

Muriel Manning blasts Chretien

1997

JIM CUNNINGHAM
Calgary Herald

Preston Manning's mother is ticked off.

Muriel Manning Monday slammed Prime Minister Jean Chretien for trying to use her deceased husband E.C. Manning to attack her son, the leader of the Reform party.

"Is Mr. Chretien so desperate to defend his position that he has to drum up support from the grave?" she wrote in a letter to the Herald, dated Monday.

Mrs. Manning, who still lives in the northwest Calgary home she and the former Alberta premier E.C. Manning shared before his death last year, was angry over claims made last week by Chretien on the campaign trail.

Searching for a way to respond to Reform television ads warning voters that both the Liberals and Conservatives are part of the national unity problem, Chretien told voters in Hamilton, Ont. that E.C. would not have approved.



MANNING: 'Is Mr. Chretien so desperate ...'

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"I knew his (Preston's) father and he would not be very proud of his son today," the prime minister said, calling the Reform leader's use of the ads "aberrant and incredible."

Mrs. Manning, however, noted that her husband scarcely knew the PM.

"I asked him (E.C.) once what he thought of Mr. Chretien and he replied, 'He's a typical Liberal heeler but I don't know him well enough to go further than that,'" she wrote.

"In the second place, I have heard my husband not once but many times express deep concern that the rest of Canada should have a greater say on the unity issue and not leave it solely to politicians from Quebec."

In a brief interview Monday evening, Mrs. Manning said the letter was the first she had ever sent to a newspaper.

She also said she had talked with her son about it before sending it to the Herald.

"The only thing he did was to calm down my language a little bit," she said.

"It would have been a lot stronger."

Mannings united

The Reform party and my son, Preston, are well able to defend themselves and their positions in the heat of election rhetoric, but my dead husband is not.

Is the prime minister, Mr. Jean Chretien, so desperate to defend his position that he has to drum up support from the grave? He recently stated that he knew the deceased former premier Ernest Manning and was therefore qualified to make the judgment that Mr. Manning would not be very proud of his son. This is because of Reform's defence of the rights of "the rest of Canada."

In the first place, Mr. Ernest Manning scarcely knew Mr. Chretien. I once asked him what he thought of Mr. Chretien and he replied, "He's a typical Liberal heeler but I didn't know him well enough to go further than that."

In the second place, I have heard my husband not once, but many times, express deep concern that "the rest of Canada" should have a greater say on the unity issue and not leave it solely to politicians from Quebec.

So much for Mr. Chretien's familiarity with Mr. Manning and his purporting to represent Mr. Manning's thinking on the subject of national unity.

Mr. Prime Minister, go get your support elsewhere than from the grave.

MURIEL A. MANNING

Calgary.

(Muriel Manning is the widow of former Alberta premier and senator Ernest Manning and mother of Reform party Leader Preston Manning.)

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