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The Hill Times, December 8th, 2008
LETTERS

Prime Minister Harper will have to face music, sooner or later

Could a Parliamentary coup d'  tat be underway in Canada? Absolutely. And it would appear that such a plan is being hatched by Stephen Harper. Never in Canadian history has a Prime Minister refused to face a vote of confidence in the House of Commons. Even in the famous "King Byng Thing" of 1926, prime minister Mackenzie King asked for a dissolution of Parliament in the face of a possible motion of censure, not of non-confidence.

The bedrock of Canadian constitutional democracy and Parliamentary procedure is that Canadians elect representatives to a House of Commons. They do not elect a government. They do not elect a Prime Minister. The government of the country is formed in the House, lead by a political leader who can command its confidence. If a Prime Minister loses the confidence of the House of Commons, he has no choice but to resign. The Governor General of Canada can then chose to dissolve Parliament and call an election, or else call on another political leader to see if they can form a coalition.

It is (at least hitherto) unthinkable that a Canadian Prime Minister should attempt to evade constitutional responsibility to the citizens of Canada by threatening to prorogue Parliament to hide from its will. This would be a catastrophic departure from Canadian Parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, and would cause grave damage to the office of the Prime Minister, let alone to the person holding that office and the party he represents. If we value the rule of law, and of democracy in Canada, we must resolutely resist such creeping tyranny. To abandon 150 years of tradition that has respected the rule of law in Canadian society would be a major setback for our country. We must not cave in to the tactics of a bully, desperately seeking to cling to power by any means.

Christopher Majka

Halifax, N.S.

- This power grab in Parliament has all the earmarks of a Third World country. Few voted for Liberal Leader St  phane Dion in the recent election. It's a government for the people—we have already put in our say on the matter.

Lynn Hyde

Richmond, B.C.

