

Canada Goes Rogue

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Elizabeth May

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I am frequently asked how I maintain a positive attitude when confronted by Stephen Harper's destructive agenda—dismembering our environmental laws and policies. Honestly, I can respond that most days I am encouraged by the ability of one MP to make a difference. That was not the case last week as, sitting late in the House for votes, news came over my Blackberry that the Cabinet had decided to withdraw from the United Nations Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification (UNCCD). It had the effect of a swift kick in the gut. I had to fight back tears for a day or so ... just like when I read Bill C-38. I felt devastated.

I remember the struggle to develop a treaty to combat drought and encroaching deserts. Canada was one of the few countries in the lead to negotiate the treaty. I was not intimately involved, but I knew people who were. When it was signed in 1994, I was elated. Along with the conventions on climate and biodiversity, the treaty to combat drought addressed a global and pressing concern. It was clearly related to climate change, but was more regionally specific. And, although desertification is not a current threat to Canada, certainly drought is.

There had been no inkling or rumour that Stephen Harper wanted to exit another global environmental law. Given that the only treaty from which Canada has ever withdrawn, since 1867, was Kyoto, the cavalier way in which this news leaked out—posted on a Foreign Affairs website and noticed by Canadian Press— added to the shock. That we gave no notice to the secretariat for the Convention was further evidence of our contempt for both the United Nations and the threat posed by climate induced drought and desertification.

In Question Period the next day, Ralph Goodale posed an excellent question in which he linked other recent Harper administration decisions reducing ...

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