

[This is the alternate version of the letter Hass wrote Governor General Jean at the time of Harper's first prorogue. He opted not to send it and we think he was correct. - Robert Von Stricker-Beresford]

Dear Mrs. Jean,

Though I am only a humble caveman (that is to say, I have no pull with you, or with any politician, and I am member of no powerful lobby group), I can't help but tell you about how angry I am over your ridiculous decision to allow Stephen “Mad with Power” Harper to get away with this shit. He is trying to keep power, that's all he's trying to do. The budget is just a pretext. Of course he is going to come up with one, he has to (at the moment), but he asked you to do this thing, not because he wants to solve the economic crisis, but because he thinks he has the *right* to solve the economic crisis. He is convinced of this supposed right, as can be see by any number of his actions and comments since he first became a party leader. He believes government – well, he – should be able to dictate which duly elected MPs can vote on which bill, as evidenced by his comments about Bloc MPs and their right to vote for or against Gay Marriage (he has since revealed that he believes certain MPs shouldn't be allowed to be members of a government either). He believes that the Prime Minister – well, he – should only have to deal with, and answer questions from, those members of the press that he likes or can use to his advantage. He believes in balanced budgets during recessions, regardless of economic advice – and common sense – to the contrary, because he likes balanced budgets. He has committed to his ideology, and he will stick with it, regardless of circumstances. He passed a law about fixed election terms. Then, when everyone told him now was the time to strike, he called an election to take advantage of the Conservative's supposed favour, even though that turned out to be a little less than they thought. He *broke his own law*. I don't know how to stress this enough. HE BROKE HIS OWN FUCKING LAW. At that point, you should have stood in the way. You did not. Maybe you wanted to keep your job. Maybe you didn't care. I don't know. I can't read your mind. You shouldn't even have this job. We should have an elected GG or a president. But we have you. Apparently you need a lesson in Canadian democracy.

Parliament is the country's lone national democratic institution, in case you forgot. The Senate is not elected. The bureaucrats are not elected. The Judges are not elected. You are definitely not elected. And yet, there you sit, curbing our democracy, working towards who knows what. All of the MPs in parliament were elected by citizens of this country. They were elected just like Mr. Harper, in their ridings. Mr. Harper happens to be the leader of the Conservative party. Further, the Conservative party happened to receive a plurality of seats in the most recent election. By custom, you asked him to form a government. This happened because the Conservatives appeared to have the most right to power. If the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition had existed then, you would have been compelled to ask them. However, this coalition is not a permanent thing, despite what Conservatives and Conservative supporters allege (They allege it is a coup, and it is evident to me that Canadians do not understand the meaning of the word coup...perhaps these Canadians should spend some time in another, more latin, country. I think they wouldn't know what a coup was if it walked up and kicked them in the face. What do we call a real coup then, a super coup? I think many people, Conservatives in particular, would support it. Hey, it might bring "Peace, Order and" harsher prison sentences). The coalition did not exist at the time and so you did not ask its leader to form a government. Alright so far?

The PM had the confidence of parliament despite his lack of a response to the recession. The "response" made sense in some basic way. If they are so determined for balance budgets (who knows why), then cutting a non-essential like federal campaign funding is a good thing. However, the thing about campaign funding is that it helps those lesser parties most. Election always favour the incumbent (unless the incumbent is the PCs of the early 90s) and so cutting federal campaign funding is a direct attack on the opposition parties. If I were a member of the Liberals, NDP or Bloc I would have been very pissed off. The move reeks of opportunism. Harper and Co. were no doubt thinking of doing this before but couldn't find the right time. Then a recession dropped into their laps, aren't they lucky?

Now, maybe the timing of this coalition wasn't that great, given the recession, but timing doesn't make something illegal or improper. Harper didn't appear to be doing much about the recession

anyway, so I guess some people figured they might actually accomplish something good, in addition to being outraged opportunists. We haven't seen this in over eighty years. It is unusual, that is all. It is the majority of the MPs (doesn't matter what parties they are from) deciding to take over the government. This is totally okay. It comes with minority government territory. As a country, we used to fetishize majority governments, so of course this is unusual for us. Now, as much as I personally like elections, I recognize that now is not the time for one. We need leadership. As Governor General, your choice was between acknowledging the numerical and moral superiority of the coalition and calling an election. Given that *even I* don't want an election right now, you were left with one choice.

But then this asshole exceeded his authority (how can he even have authority if he doesn't have the support of parliament, I ask you?) and he “asked” you to prorogue (suspend) parliament to give him enough time. To give him enough time for what? We all knew about the recession in September! Why does he need time in December? Shouldn't he and his party have planned for this already? He needs time to demolish support for the coalition and to repair some of his ridiculous mistakes! That's what he needs time for. But it's worse than a falling leader just buying time, it's much worse. And I guess you don't understand that, because if you did, you would have never prorogued parliament.

By suspending our only democratic institution, we don't have one, duh, until January 26th. But what happens if he comes up to you and says, “Hey Jean, I need more time again!” And then you, because you can, you say, “Sure thing, Steve.” Though outrage and Harper's own desire for a legacy conceivably will prevent this from happening, there is no institutional device to prevent it. You, in your brilliance, removed it. That institutional device was called parliament, you silly goose. You (and the rest of the country) need to take a few politics classes...or something.

So he is avoiding his due, and he could conceivably avoid it in for quite a long time depending on what you and him decide to do in late January. This hadn't even occurred to you? Funny how that works. The only thing you can do now is make absolutely sure that parliament comes back on January 26th. Well, you can do one other thing: you can resign right afterwards. In the meantime all we

can do is hope: hope that Harper isn't as power-mad as I think he is; hope that Harper actually has some kind of response to the recession beyond waiting; hope that the coalition leaders don't back down from what they've started (well, we can also hope that one of these leaders suddenly becomes a great orator out of the blue and gives us one of these “in Heaven's name, Go!” moments that our country sorely lacks). Let's hope you finally do the right thing too, while we're at it.

Sincerely,

R. Nelson Haas