

Joe Clark says he'd choose Martin over Harper



Joe Clark

CTV.ca News Staff

Updated: Mon. Apr. 26 2004 6:28 AM ET

Former Progressive Conservative leader and onetime Prime Minister Joe Clark says he'd prefer to see Paul Martin, and not current Conservative leader Stephen Harper, win power in the next federal election.

"I would prefer to go with the devil we know," Clark said Sunday in an appearance on CTV's

Question Period, explaining that he is "extremely worried" by Harper's ideological views.

"I am that concerned with the imprint of Stephen Harper, not only what he stood for in the past, but the way he has led this party," Clark said.

"I don't believe that the Harper party can get away with the masquerade that it is the Progressive Conservative party that was broad enough to attract support from a wide cross-section of Canadians."

While his endorsement of Martin and the Liberals was reluctant, Clark's comments were a scathing indictment of the newly-unified right-wing.

His remarks came just one day after another former PC Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, buried the hatchet with Harper and joined him at a party dinner in Moncton, N.B.

On Saturday, Mulroney urged Conservatives to support Harper's bid to return the right to power, saying Harper led a "moderate, successful Conservative party."

But Clark said he continues to doubt that Harper's Conservatives can provide a broad, national alternative.

"I have seen nothing in the Stephen Harper-led party that suggests on human-right issues, environment issues, bilingualism...anything like the governments that either Mr. Mulroney or I led," Clark said.

For his part, Harper told reporters Sunday that he doesn't understand where Clark is coming from.

"We've seen the parties come together," he said, striking a positive note. "I think Conservatives across the country are feeling great about the election.

"I think it's unfortunate for Joe."

Failure on both sides

But in his comments, Clark was almost as unimpressed with the Liberals, saying he sees a "failure" in both parties.

"I don't think, frankly, either one of these so-called national parties merits support," said Clark, who admitted he will help friends from both parties campaign in the next election.

He advised others to do the same - pick the best candidate in the local race, rather than vote along party lines.

Clark said the hard-line Alliance remnants of the party are scuttling efforts to broaden its base.

He pointed to a bill currently before the Senate that would add sexual

orientation to a list of things that people cannot be discriminated against, saying it was being held up by "Stephen Harper's senators."

Clark said he was not interested in crossing the floor to run as a Liberal or in accepting a Senate appointment.

"I am not a Liberal and I am very disappointed in what the Liberal Party has been doing," he said.

"This party has become defined by the people it doesn't want with them," he said. "That again betrays the fundamental nation-building responsibility of national parties."

© **Copyright 2004 Bell Globemedia Inc.**