

## BROCK'S BANTER: Valentine's Day is for...haters?

By Brock Weir

So, that's another Valentine's Day in the books.

I hope yours went well ? that the one you love treated you to something nice, you received a little token from a secret admirer or, if Valentine's isn't your thing, made it through February 14 with the nausea induced by the sight of lovey-dovey couples kept to an absolute minimum.

In the lead up to the day itself, I was talking to a friend who decided to regale me with the details of a new budding romance he was experiencing.

?It's great,? he said. ?We both hate the same things!?

At first I chuckled. Then I realised he was being absolutely serious.

For a little while I was taken aback. After all, many of us are raised to believe that while opposites might attract, like interests and like principles are, in the end, the bonds that usually cement a relationship.

Being united by common hates sounds, at the outset, to be going down an inevitable collision course.

It's hardly romantic. It's not necessarily something you'll want to tell your kids' kids when they ask, ?What made you fall in love with grandma??

?Well, sonny,? you might reply, ?we both hated Justin Bieber.?

You must admit it is not a sentiment you're likely to find on a Hallmark card anytime soon. And, let's face it, by the time this guy has grandchildren to call his own, there is a strong possibility that Justin Bieber has the same level of public awareness among teens and tweens that former Canadian popstar Paul Anka has today.

But, I digress?

After considering my friend's point for a little while, I had to admit he did actually have one.

It might seem alarming in this day and age that some people can be united by common hates, but that seems to be the way of the world. The world ?hate?, after all, has been used so much in a hyperbolic sense that it has lost so much of a punch.

?I hate the Biebs.? Okay, you might not care for his music, his public behaviour, or his fashion sense, but is that really enough to hate?

?I hate the morning commute.? Well, okay, but at least you have a job.

?I hate the Kardashians.? Fine, but do you really care enough about them in your daily life to have such strong feelings one way or another?

It seems, however, that common ?hates? are enough to get people on the same page.

If you find someone who shares your ?hate? for Justin Trudeau, chances are you have found a Conservative or non-Liberal soulmate.

The same goes for heart flutters when you hear someone ?hates? 45. Well, bless their bleeding Liberal hearts!

But, if you find someone who professes ?hatred? for homophobia, Islamophobia, racism, exclusion, and similar such matters, you generally know where they stand and that, in the end, makes things so much easier.

In a strange way, this alleged ?hatred? is a sure sign of good intentions. But, as we all know, good intentions all too often pave the road to hell.

Take, for instance, the latest apparent controversy coming from Ottawa over a motion from MP Iqra Khalid.

Introduced this past December, it is a motion ostensibly to combat ?systemic racism and religious discrimination.?

The motion, in its most basic form, calls on the House of Commons to ?recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear; condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination;?and request that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage undertake a study on how the Government could (i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia, in Canada, while ensuring a community-centred focus with a holistic response through evidence-based policy-making, (ii) collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities, and that the Committee should present its findings and recommendations to the House no later than 240 calendar days from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report the Committee should make recommendations that the Government make to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the Constitution Acts, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.?

It seems, on the surface, to be a motion that would find the minimal amount of detractors. It does, after all, take aim at ?all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination? while tasking Ottawa with finding ways to combat which, unfortunately, seems to be a

rising problem.

Digging deeper though reveals an opposition which I find more than slightly alarming.

One of the many detractors of the motion is Andrew Scheer, the former Speaker of the House of Commons, who is currently running to replace Rona Ambrose as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition and, the party hopes, Mr. Trudeau as Prime Minister in the next election.

His criticism of the motion is threefold: ?it is not inclusive? as it allegedly ?singles out just one faith?, it fails to define Islamophobia, and could be ?interpreted as a step towards stifling free speech and legitimate criticism.?

He might have a point with that last item as legitimate criticism over the tenets of Sharia Law, for instance, could be interpreted by some more extreme quarters as ?Islamophobia?, but Point Three is let down by the first two.

In the world we're living in today, everyone should be well aware of the generally accepted definition of Islamophobia as, unfortunately, we don't have to look very far to find it. Additionally, it might mention one faith specifically, but it certainly does not ?single out? Islam. It very clearly references ?all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination.?

?As someone whose faith is integral to my life, I am grateful for and believe very strongly in the religious freedom we enjoy here in Canada,? wrote Scheer. ?That freedom, which includes protection against discrimination based on your faith, is a right for all Canadians and I will fight to protect those rights and freedoms.?

His words are not something one can easily condemn, but what those words are being used to condemn, however, can be a slightly different story.

In voting against a motion to combat systemic racism simply because it makes specific mention of Islamophobia reminds me of the intense debates which took place last year between supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement versus those who counter that argument with ?all lives matter.?

The most logical analogy to come out of that melee was the burning house. If you're an emergency responder combatting a blaze with finite water on board your truck, you don't spritz the house across the street as well in the view that ?all homes matter.? You tackle the immediate problem.

With so many people hurting, now is not the time to get hung up on semantics.

It is a time to be like my friend and his newfound Valentine and hate the hate.