

BROCK'S BANTER: Post-Mortem

By Brock Weir

Sometimes in this business you not only have to take a few things on the chin, other times you also have to take one (or two) for the team. So, to my media colleagues, you're welcome.

Following last Monday's Federal Election, I made an appointment to sit down with Lois Brown, Newmarket-Aurora's outgoing Member of Parliament to conduct a post-election post-mortem. (for lack of a better phrase)

The interview took place over 72 hours since Canadians lowered the electoral boom on the Conservative government. In that time there had been no shortage of Conservative supporters, elected, defeated or otherwise, who had come out, knives drawn, in some cases looking for blood within their party, on just where the campaign ultimately took a nose dive. And many of their blades pointed straight to the top.

So, I thought it was safe to say Ms. Brown might have a few words on where she felt the campaign went wrong and some insight on the Federal campaign itself.

Writing this on the following Monday afternoon, I'm still not quite sure whether I was right or wrong.

'I honestly look at what the media did to eviscerate Stephen Harper and I think it is unconscionable,' said Ms. Brown.

Going into this response, I told her during the course of the campaign there were many people who told me they had no problem voting for Ms. Brown on her record, but just couldn't bring themselves to do it this time because it would be a vote for Stephen Harper and, at the end of the day, that was just not going to happen.

The question that followed was, of course, 'Do you think the Federal campaign let you down?'

The question got straight to the point and Ms. Brown did the same.

'If there was one thing I was trained as a child, one thing my parents taught me is regardless of whether or not you like a person, you will respect them. I believe the media has created such disrespect for the office of the Prime Minister. I am appalled. I am appalled! I don't know how else to say it. I may not agree with you, people are welcome to their own opinions, but when the media has deliberately, deliberately undergone to disrespect, first of all, the office of the Prime Minister but Stephen Harper as Prime Minister, I am appalled!'

When pressed for details, Ms. Brown cited examples of 'the media' calling him 'arrogant' and a 'liar' and 'a whole lot more than that?' but there was no further elaboration.

'I think the media needs to look at their own actions,' she concluded. 'Whether that will happen, I don't know. It is on their conscience because I believe Mr. Harper is a very fine man. A very fine man. I think he is one of the most trustworthy individuals I have ever met and I think, in the long run, he will be recognized over the course of history as one of the finest we ever had.'

So, as the closest member of the 'media' on hand, I followed Ms. Brown's advice and looked at 'our' collective actions as a whole. I am accommodating that way. At The Auroran, of course, we strive to keep our focus at a very local level and on the people that directly represent us, so in this prescribed exercise of introspection on behalf of my colleagues in the wider arena, I looked to the editorials and coverage of our national dailies.

In the end, I am just not seeing what Ms. Brown's seeing.

Rather than a collective pile-on in the direction of Mr. Harper, I am seeing a critical free-for-all targeting all of our political leaders ranging from policy planks to examples of foot-in-mouth disease including Mr. Trudeau's 'budgets balance themselves' and Mr. Harper's ode to 'old stock Canadians.'

Heck, three of Canada's largest five national newspapers came out explicitly with their support or endorsement of Mr. Harper. Ms. Brown borrowed a quote from Mark Twain by saying, 'never pick a fight with people who buy ink by the barrel' so, to follow that train of thought, I'll borrow from the late Mr. Twain as well by saying reports of Mr. Harper's evisceration have been greatly exaggerated.

'When people would say to me, 'I hate your leader,' my question back was, 'what has he done except put money back in your pocket?'' said Ms. Brown. 'People are always interested with how much money is going to be in their own pocket.'

Herein lies what I believe is the problem. Talking to people on why they voted the way they did, locally there seemed to be two schools of thought; the first being they were very impressed by the campaigns run by Kyle Peterson and Leona Alleslev alongside Liberal leader Justin Trudeau and the second being there were larger issues to look at.

'Such as?' questioned Ms. Brown when I asked her if this time she had the sense it was about more than just the bottom line. 'I

think that is an analysis for another day.?

At the end of this ?other day,? I think this election was about very much more than how much of my own money my government is going to give back to me.

This time around, there seemed to be significantly more concern about just what the government plans to do with our tax dollars they already have in their coffers, not to mention an increased interest in Canada's domestic and foreign policies, its standing on the world stage, the environment, and, in the case of some, looking for change regardless of which direction this change was coming from.

Now that more than a week has passed since Canada made its very clear decision, it is time for Conservatives to put some ointment on whatever stings they might be still be nursing and enter into a productive discussion on where they go from here.

An article on the CBC website at the start of the week, carrying a photo of Brian Mulroney, caught my attention with the premise that now is the opportunity for Red Tories to come out from the wilderness of the last decade and reclaim their party.

The premise of the piece itself was sound, but it leaves open the question on whether this will also be seen as an opportunity for the bluer wings of the party to double down and accentuate the differences between itself and the Red and Orange parties.

Whichever way the tide turns, efforts by the Conservatives to recalibrate and rebrand itself to the Canadian people will be interesting to watch ? but it will only be a worthwhile discussion with significant introspection, not finger-pointing at others and playing the blame game.