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Adrian MacNair: Canada, unregulated gun zone where women fear for their lives

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NDP leader Jack Layton has had to balance his party's urban and rural supporters.

That the Liberals are fighting to keep the immensely wasteful gun registry alive is no great surprise. They've established themselves as the inner city political party of Canada, with few ridings outside of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. They don't understand much about rural Canada, and care to know even less. They don't see how intrusive it might be for a person to have to register that 100-year-old family heirloom that hangs over the fireplace under penalty of fine and seizure, because they've never had a gun themselves, and they have no idea why somebody would ever need one.

But the NDP are a different breed, particularly as you head north and west of Toronto. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation [CCF] was the predecessor to the NDP, founded in Calgary by socialists, farmers, and co-operative labour organizations during the Depression. The main purpose of the CCF was to help farmers and labourers survive the great depression by pushing labour laws and forming co-operatives. Many of the people who originally supported the CCF were rural citizens, hunters and farmers who lived off the land.

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Though the NDP is a far cry from the CCF, it still has strong support in northern Ontario and Manitoba, and areas where owning a hunting rifle is as common as driving without a license by the age of 12. The reason that NDP leader Jack Layton, a city dweller, can't whip the vote on supporting the gun registry when Parliament reconvenes next month, is that there are plenty of constituents in NDP ridings who won't be too pleased with the decision. Nor would many of his own MP's be happy about being forced to choose between party and conscience.

That doesn't mean the NDP want to be painted into a corner by Michael Ignatieff and the Liberals, who are busy trying to embarrass them by suggesting they're jumping into bed with the Harper Conservatives. So you can expect a lot of tough talk from NDP MPs who support axing the gun registry over the next little while, just to properly distance themselves from Stephen Harper.

The NDP also have to properly balance their CCF northern-prairie roots with the now more traditional urban inner city voter. They don't want to come across as dismantling something that is perceived to help with law enforcement, as Heather Mallick rather disingenuously suggests in her [latest op-ed in the Toronto Star](#).

Writing that the NDP will help turn Canada into an "unregulated gun zone", Ms. Mallick contends that Jack Layton will be responsible for the women who die at the hands of their violent husbands if the registry vanishes. The registration forms for handguns, she contends, are designed to guard against men who buy guns after a divorce to seek retribution.

"What is the NDP saying then? Have a go?"

What is Heather saying? That only the gun registry stands between deranged husbands and murder? Blunt trauma weapons won't

work? Sharp pointy objects? Ropes? Deep water?

Let's face it. The gun registry is a mainly pointless government program that doesn't catch actual murderers, criminals, or organized crime. Men who kill their wives with registered weapons will still kill their wives without a gun registry. It isn't the gun registry that's keeping women alive.

Heather Mallick should talk to fellow [Toronto Star writer Joe Fiorito](#) about the relative usefulness of the registry, and how the police spend their time cracking down on single-barrel .20 gauge shotguns from 1960. So should Jack Layton and Michael Ignatieff for that matter.

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Adrian MacNair is a Vancouver writer and blogger. Read more [here](#).

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