

BROCK'S BANTER: Find clarity in your choice

By Brock Weir

Unless you are one of our voracious online readers, by the time you read this, you are picking this up on your front stoop to read with your morning coffee just before you leave the house, hopefully with your voter card in hand.

You might, on the other hand, be coming back from work, grabbing this off your porch, ready to read with a tumbler in hand, confident that you made the right choice earlier in the day.

Some of you, however, I concede might be avoiding the paper all together until Sunday or Monday waiting until your Provincial Election saturation starts to wear off.

Believe me, I understand where you are coming from completely, but I certainly hope it didn't turn you off going to exercise your civic duty.

Every time I line up at a polling station with my voter card in hand, I always think about the simpler times. Alright, I have written before how much I loathe when people of a certain age reminisce about their childhoods as if wherever they grew up, whether it was in a rough area of Toronto, or the upper echelons of society, as if they grew up in Mayberry? but hear me out.

Back then, when we did our in-class elections to see who would take office if we, the children, were in charge, it was a much simpler affair. In Newmarket, our Grade 6 class had a clear choice in returning Liberal Karen Kraft Sloan to Ottawa, or return former Progressive Conservative MP John Cole back to his post. Of course, we also had our candidate from the NDP and myriad other parties, but do you know who won our class in a landslide?

The Christian Heritage Party.

That's right. I too was astounded at that young age. So, the next natural question is 'why??' How did a party like the Christian Heritage Party beat out two very able veteran politicians, as well as an equally able new kid on the block representing the New Democrats? The answer is quite simple: he came bearing lapel buttons.

So, the majority of my classmates were political magpies, easily swayed by shiny, new objects, but I bet you any money that when the Christian Heritage candidate heard of his electoral success among his potential young constituents, he undoubtedly argued that we were harbingers of change for when this generation eventually reached the age of majority.

Now, our class is mostly 28 or 29. The big three parties are still seen by many as the only parties worthy of a vote, and the other ones are still roughly in the same place. Perhaps blistering from that loss years ago, the others have maintained the status quo by being more liberal (yes, small 'L') in their distribution of campaign buttons.

I am writing this before I go to vote, but these memories came back earlier to me this weekend with the new campaign ad from Kathleen Wynne essentially stating that a vote for the NDP was, in the end, a vote for Tim Hudak. Contrast that to arguments heard around the Council table at Aurora Town Hall on Saturday afternoon at our all-candidates' debate when Canadians' Choice candidate Dorian Baxter called for a 'paradigm shift' in the minds of voters.

Ballots are, after all, secret ones, he argued. Nobody is going to know next to whose name you marked your all-valuable 'X?', so why not

throw caution to the wind and look to parties beyond the 'Big 3'?

You know, I am inclined to agree with him. That is not to say I am endorsing any particular party or candidate, but I think I am finally reaching my breaking point. My breaking point, that is, not towards who I am going to personally vote for, but my breaking point in hearing other people's arguments about why they are looking myopically at their respective ballot.

'Why would you throw your vote away?' is the common refrain when anyone dares suggest they vote for the Green Party, Dorian Baxter's party du jour, the Libertarian Party, Trillium Party of Ontario, Marxist-Leninists, or any other party that enters into the race.

A similar argument follows when two people in one household dig themselves into opposing political trenches. How many times have you heard, 'Well, if you vote for the NDP you'll cancel out my vote for the (Progressive) Conservatives!?' I don't know about the rest of you, but 'too much!' is my answer.

Unfortunately for the person sitting next to me just a few days ago, they trotted out both pithy quotes simultaneously. That was the last straw. If Scott Johnston, in his cartoon above, ever wanted to capture the scene, steam would be shooting out of my ears like a Looney Toons character.

I was raised in a family that was generally dyed in the wool a certain colour, but for the life of me I have never been able to wrap my head around these bizarre concepts, concepts which are all too often played up by our politicians.

Why would one vote for a party they clearly don't agree with merely to cast a vote for the lesser of what they see as three evils? Or cast their vote against a party or a party leader rather than for a party, leader, or platform plank? If you agree with the platforms of the Green Party, the Canadians' Choice, the Libertarians, or the Trillium Party, throw that same caution to the wind and vote with your heart.

If, by doing so, you think you are throwing your vote away on a party or a candidate that couldn't possibly have a chance of winning, what could be a clearer example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However you voted, or plan to vote on Thursday, I hope you have voted for something and not against something, and leave the polling booth with a clear head and heart that you have found something you believe in.

?FRANKLY, MY DEAR...?

On a final note, I want to wish Frank Klees all the best on wherever life takes him following his long career in the Ontario Legislature. As Editor, it has always been fun to see what is going to cross my inbox every other Sunday for the latest Frankly Speaking column, and tracking down a man on the move on Sunday night if the column happened to be a bit late. Judging by the events of the previous week, it was always fun to wager just what the bi-weekly column would be about, and it was often the most fun when the contents were completely unexpected, threw me for a loop or, truth be told, might have been a better fit in a completely different venue! (And, of course, the back and forth that followed, if that turned out to be the case!)

Thanks, Frank, and I hope you've left a few column suggestions for your successor!