

Local boy makes good

...but with what consequences for the nation?



If all goes well for Stockwell Day, he'll win a federal seat in the B.C. riding of Okanagan-Coquihalla, and take his place as Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons for the opening of session on September 18. And if things go really well for him, it's conceivable that he'll one day be Prime Minister. What might this mean for Canada?

He's called the "darling of the American media." A story in the *Washington Times* says, "for American conservatives, the good news about Mr. Day is his platform: a 17 per cent flat tax on incomes, reducing the size of government, a cut in the capital gains tax, promoting family values, tougher anti-crime legislation, national referendum on abortion and other morally sensitive issues."

Day says Canadians don't feel safe on their streets. He takes a tough and punitive stand on crime and offenders. This issue alone makes him very popular with the coffee shop crowd in Keremeos. For some there is never enough punishment. But law and order issues are easy politics.

In fact there is no crime wave. Even the *Calgary Herald* in a July 16 article by David Heyman reports that crime is dropping significantly in the city. Retribution and revenge are not justice. Day says offenders as young as 14 should be tried in adult court. Children are not little adults. They are immature young persons in their formative years. They may know right from wrong, but have no sense of the consequences of wrongdoing, and have a very different sense of time. See Sandy Kalef's "Hard Times for Youth Crime," page 28. Most young offenders in custody have backgrounds in child protection or welfare, which may reveal more about the inadequacy of society's response to neglect

and children at risk. The Canadian Criminal Justice Association states, "Let us not follow the path of appeasing popular misconceptions but rather the higher road of principles."

And of course Day is the architect of the flat tax in Alberta. When asked by *Alberta Venture* magazine to name his most important accomplishment he said, "Introducing Alberta's single rate tax, the first in North America."

It's difficult to understand why the grassroots find a flat tax so appealing. Fully 85 per cent of the taxpayers in Alberta have taxable income under \$50,000 per year. With a flat tax the group earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000 will carry the heavier burden and the rich will carry a lighter one. See Greg Flanagan's "Shifting the Burden," page 21.

What concept of social justice is this? Here's Day's justification: "Albertans will be the first Canadians who will be able to work overtime or become upwardly mobile or work harder without being punished with a greater tax rate." Is hard work the only variable in determining how much money a person makes? Do 85 per cent of Alberta taxpayers not work hard enough? Do the rich work harder than the poor? A large proportion of the wealth of the rich comes from investments. Is it very hard work watching the price of your shares go up? The working person's paycheque is taxed on 100 percent of every dollar earned while money made from the sale of stock (capital gains) is now taxed on 67 cents for every dollar earned.

Please give us your feedback. What issues concern you most? How can we be more useful and interesting? Clip the Reader Survey and fax or mail it to us. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jackie Flanagan