

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Trump win mirrors Truman?s

It's true. If you wait long enough, history is sure to repeat itself.

I'm reminded of that having just read historian David McCullough's Pulitzer-prize winning masterpiece, Truman, particularly his account of Harry Truman's upset victory over New York Governor Thomas Dewey in 1948.

Hillary Clinton and her supporters should have read this book and learned from it before launching perhaps the most inept major campaign since, well, since Dewey.

As everyone knows, the political Establishment (Democrats and Republicans alike), the media, academia and even the pollsters, all agreed that Donald Trump had no chance of defeating Clinton, just as they had all known that Truman, who moved up from vice-president after Roosevelt's death, had no shot ? none ? at beating Dewey.

Indeed, even though Trump actually did win, most of the same critics who scoffed at him have stubbornly refused to accept this reality and have treated every action ? both good and the bad ? as the end of democracy as we've known it.

To be sure, Trump has given his critics lots of fodder, but the hysteria over every little thing ? and the overblown coverage of the Russian ?scandal? (despite numerous investigations showing no collusion whatsoever between Trump and the Russians) ? continues unabated.

The Sunday Star ? duking it out with The Globe and Mail for the most one-sided coverage ever of a politician ? published a lengthy piece by British historian Richard Evans (who, as far as I can tell, has no particular expertise in American politics) ? essentially saying Trump is mentally ill and outlining how people have historically unseated unfit rulers.

?He may not be mad,? Evans writes of Trump, ?but a growing number of commentators allege that Trump is suffering from dementia, or is mentally subnormal, or is suffering from a personality disorder of some kind.?

Evans offers no evidence whatsoever to support this remarkable claim. Yes, Trump critics are saying these things ? and worse ? but they are the same ones who have been smearing him from the beginning and have yet to come to terms with the fact that Americans ? the ones Hillary haughtily dismissed as ?deplorables? ? actually voted him into office.

Back to Truman. The parallels between his 1948 win and Trump's 2016 upset are absolutely stunning.

One of the most (in)famous election photographs ever was the one of Truman, happily waving a copy of the Chicago Daily Tribune, emblazoned with the front-page headline: ?Dewey Defeats Truman.?

Just as pretty well everybody picked Clinton to crush Trump, so too did the political class agree that Truman was toast against the charismatic Dewey. A final Gallup poll had Dewey comfortably ahead. The New York Times predicted Dewey would win easily with 345 electoral votes (he got 189) and the new issue of Life magazine carried a full-page photograph of Dewey ?the next President? crossing San Francisco Bay by ferry boat.

And so it went. Even at the Democratic convention, party stalwarts desperately had sought another candidate besides Truman, the feeling that the mid-western rube would lose to the sophisticated and accomplished Dewey. During the campaign, even though Truman was the president, Dewey enjoyed two to three times as many reporters covering his campaign ? most of the coverage laudatory ? while the coverage of Truman, like much of Trump's, was routinely dismissive.

While Truman continued to draw huge crowds to his rallies ? just as Trump had ? the media sniffed that a) it didn't mean anything and b) people were just curious to have a look at a president. They ignored Trump's huge crowds as well.

Dewey barely campaigned in several states considered a shoo-in for the Republicans ? the same mistake Clinton made by ignoring solid Democratic states such as Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio and others ? resulting in a string of narrow victories by Truman (just as Trump did against Clinton), resulting in the upset victory.

The two elections demonstrate what happens when political arrogance ? that good old sense of entitlement ? convinces the collective smarty-pants that their opponent is not even worthy and all their candidate has to do is drive by waving the flag and the public will do the right thing. It didn't work for Dewey, and it didn't work for Clinton.

But unlike the losing 1948 Republicans ? who acknowledged their mistakes ? the current Democrats and their fellow travelers in the media, academia, Hollywood, etc., still can't believe Clinton lost. She herself continues to blame everybody else, i.e. the Russians, her gender, or any number of weak excuses, anything except facing the fact that she was an unpopular candidate who ran a lousy campaign.

The anti-Trump legions, unable to handle the truth, continue to smear the guy who won at every opportunity. It won't change reality. And they may eventually get past their own self-importance. But not for the moment, it seems.

