

BROCK'S BANTER: Brexit Strategy

By Brock Weir

Nearly two years ago in this space, I pondered what it means when your ancestral roots kick into high gear.

It was September 2014 and Scots were heading to the polls to cast their landmark vote for or against independence from Great Britain.

If one chopped down my family tree and did a close examination of each of the branches, they would find most of the branches dripped the blue sap of Scotland's saltire but, at the time, I wasn't feeling the independence fervour felt by so many of my ilk.

I went so far as to call myself a bad Scotsman as I have yet to see the point of a Burns Supper, particularly standing up for, and paying homage to, a stuffed and boiled sheep's stomach, and trotting out the same old verses. However, I appreciate the fact that people do get a kick out of it. I just wish they could explain it to me, but I digress.

I could appreciate why many voters were in favour of independence. However, if I had the right to vote in the referendum, I would have voted to stay in the Union. There were too many uncertainties, including the freedom of movement throughout the so-called scepter'd isle, economic uncertainty, uncertainty over an independent Scotland staying within the European Union (something most voters in favour of independence dearly wanted), and even whether or not athletes from an independent Scotland were eligible to compete in Rio this year.

Ultimately, of course, they voted to stay ? and a fat lot of good it did them.

I'm sure most of you political junkies out there joined me on Thursday night glued to your devices waiting for the results of that evening's Brexit vote. Those who started the arduous wait with us most likely packed it in for the night when Remain was still in the lead, dubbing the coverage ?boring?, a ?foregone conclusion? or both.

We knew better.

?Boring? was the least apt word to describe this wild ride and, speaking solely for myself, before I knew it, it was 3 a.m. I was too stunned by the results to notice the clock.

In one fell swoop, the entire landscape of both the United Kingdom was changed and, as a result, the entire landscape of Europe itself was teetering on the edge, and the world was on tenterhooks waiting to see what the fallout would be.

While the divisions for and against leave were striking when one divides the United Kingdom up into its constituent parts, what is perhaps most striking is the demographic gaps between those who voted Leave and Remain.

England, with the exception the London core, was clearly in favour of the Leave vote while Scotland, Northern Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Wales, were on the completely opposite side of the political spectrum, making their voices heard in a Remain landslide.

As the night wore on, the increasingly snippy-in-disbelief BBC anchor kept pressing his panellists on whether the theory those who were better educated, or in a more economically advantageous position voted Remain while those who had limited resources and education sought apparently greener pastures in the Leave camp.

For the first little while, many were reluctant to weigh in on that potentially hot button issue one way or the other, but with the clock ticking and their energy draining, a number of them finally conceded this might very well be the case.

Proponents of the Leave campaign will tell anyone who will listen that the vote was not about racism, xenophobia, or a direct response to increasing immigration from other parts of the European Union and beyond, but those who voted Remain aren't buying it ? and the increasingly reported incidents of intolerance and backlash against immigrants in the wake of the vote is lending credence to the theory they hold so vehemently.

No matter how you slice it, cataclysmic changes are underway. Scotland looks ever more likely to hold a second independence referendum which, if the momentum of last week's vote continues, will surely result in a fully independent nation. Northern Ireland is inevitably going to demand changes to their governance model, breathing new life into a relatively stagnant movement to reunify the entire Irish island, and Wales? Well, that's between her and England.

What most concerns me, however, is not the geographic gap, not the possibility of the Queen having to preside over the dismantlement of her most senior kingdom in the twilight of her reign thanks to politicians who can't keep it together, nor the economic turmoil which immediately made itself known.

My worry is the age gap.

Exit polls, and a growing number of scientific polls, have indicated that young Britons were overwhelmingly in favour of staying within the European Union. They did not buy into the fear-mongering rhetoric espoused by leading figures on either side of the

debate forecasting doom and gloom however the dice fell; they were most concerned about their livelihoods, their freedom of travel, their ability to learn in other cultures, and their freedom to work across the United Kingdom.

As pro-Brexit campaigners celebrated their unexpected win with pints and politicians on the losing side licked their wounds, wondering what to do next beyond lining up to replace their political leaders who decided to fall on their swords, the younger people were mourning, to paraphrase the general sentiment, the lost opportunities and the inevitable hardships that will have been inflicted on them by their parents and grandparents in a knee-jerk reaction that will leave their generation, and the ones to follow, to pick up the pieces.

If they do not become a generation galvanized to take back their country and look to the future rather than simply taking the first opportunity to virtually smack their lawmakers, they will become disenfranchised citizens believing their voices, and their vote, amounted to nothing. In this case, that is tragically correct, but as an increasing number of people develop buyer's remorse over this whole thing, perhaps it is not the end of the story.

While parallels can be drawn between what went down in the United Kingdom and what is currently unfolding in the United States with certain demographic groups gravitating towards the Band-Aid ?solutions? offered to them by a television huckster, their decision seems to stand in sharp contrast to Canada.

Whether you bleed red or bleed blue, I think one thing most Canadians can agree upon is Justin Trudeau's campaign tapped the energy of young voters in a way that hasn't been done in decades and their desire to actually get out the vote was a primary game changer in casting off a decade of Tory rule.

While the honeymoon period has inevitably started to wane, I am confident that 2015 was a watershed moment in making our youth realise that their vote does matter, that it can make a difference, and they too can be the change they want to see in the world.

A graceful exit is one thing, but fostering this sense and channeling the outrage of youth into a positive driver down the road should be next on the British lawmakers' Bucket List.