

POLITICS AS USUAL: The Enemy of my Enemy

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

I fully admit that this week's article is written on the fly.

But in my defence, I did have a completely different article written for this week. That, however, was written before I saw the huge advertisement in the Globe and Mail last week from a group known as 'Just the Facts Canada.'

When I saw that, I tossed out what I had and decided to focus on this extraordinary advertisement.

I had to read it multiple times, reading the page over and over, absolutely incredulous at what was presented. All I could think was, 'boy oh boy, some folks are really pulling out all the stops to prevent another Conservative government.'

If you haven't already seen it, the advertisement in the Globe (and I don't know if it is similarly published in the other dailies), is framed as an Open Letter to Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Mulcair and Ms. May. The tag line? 'On October 19th vote strategically for the Canada you want.' Not sure who the 'you' is or who defines what Canada the 'you' want.

They advocate the parties working, 'co-operatively in strategic ridings.'

Not sure they got the memo yet, but political parties in the midst of a knock-down-drag-out fight to the finish are hardly going to get together to 'collaborate'.

The gist of the letter is that some ridings are more 'winnable' by certain parties. The good folks at 'Just the Facts Canada' have produced a list (!) of ridings where the parties are likeliest to win against the Conservatives. These 'Facts' are supported by stats from what they describe as 'credible polling of threehundredeight.com'. It goes on to list about 20 ridings in which the NDP are poised to beat the Conservatives and about 50 that the Liberals are poised to win.

That is, unless the vote is split amongst the NDP, Liberal and Green party.

And that is the thrust of the letter. That, to ensure that said parties win said ridings, the others should fall on their swords in support of the common good - that good being defined as the 'removal of Stephen Harper'.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend, approach to political strategy.

The conceit in the whole thing is the extraordinary premise that the parties - NDP, Liberal - are interchangeable, and the Greens are simply an afterthought. It is truly an astonishing premise to posit let alone advocate. The letter actually states that most Canadians would not have a concern with 'either of you' as Prime Minister.

Wow.

So people do not care if it is Mulcair as PM as long as it isn't Harper?

NDPs would line up behind Trudeau, as long as Harper goes down in flames? Sorry, but I find that truly hard to swallow.

The most galling statement I have to say is the entreaty to Elizabeth May more or less saying, 'you don't have a hope in heck of winning so don't act as a spoiler and withdraw.' Okay that is paraphrasing a bit, but not by much.

Calls for strategic voting are nothing new. Every election has some level of push, urging candidates in 'losing' positions to drop out in favour of allowing voters to vote for the candidate that will 'supposedly' 'defeat' the candidate that some voters do not want.

What is new about this one though is the level of organization of this campaign. And the funding.

The cost of a full page ad in the Globe and Mail is not exactly chump change.

It will be interesting to see if their efforts have worked. If Harper is defeated, I am sure they'll take credit regardless.

Next week, when all the results are in, I will do a commentary on what if any parts of this strategic voting strategy actually worked.

Until then, stay informed, stay involved because this is - after all - Our Town.