

POLITICS AS USUAL: One Hit Wonders

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

As I watch the unseemly circus act underway in the States, I think to myself, how on earth did they get to that point? It isn't just the current President that's at issue, though he is at the centre of the current maelstrom of insanity. There's been a sharp turn towards issue driven politics for years now. So you can't lay it all at the feet of one person.

Folks get involved in politics for many reasons. Most of them ? but clearly not all of them - if not noble reasons then at least for good intentions

Many want to serve the public, do good for their communities. Others have a particular issue that they want to see addressed or fight against: A pipeline through the Province or clean-up of a toxic waste site. Or a proposed tax increase ? or decrease, as the case may be.

Some have had success with being a one issue candidate. I can think of a few off the top of my head. But the issues were ?big ?issues, ones with significant and wide reaching implications. The province's bottom line was affected. Or national policy was affected. Fundamental changes to how we live our lives were at stake. Candidates that ran on platforms that focused on a single issue of importance, have had success. If the issue affects just a handful of folks it won't gain any traction.

It goes without saying, but petty local beefs rarely translate well to the interests of the wider voting public. Maybe some local news coverage. But in the long run it does little to garner the sustained attention of the general public. Unless, of course, the ?issue? is some nebulously defined issue like making your country ?great? again. Whatever that means.

That being said, though, every vote counts. So discounting the views and interests of folks affected by a local issue is similarly short sighted, as a candidate to the south of us learned rather recently.

It's the balance that matters, in my opinion at least. Mindful of what is important to the country (or province, etc.) as a whole and to individuals.

Yes, unfortunately, pandering to certain groups can also play a part. We've seen an unfortunate rise in ?issues driven? politics in elections across the globe. The politics of division has always met with some success. But the pendulum usually swings back.

Usually. Let's hope for our sake it does swing back soon.

That's why political self-interest dressed up as righteous indignation is rarely in the public's best interest. And it shows. It gets a little bit of attention but then fizzles just as fast. Why? Because, at their core, most people are self-interested.

That isn't a slam against anyone. It's a fact. And it makes sense. If we weren't interested in preserving ourselves well, goodness, who would? So if an ?issue? isn't in the broader self-interest, then no one will pay any attention. And that's never a good thing in politics.

It's like the one hit wonders of the musical world. They may get a hit, get some moderate success but then quickly fade from view because they never had anything to offer but a novelty.