

Premier Narcissus?

Until last Friday, the provincial election plodded along and was, essentially, much ado about nothing.

The Premier, content to provide painfully obvious rehearsed baffle-gab, and Carole James, in a kerchief of incompetence, were serving the public with one of the singularly most impressive snoregasmis in B.C. electoral history.

Well, what a difference a week makes.

Carole James may have finally located sure footing with some crisp messaging about the economy and a brilliant dissection of the obscenely ridiculous and entirely ineffective carbon tax, while Gordon Campbell and the B.C. Liberals were rocked by four separate candidate controversies that were all handled, almost entirely by the premier himself, in the worst possible manner.

Three involved charges of incredibly careless driving and one had a particular candidate in the "Bible Belt" of the province musing, indelicately, about homosexuals – albeit in an old e-mail, but the reflections were hostile and unsympathetic.

What I found most interesting was the simple-minded manner, which these controversies were dealt with by the Premier.

One, in particular, explains Campbell's pathological narcissism – and how, with two weeks to election day, his cringe-worthy overconfidence could become the Premier's undoing, all by his own hand.

Now disgraced former Solicitor General John van Dongen is a speed demon

like no other MLA. Nine infractions litter his driving record, over a five-year period; the revelations of which likely made Moe Sihota stand and salute.

Van Dongen, at first, was defiant, refusing to relinquish his portfolio, where, chiefly, he is responsible for "public safety".

Think of the condescension, the haughtiness even: The province's top cop



REBEL WITH A CLAUSE

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telling the public that there is one set of rules for him and yet another for the rest of us.

I lost my license when I was young for precisely the same reason as van Dongen. I had a fast car and sped excessively, without pause, like the fool that I was.

There was no special dispensation for me, or, I gather, for any other idiot who has lost his license for such stupidity.

If you do the crime, you must do the time. I needed my car for school, but was forced to make other arrangements (after my father, who will read this and knowingly smile, imposed martial law over my life).

Believe me, I was sorry.

Well, there wasn't anywhere as much contrition in the former minister's original take. He wanted to simply keep his job, clearly because a high-profile resignation by a cabinet minister is certainly not flattering op-

tics for a government running for a third consecutive term.

Enter the Premier: "John has done the right thing by admitting this and I think he doesn't need to resign"

Really Gord?

This was one of the most deplorable statements the premier could have possibly made, particularly since van Dongen was responsible for exactly the department of government that would mete out his punishment.

The NDP's Mike Farnworth, along with Carole James, ceaselessly sledgehammered Campbell and van Dongen throughout the weekend, and with pressure mounting around the premier by top advisors, a resignation.

In consequence, what this episode really makes remarkably manifest is that the election is much closer than you might think (something I have been saying and writing ad nauseam).

Remove the economy as first priority and the premier is vulnerable on all sorts of issues of government failure ranging from education to health care and poverty to crime.

The Liberals ended up on their heels this week and it was the premier, whose camaraderous roar for his colleague, once again, drew attention and agonizingly underscored the frightening arrogance that has become Campbell's calling card.

Then again it's not like van Dongen was caught driving while drunk on martini or Chanel No 5.

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