



Thursday » January
31 » 2008

Stelmach is still a puzzle

The Edmonton Journal

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

Back in the dim pre-history of conservative Alberta -- that is, in the Social Credit 1950s and '60s -- you could watch an American quiz show on television called To Tell The Truth. In a chatty, rather middle-aged format light-years removed from modern reality television, the show's panellists would question three guests claiming to be the same person, and then try to guess which was the genuine article.

In this pre-election week, it seems appropriate to ask To Tell The Truth's signature question about a man who probably also remembers it:

"Would the real Ed Stelmach please stand up?"

As all Albertans will recall, the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville became our leader in part as an antidotal change from Ralph Klein. In his policy choices, he has often seemed bent on being the anti-Ralph, for example when he began a royalty review Klein rejected, when he talks pointedly about having a plan, and when he begins to reverse the rather negative attitude his predecessor's regime seemed to have towards arts and culture.

And then this anti-Klein goes to a premiers summit in Vancouver and channels vintage Ralph like an impressionist, playing the grumpy odd-man-out, rejecting the others' interest in a more aggressive climate change strategy, and leaving the two-day session a day early.

Not so very long ago, our new premier was adopting a national leadership posture on the issue, with a series of initiatives that set targets for greenhouse emissions and penalties (in effect a carbon tax) of \$12 a tonne for failure to meet them.

But now, the motto seems to be "Doing Even Less Than Stephen Harper," as a result of which the tiresome and rather bizarre spectre of a federal-provincial spat with a Calgary-heavy Conservative government in Ottawa is rearing its head.

No doubt Stelmach believes his wagon-circling, go-slow message is what Albertans want to hear. Which brings us back to the To Tell The Truth question. In repeated surveys of Albertans values and attitudes, concern for the environment ranks extremely high. Just as the real Stelmach needs to stand up in the coming weeks, therefore, so perhaps do Albertans.

If Monday's bad-boy-Ralph posture on climate change is a reflection of the true Ed, Albertans will have to decide, at the ballot box, whether Stelmach and his Conservatives are still an accurate reflection of them.

© The Edmonton Journal 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.