

# CTV NEWS CHANNEL - POWER PLAY WITH TOM CLARK

## Strategy Session

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TOM CLARK: Welcome back to "Power Play", I'm Tom Clark, and I am here with my Friday strategists. Joining me from Toronto is Warren Kinsella Liberal strategist, and here in the foyer of the House of Commons is other side, the other part of Warren Kinsella, Tim Powers Conservative strategist.

Welcome to you both. I want to start off with what happened in the house this week, and, Warren, let me put this to you. It seemed to me that there were a couple of big issues that came along. There was the whole question about the torture of Afghan prisoners by Afghan authorities, the accusation being that people at the top of this government knew all about it while it was going on. There were the 10 percenters. Those are the pamphlets that charged the Liberals with being anti-Semites and this sort of thing. And the whole time that was going on, and this was the first week of the new team, your new team up there with Peter Donolo and the likes, and yet Michael Ignatieff was nowhere in sight. What happened? Did you drop the ball on this one?

WARREN KINSELLA (Liberal Strategist): We never drop the ball. Michael Ignatieff never drops the ball. No. What, look, the House of Commons is an important place, but it's not the only place. And what the new team, the new management under Peter Donolo is going to be doing in the weeks ahead is you're going to be seeing a lot more of Michael Ignatieff on the road. And the guys who have done that in the past very successfully have names like Brian Mulroney, and Jean Chretien, and Stephen Harper, where you get away from Ottawa, you get into regional media markets, you talk to real people, and you craft your message and you get fundraising support and new members and all that good stuff. So that's what's going to be happening the next while and it's going to work.

TIM POWERS (Conservative Strategist): Well I guess it's the Hallmark strategy, you know, absence makes the heart grow fonder, so if you don't see him you love him more. I think that's the strategy my mother uses with me, by the way.

(INAUDIBLE)

POWERS: But it's interesting on the issues, Tom, well, thank you, the two issues though that have been central this week that you just raised are ones that Mr. Ignatieff himself has had trouble with. On the issue of torture generally, not Mr. Colvin's testimony, we all know Mr. Ignatieff in the past has talked about using coercive means. On the issue of Israel, the state of Israel and the Liberal party's relationship with it, we know Mr. Ignatieff, and Warren got upset about this in 2006, said things about war crimes in Qana.

Warren at that time spoke and supported what the CIC said, Canada Israel Committee, in asking Mr. Ignatieff some questions about this. So it's not surprising on these issues that Mr. Ignatieff is not here because he's had trouble with them.

CLARK: Well I got to admit feeling a little bit uncomfortable allowing a discussion to continue on the politics of race and religion which I think is probably not a hallmark of Canadian politics. But, listen, let's deal with the other one, and that is, and, Warren, let me throw this back at you and suggest to you that maybe one of the reasons that you kept Michael Ignatieff out of view is because you're not sure this is a ballot question. You're not sure whether Canadians ultimately are going to say, you know, you didn't treat those Afghan prisoners very well so I'm going to vote against you and I'm going to vote for the Liberals instead. Is that true? Is this not a ballot question?

KINSELLA: I don't know. I mean it's important though. And we've seen in the United States when the Abu Ghraib stories were taking place it became a huge issue politically and for a period of months. I think the mistake that the government made this week, because this is a strategy panel, you know I think what Peter Mackay should have done is what smart guys like Tim were probably advising him to do, which is to say, you know what, this diplomat is well regarded, well respected, we take these allegations seriously and we're going to get to the bottom of it. But instead they're trying to destroy this man personally, who's obviously highly regarded, and they're just trying to do this cover-up thing. So now they've got two problems. They've got a problem where they seem to be indifferent to torture and they seem to be engaged in a comprehensive plan to cover it up.

POWERS: Well never underestimate the ability of my friend to overreach. First of all as you're...

KINSELLA: I'm not dead yet, by the way.

POWERS: No, I know, you're very much alive. I hear that haunting Irish brogue there. But as your journalist said last night, and clearly, very clearly said this is nowhere near Abu Ghraib, and that is not a comparison that should be brought forward. This has nothing to do with any Canadian soldier torturing any Afghan.

CLARK: We all know that.

KINSELLA: Tim, we don't know that.

CLARK: Warren brought it forward.

KINSELLA: We don't know that.

POWERS: Well actually, well, Warren, I think you're getting on dangerous ground here. On the other matter of Mr. Colvin, I think the strategic danger that the Liberals are engaged in is embracing solely Mr. Colvin. Mr. Colvin's character is not being attacked. It's Mr. Colvin's testimony.

KINSELLA: Yes, it is.

(OVERLAPPING SPEAKERS)

KINSELLA: You guys have been trying to defame him on a regular basis.

POWERS: The government has rightly been asking questions about the information that he brought forward, and there's some puzzling questions that haven't been properly answered. Mr. Colvin arguably has demonstrated a lot of courage in coming to speak before a parliamentary committee.

KINSELLA: I agree.

POWERS: Why then did he not take the opportunity to speak to Peter Mackay when he was in the region? Less public, hang on, hang on, hang on, but Warren, Warren, a minute please.

KINSELLA: You're ragging the puck. Come on, let's go.

POWERS: No. Well, Rick Hillier, a man of significant credibility, you're familiar with Rick Hillier.

KINSELLA: Yes. He signed the agreement.

POWERS: Well Rick Hillier, Warren, said, and challenged this man's testimony. Rick Hillier, no longer a member of this government, has spoken on this show and on other shows about some of the challenges he had in Afghanistan, but very clear, very strong in challenging Mr. Colvin's testimony.

KINSELLA: Okay. Great. Alright. You're just trying to run out the clock here. The bottom line is this man testified under oath. He is a respected, highly regarded diplomat who you guys actually just promoted, right? So he's not some wing nut on the fringe. He came forward and testified under oath and described with particularity all sorts of problems that have been verified and backed up by NGOs and other nations, right? When the Liberal government was there, we were handing over detainees to the Americans. When you guys got into office you and Mr. Hillier, quite frankly, signed an agreement to hand over these people to the Afghanistan government. And that seems to have been a mistake, and that's should be examined and not covered up.

POWERS: That's interesting. Interesting how you've sort of forgotten your whole history there. The agreement that is place now is an excellent

agreement. You didn't do anything with that particular agreement. I'd be very careful where you tread on this. This is one man's testimony and it has lots of holes in it.

CLARK: Okay. I got to break it off. There are so many questions left up in the air. Why is a guy who you don't trust still in a position of high authority at our embassy in Washington? Nobody can seem to answer that question sadly but I'm going to have to leave is at that. Gosh I wish I could get into this discussion.

POWERS: Let's keep going.

KINSELLA: I'm still alive, Tom. Tom, I'm checking my pulse. I'm still alive.

CLARK: Warren Kinsella has not been fired Ezra Levant, and I can tell you that. Warren Kinsella, Tim Powers, thanks very much. We're going to be back with Reality Check right after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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