

Bil Rea ? Time to give Trump a chance

There is a good lesson to be taken from last Tuesday's presidential election in the United States.

Never, ever take my political predictions seriously, no matter how brilliant and insightful they might seem.

I own up to the fact that I predicted Donald Trump had no chance of winning the election, and I have been saying that for about a year now. In the early days, I said his candidacy was a curiosity. I called him a clown in this spot in the paper, and maintained his running for president was little more than a source of amusement and entertainment. If by some miracle he got the Republican nomination, I asserted he didn't have a chance of moving into the White House.

And yet, there he is, about to move in to the Executive Mansion in Washington in January (Jan. 20 is the day he's to be sworn in). This is not the first time I have put my predictions on the record. During my first stint with the Citizen, I went out on a limb with predictions on the 1991 municipal elections, and the limb broke, something the late Richard Whitehead never let me live down. In fact he went a little overboard. He would say I called every race wrong, and that's not true. I accurately predicted the election of then councillors Carol Seglins, David Hughes and Dick Pallett. As for the other shots I called, I try not to think about them.

I did pick Hillary Clinton to win last week's election. I was following the polls the last couple of days of the campaign, state-by-state. Although it was clear that Trump had momentum, I didn't think he could pull it off. I was actually expecting him to take Florida, and probably North Carolina, but I figured Pennsylvania would stay in the Democrat column. I wasn't worried about Michigan or Wisconsin.

?Hillary's going to do it,? I responded to anyone who asked me last Tuesday, and believed it as I sat down at home to watch CNN. I was feeling confident in my predictions well into the evening. States were going one way or another, but there was nothing that was a surprise. Florida going to Trump was the first really crucial call, but that was one I was expecting.

I was a little taken aback at the major production CNN made of Clinton winning in California. Good heavens! That was expected. I don't think even Trump thought he was going to take that state.

By midnight, Trump was ahead in most of the aforementioned crucial states, and I had a heavy day at work coming up. I went to bed, feeling a little depressed. My gut was telling me where all this was going.

I woke up at about 5:30 and briefly went on my computer. It took about 20 seconds to get the info I required.

I take a certain amount of comfort in the knowledge that I wasn't the only one who called it wrong.

Which leads to an obvious question; namely ?Why??

It is clear there is a lot of anger south of the border. There was a really interesting segment on 60 Minutes last Sunday night, with 23 angry and impatient people making heated points about who they were going to vote against. Expanding that country-wide, it seems a lot of Americans voted against candidates, as opposed to voting for anyone. And according to figures I've heard, about 46 per cent of the American electorate didn't vote at all. Some day, some one might be able to explain that figure to me.

There is anger, but I'm puzzled at just what it is people are mad at. True, things are not perfect. They never are. But the economy has done reasonably well over the last couple of years. There have been no major international debacles that have caused embarrassment. So I'm having trouble understanding the cause of all this anger that Trump successfully tapped in to.

Accepting that, it also became clear in the days after the election that the anger is still there. There were people out in various American cities last Wednesday night protesting the election results. There were chants of the ?Not my president? and ?Reject this president-elect? variety. I haven't heard slogans like that since the megacity protests of the 1990s in Toronto.

I read about these protests on the internet late in the evening, and my initial reaction was one of puzzlement, as well as a little anger on my own part.

The man, after all, has only won an election, so what exactly are people angry about.

It reminded me of 1995, when Mike Harris became premier. I was in the press gallery at the legislature the day his first cabinet was sworn in, and my strongest memory of that experience was the roars from all the protesters on the front lawn at Queen's Park. The sound easily penetrated the walls, and I kept reminding myself that Harris had simply won an election, and was preparing to do nothing more than try to implement the platform on which he had successfully run. And I'm hard pressed to think of any elected leader who did a better job than Harris of keeping the promises he made; even the bad ones.

True, there is some question as to whether Trump is qualified for the job. That has been on my mind a lot too over the last couple of months.

The solution is simple. If you don't think a candidate is qualified for the job he or she is seeking, don't vote for that person. And if that candidate gets elected, live with it.

That's nothing new in a democracy. Have none of you ever seen the election of someone you voted against? I didn't vote to have

Kathleen Wynne elected premier, but she got the job and I accept that. There'll be another election soon enough. It's going to be part of Trump's job in the next four years to try and bridge the gap between these polarized factions in his country. Indeed, I think that will be a main test of his competency. But those on both sides are going to have to want to come together. That will certainly take some time.

I thought he made a decent start with his acceptance speech. He was dignified and respectful. In fact, I thought he started looking . . . well . . . presidential. I pondered why he couldn't have shown that kind of class during the campaign. I wonder if he can maintain it. I thought Clinton's concession address was pretty good too, although it should have been delivered about nine hours earlier. There were many people who worked hard for her. They deserved to hear something that night. I know she was disappointed, but such situations are part of her occupation. If she couldn't react appropriately to such a set back, how well would she have done as president when it came to dealing with a crisis?

It's time to give Trump a chance to show what he can do. His fitness for the office is no longer an issue. That matter was settled last Tuesday

