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Ottawa*Watch* 208: Grey and Gibson

By Lloyd Mackey

A few years before I wrote this piece, Deb Grey added to her resume, her marriage to Lewis Larson. In retirement, they are living in Parksville on Vancouver Island, where their twin motorcycles (Harleys, I believe) receive substantial exercise.

Sometimes, dogs chase fire engines. Those canines know, for sure, that their chasing the fire engines actually cause the engines to go in the dog-desired direction.

That the drivers of the fire engines believe that they, themselves, have control over the direction taken by their vehicles, has nothing to do with dog-created reality.

So, I might suggest, tongue-in-cheek, that Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff's new "coalition" with the Conservatives is a direct result of last week's Ottawa*Watch* piece, entitled "Power-sharing if necessary ..."

To properly understand my sense of satisfaction in the outcome of the federal budget vote, just consider Ottawa*Watch* to be the dog. That makes the combined and diverse efforts of the governing Conservatives and opposition Liberals to be the Harper/Ignatieff fire engine driver-navigator team.

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With that observation, we will move to a quick look at a couple of events that provide opportunity to spotlight British Columbia's continuing potential to provide some sense of direction for the federal body politic.

This year's Mel Smith Lecture at B.C.'s Trinity Western University is Deb Grey, long-time former Reform/Canadian Alliance MP. Yes, we realize that Grey served an Alberta riding. But she grew up in one of Vancouver's southerly suburbs and took her first two years of university at Trinity Western, when it was a mere junior college.

She is a good choice for the lectureship – the 11th annual, as it happens. The late Mel Smith was a renowned B.C. constitutional specialist who taught at Trinity in his "spare time." Although working his entire career in the provincial public service, his wide perspective on constitutional matters served the national scene more effectively than most people realize.

Grey, for her part, will speak to the topic of "Power, Parliament and Preston Manning."

The lecture takes place at Trinity Western on Thursday, February 5. I hope, in the next week or two, to provide a summary of her comments.

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And speaking of Preston Manning, let me take note that the Manning Networking Conference and Exhibition 2009 is set for March 12-14 at the Westin Ottawa.

Manning, of course, will be one of the speakers. But included in the list, as well, is a British Columbian, Gordon Gibson.

In his earlier years, he was well-known as a Liberal, both federally and provincially. In fact, he might have become B.C.'s premier, if he had won the leadership of the B.C. Liberal party in the 90s, instead of Gordon Campbell.

In more recent years, he has made his mark as a senior fellow at The Fraser Institute. And he is seen as the author and designer of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, which has shaped – and continues to shape – the course of democratic reform in the west coast province.

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As with Grey, I hope to provide some of Gibson's comments for *OttawaWatch* consideration, when the time comes.

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