

Harper checkmated?

By [David Orchard](#)

Region: [Canada](#)

Global Research, December 09, 2008

9 December 2008

At the Prime Minister's request, the newly minted 40th parliament of Canada has been prorogued, closed until January 26th, creating a situation unprecedented in Canadian history — a government has avoided defeat by dismissing the nation's lawmakers.

Over the next seven weeks, we will see a wave of propaganda and mobilization, amply funded, from the Conservative Party attacking the opposition leaders. This spending will take place outside the election writ period and thus, like the attacks on Liberal leader Stéphane Dion over the past two years, will be subject to no spending limits whatsoever.

At the end of January, on the date that he has chosen, Mr. Harper will meet Parliament and present a budget.

If his budget and/or throne speech fail to pass the House, Mr. Harper will seek — perhaps successfully — to dissolve parliament and go to a general election. He will have the momentum of seven weeks of wall-to-wall campaigning, without bothersome election spending restrictions, at his back.

If the Conservatives receive a couple of percentage points more of the vote (or if, for example, the Green Party takes one or two percentage points more), Mr. Harper may well receive the majority he has been desperately seeking.

With a majority, Mr. Harper will be able to move rapidly to do many of the things he has been restrained from doing so far — whether this means emasculating the opposition parties by removing democratic, proportional, public funding, completing the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board, or undermining Aboriginal and women's rights.

If the Liberals and the NDP enter the next election competing against each other as usual — something Mr. Harper is counting on — they will divide once again the votes of progressive Canadians (the majority) and may well leave themselves, and our democracy, badly damaged.

One thing Mr. Harper may not have counted on is that, instead of falling apart, the coalition may solidify and take the initiative.

This could happen if the NDP and the Liberals (and, hopefully, the Greens as well) make a concrete agreement not to run against each other in any riding in the country.

If the opposition parties took this step, they could win a solid majority of the seats in the election Mr. Harper is hoping to take the country into shortly.

A clear agreement not to run against each other, made ahead of the election, would also have a salutary effect on Mr. Harper's actions in the House of Commons and may well cool his ardour for another election.

Professor John Ryan of Winnipeg has written a paper, "Canada needs a Liberal-NDP-Green coalition," in which he asks, how is it that a little more than a third of the voting electorate can decide who forms our government?

Proportional representation would give Canada a more representative government than our current first-past-the-post voting system, but in the meantime the opposition parties have the power to stop Mr. Harper and create a more democratic Parliament.

By forming an electoral coalition, in which the Liberals, NDP and Greens maintain their distinctive identities, but agree not to run against each other, Professor Ryan estimates the coalition could end up with almost twice as many seats as the Conservatives, and the will of the population would be much more accurately reflected in the House of Commons.

Last election saw a record number of Canadians abstain from voting. Many people, the young among them, are appalled at a system which regularly elects a prime minister and a governing party that most Canadians have voted against. Some ask, "Why should I waste my vote?"

The coalition formed in the House of Commons this past week has galvanized a great deal of interest and hope for an end to vote splitting on the centre-left.

Cooperation between the Liberals and the NDP in the past has given Canada some of its most progressive legislation, including national medicare, the Canada pension plan, a new flag and the establishment of Petro-Canada.

A Liberal-NDP electoral coalition that would see the Conservatives reduced to winning approximately one third of the seats in the House, i.e. roughly the percentage of their vote nationally, would re-energize all those Canadians who long for a more representative Parliament, one that more accurately reflects their views inside the House of Commons, rather than leaving them outside as a "wasted vote."

David Orchard is an author and fourth-generation farmer. He was the Liberal candidate in Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River in the last election and farms at Borden and Choiceland, Saskatchewan.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [David Orchard](#), Global Research, 2008

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [David Orchard](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca