

"FEDERAL ELECTION 2011"

Thursday, April 7, 2011

After years of governing as if he had majority rule, Stephen Harper is taking a gamble that he can come out of the 2011 election with a real majority. The election was sparked by a motion of non-confidence in a regime whose actions were found to be in contempt of Parliament. This is the first time in history that a government has suffered such a disgrace, but the Conservatives have responded by ramping up their aggressive campaigning and spin doctoring.

The Tory record is disgraceful in many more ways than Minister Bev Oda lying to Parliament or the Tories refusing to provide the costs of programs. Secret deals on trade and continental integration with the U.S., betrayal of seniors by scuttling the expansion of Canada Pension Plan, turning its back on the unemployed while many could not get EI... the list goes on. The blind obedience to the interests of big oil has distorted our economy and undermined manufacturing, while senseless tax cuts worsen the deficit. On the world stage, Canada is seen as a rogue nation on the crucial issues of climate change.

The Canadian Labour Congress has laid out its "Better Choices" campaign, highlighting four key issues for this election. They are: Jobs, Healthcare, Pensions and Childcare.

In asking working people use these four issues to decide on their election choices, the labour movement is hoping to cut through the spin from the parties of big business and provide a guide to what truly matters in the next four years. Affiliates are being asked to circulate the Better Choices material throughout their entire memberships, an important step in political education at a time when the airwaves are saturated with ads trying to shape the ballot question in a different way.

Labour has two goals in this election. One is to block a Harper majority, the other is to elect as many solidly pro-labour members to Parliament as possible, so we have people there who will champion our issues every day. Looking back at the history of this country, it is clear that a strong NDP role can make a tremendous difference in the political outcome. When the NDP has held the balance of power, real change happens - whether it is public healthcare, labour law, social policy or funding of key programs.

On the other hand, a glance south of the border shows how limited politics becomes when the only options are two parties of big business.

So it is crucial that labour activists get involved in this election, volunteering in local campaigns and speaking out in the workplace about the real issues at stake in 2011. We can't forget that many working people voted for Rob Ford, and the Tories are hoping to keep riding that wave to capture a number of new seats in greater Toronto. Only a strong determined effort to explain the real issues will keep people from falling for more of the right-wing rhetoric.

The Executive Board recommends that:

1. Affiliates utilize the CLC Better Choices material within their memberships to help provide a reference point for election discussions.
2. Union activists get involved in local campaigns to help elect as many NDP MP's as possible to Parliament.
3. Affiliates expose the true Harper agenda in a variety of ways that educates their members about the danger it poses to workers, Canadian sovereignty and social justice.