

### **Lest We Forget: Social Conservatism vs LGBT Rights**

#### 60 Reasons to dump Harper

By Marcus McCann

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**(A short selection from the 60 and more Reasons to dump Harper)**

#### **ANTI-GAY LAWYER PROMOTED TO COURT OF APPEAL**

In September 2007, the Prime Minister appointed David Brown to the Ontario Superior Court in the Toronto area. Brown represented anti-gay and anti-abortion views in a handful of court cases and wrote legal documents on the "sanctity of life." Freedom of choice groups were understandably miffed.

Just because the next Supreme Court judge isn't set to retire until 2013, doesn't mean that Harper can't wreak havoc on the provincial appeal courts. Enough appointments like Brown and Canada's equality battles could indeed be in jeopardy.

#### **HILL JOB FOR FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PREZ: REDUX**

Darrel Reid's was first appointed to Rona Ambrose's office. He only lasted four months. But what's much scarier is Reid's promotion: he moved to the PMO acting as the prime minister's deputy director of policy and research.

Reid headed up Focus on The Family Canada from 1998 to 2004, an ideologically anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti-abortion group with connections to the leaders of the US Christian right.

The prime minister of this country appointed the former leader of a reactionary religious group as his deputy director of policy and research. That's right. It's time to move to Norway.

### **HARPER'S HUMAN RIGHTS ALLERGY**

About a dozen of the tidbits you've read so far highlight his dislike of human rights (especially to gays, women and aboriginals). He even declined to attend celebrations of 25 years of Canada's Charter.

Human rights talk really upsets social conservatives. It's hard to tell which part of the basic dignity of a human life they find so displeasing — equality for one, duh — but that allergy is one Harper has internalized, not just in his domestic policies but on the international stage too.

### **HARPER SNUBS TORONTO AIDS CONFERENCE**

"Sleep in, Steve?" became the rallying cry for the 20,000 activists, scientists and politicians who descended on Toronto Aug 13, 2006. The event was the largest AIDS conference ever held, and participants were demanding major contributions under the banner "Time to deliver."

The fallout of Stephen Harper's absence snowballed after the event's co-chair Dr Mark Wainberg gave the PM a verbal spanking during opening ceremonies. The same day, Dr Stephen Lewis did a round of national TV interviews where he called Harper's decision "a mistake" and "a slap in the face."

A few months later, a sheepish Harper announced a \$111-million initiative to find an AIDS vaccine, an announcement he made in a photo op with billionaire Bill Gates, and was left defending himself against allegations he was vote-buying.

It was a chilling reminder of the ways Harper is living in his ideological head. It was a reminder of his refusal to deal with people in their everyday lives, his aversion to issues related to sex and drugs, and his lack of compassion.

### **HARPER ALWAYS VOTES AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE**

Sep 16, 2003: Harper votes in favour of a motion asking Parliament to do everything it can to preserve the one-man-one-woman definition of marriage.

Apr 12, 2005: Harper tried to amend equal marriage Bill C-38 to define marriage as between one man and one woman, while allowing gays civil unions.

May 4, 2005: Harper votes against Bill C-38 at second reading

Jun 25, 2005: Harper votes against Bill C-38 at third reading

Dec 7, 2006: Harper votes to "re-open" the equal marriage debates

He lost all five of these votes. His backward views on gay marriage come from a religious belief in the "traditional" and "natural"-ness of opposite sex nuptials, according to his Parliamentary speeches on the subject.

The staff at Xtra.ca aren't too hung up on gay marriage. As lesbian literary icon Jane Rule says, "I'm not against people marrying if they want to, but I just wish they didn't want to."

Still, the consistent opposition we have faced from Harper on this issue is indicative of terrifying pattern of rejection of gay and lesbian issues.

### **HARPER NIXES CHARTER CHALLENGE CASH, LEAVING ACCESS TO THE RICH**

Money from the Court Challenges Program helped the queer community win equal marriage rights through the courts in BC, Ontario, and Quebec. When government sent questions to the Supreme Court in 2004, EGALE was there to help make the legal case that gay and lesbian marriage was a charter issue — with the help of the Court Challenges Program money.

The rationale behind the Court Challenges Program goes something like this: we have a Charter of Rights in Canada. It protects Canadians from having their basic human rights infringed upon by the government. But how can you even entertain the idea of equal treatment unless you have a big bank account to take the issue to court?

Because Charter challenges affect whole communities, it was thought worthwhile for the government to help cover the costs of some challenges. Canada's minority communities — women, queers, aboriginals, people with disabilities — stood to gain the most from the program.

### **Ablonczy spanked for giving funds to Toronto Pride**

By Karen X Tulchinsky

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What do the Calgary Stampede, the Cloverdale Rodeo and Toronto Pride Week have in common?

### Union Position vs. Conservative Position

#### Statement 1:

Union position:

I am opposed to attempts to weaken unions by imposing onerous reporting requirements or eliminating the Rand formula.

Conservative position:

*Pierre Polivère is the lead Conservative attacking the Rand formula for the Harper government.*

*He calls it “workers freedom”, legislation that would give federal workers the option of paying union dues and joining their colleagues in a work stoppage.*

*“I am going to work with cabinet and caucus colleagues to build support. Over time I believe I can convince people of its merits. And hope springs eternal that one day we will have free choice for workers in Canada.”*

*Polivère doesn’t buy the idea that collective bargaining and trade unions are somehow in the Canadian DNA and he believes workers’ freedom mirrors individual freedom as a deeply ingrained Canadian trait.*

(from an article by Tim Harper, in “thespec.com”, “Pierre Polivère wants to bring right-to-work legislation to Canada”, August 14, 2013).

### **Statement 2:**

Union position:

I think unions still have an important role to play.

Conservative position:

“This isn’t the early 1900s: Most unionized workers are not toiling in collapsing coal mines, or living in leaky company housing, or suffering any more than non-unionized workers are. Yet union jobs command an estimated 7.7% premium, even after controlling for employee and workplace characteristics. According to Statistics Canada, in 2010 the average unionized full-time worker pulled in \$26.71 per hour, vs. \$22.71 for his or her non-union counterparts.” (From the National Post, 12/05/03; article by Tasha Kheiriddin)

### **Statement 3:**

#### Union position:

I think the Canadian government should take a stand defending glbt rights internationally.

#### Conservative position:

In response to John Baird's critique of Russia's anti-gay legislation, the vice-president of REAL Women of Canada, Gwendolyn Landolt, said in a statement that Baird's actions are "highly offensive" to conservative taxpayers. (REAL Women is a right-wing, pro-Harper Conservative anti-feminist organization, which campaigns against same-sex marriage and glbt rights,)

"Just who does John Baird think he is?" asks Landolt while accusing Baird of using taxpayers' money to "promote his own personal agenda and endeavouring to set standards of the laws of foreign countries."

She also says that while Baird argues that "homosexual rights are a 'Canadian value,' this applies only to himself and his fellow activists and the left-wing elitists."

She adds that these are "not conservative values and that of grass roots Canadians."

(REAL (so called) Women. Canadian Press, August 8, 2013)

### **Statement 4:**

Union position:

I support public services.

Conservative position:

“I believe that all taxes are bad” (Steven Harper, CTV.ca news, December 2005)