intolerance and arrogant fundamentalism are inherent character traits.

Ironically, the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc, despite the occasional bitterness in their differences, do not have this inherent character of intolerance and fundamentalism in above average abundance. The only party that possesses these in excess is the Conservative Party of Canada. Since these are recognized flaws, make for bad government and a dysfunctional Parliament, aligning together to oppose this must be good for Canada.

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