

Sorry, he's in a meeting - no time to solve problems

TIM POWERS, OCTOBER 2, 2008 AT 6:29 PM EDT

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If there is a person with dilemma today, it's Mr. Dion. If we are to believe party preference polls released earlier - the Nanos and Harris samplings - the Conservatives had 11 and 13 point leads over the Liberal Party. Of course these numbers can change, but to win an election you need to be in front not behind. After one performance in which Mr. Dion had the help of three others and did not fall on his face, the return of Liberal arrogance and bravado might be a little premature, Rob.

While Mr. Dion did prove he could walk and chew gum at the same time last night, admirable skills for anyone hoping to attain the highest office in the land, he was left wanting on the issue of this election - the economy.

Dion's 30-day meeting plan is a weak approach; in fact it is really no approach at all. Meetings for the sake of meetings are a sad excuse for leadership. Clearly, Mr. Dion still can't make priorities. Certainly not surprising since, as someone pointed out to me today, during the entire last month (June) of the parliamentary session, Dion did not ask one question in the House of Commons related to the sub-prime crisis, the credit crunch and/or the stability of financial institutions. The U.S. financial Crisis is a bit of new dawn for him. For the rest of us, the sun has been up for a while.

I'm not sure what post-debate analysis you are reading, Rob, but here is some that might interest you and the readers.

From Jonathan Kay:

Stéphane Dion: nice guy, but with an annoying habit of outsourcing his judgment to others. Last week, this took the form of asking the Canadian Jewish Congress to make the call on whether 9/11 conspiracy theorist Lesley Hughes should be turfed. This week, he took the same approach on the economy...

In fact, it seems Canada's "major economists" have already delivered their pronouncements...It turns out that these Very Smart People have been thinking about these issues for many months - while the chief of the Liberal Party was daydreaming about a carbon tax no one wants.

From Don Martin:

It's arguably the first French debate in Canadian history where the once-invincible Liberals were marginalized to the Quebec sidelines.

In that context and as a rehearsal for his critical performance tonight, Stéphane Dion was underwhelming at times, a faded force of personality dwarfed by the testy exchanges surrounding him. His segment on the environment was strangely weak.

No focus on sweater vests, Super Bad or Perry Cuomo can distract from the Dion leadership deficiencies. Tonight as a member of the gang of four he can pile on again, but standing out from the crowd will still remain his greatest challenge.

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