

# Wrestling with election issues - may the best abs win

By tomorrow, the results will be in, and either George W. Bush or Al Gore will be the newest president of the United States.

Currently, opinion polls have Republican candidate Bush either neck-in-neck with or slightly ahead of Democrat Gore.

Since this makes no earthly sense, my guess is Bush is riding high on the fact that he makes the average American feel smart.

Al doesn't. Despite his odd hyperbolic turns and strange personality transformations, one gets the impression that if you sat down with Gore and asked him to speak about policy, he would.

At length. And he might even ask you to respond.

No such fear with Bush. Ask him what he thinks of Zimbabwe and he might just say "Nice place. Touch north of Chicago, right?"

That makes all the Americans, who think 'no, it's SOUTH of Chicago, you putz' feel better.

Which is precisely why Canadians have overwhelmingly opted to support Gore in an opinion poll published recently in the National Post. In our constant quest to one-up the Yanks, it's our way of saying 'nya nya. We're not afraid of Gore's intellect. We're serious folk up here.'



*Gentle persuasion*  
with IRENE GENTLE

Which works fine, as long as some curious American - and no, that isn't an oxymoron — doesn't sneak a peek at our election.

If they did, they'd discover Canadians are on the verge of re-electing a prime minister whose first language is bafflegab, while our second choice appears in immediate danger of speaking in tongues.

Next is NDP leader Alexa McDonough, who says she's speaking for the people, but won't say who, so the rest of us can give them a talking to.

And Conservative candidate Joe Clark would like to speak at all, but since someone demolished his party he has been limited to two just questions in the House. What's worse, it's said he accidentally spent them by muttering 'does anyone see me back here' under his breath. Twice.

During elections, reporters spend much of their time urging the candidates to speak out on issues. We do this partly because it's our job, and partly because it amuses us to see the big guys break out in a sweat.

There's no other compelling reason, though, since the average voter doesn't appear too interested.

Instead, they seem just as game to work themselves into a frenzy over John Turner's blue eyes, Pierre Trudeau's charisma and Stock Day's tank top.

Politicians know this, and so have become adept at brushing off the incisive, nay, brilliant, questions of reporters by asking us to just read their campaign literature.

Some even manage to refrain from tagging the phrase 'you annoying, illiterate jobs' on the end.

Then everyone nods sagely and the politician plants a Stetson on his or her melon and climbs up on a pony for a photo-op.

But don't let it be said that our current crop of candidates haven't done a tango or two with issues.

McDonough, for example, has issues with tax cuts. Clark has issues with the other parties hogging all the votes.

Chretien has issues with the truth and people who wonder aloud if the Red Book, which has shrunk to a Coles Notes version of the original, has GST attached.

And Day has issues with whatever his campaign team tells him to have issues with. Skinny white boy rapper Eminem, for example. Or was that plump chocolate candy M&Ms? If only those guys back there would speak up.

It's one of life's ironies that after years of being convinced of the contrary, there comes a time when a real woman has to admit her mother may be right.

Mine occurred when she observed there's no reason to focus on issues if no one expects politicians to do what they say. So you might as well vote for the guy with the tightest abs, best ads or most decorative offspring.

Or even the guy that makes you feel smart.

So if Bush gets in tonight south of the border, at least we'll know why.



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