

Bill Rea ? More election reflections

One of the nice things about federal elections, such as the one of recent and reasonably happy memory, is they provide lots to write about.

All sorts of observers, experts, know-it-alls and phonies have been filling pages and air-time, getting all their thoughts on the record before reality kicks in and they have to find something legitimate to write about.

Well, I might as well join in too.

There are a wide variety of nuances being worked into the results of the election, which as we all know by now, has ended up in another Trudeau occupying the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

There are people remarking on the make-up of the new cabinet. I'm not really interested in commenting on it. It is a fact that the Liberals have been out of power for about nine years, so finding MPs with cabinet experience was tricky. Trudeau was seeking a gender balance, which he evidently achieved and which is receiving lots of praise. And it's true that a lot of deserving MPs probably figured they'd be invited to the front bench and were passed over. The truth is Trudeau only had so many positions to fill, so he did. I can appreciate there's a certain frustration to be felt at a time like this, but that kind of frustration goes with the game. And since these are all adults, one would hope they'd be able to get on with their respective tasks.

Fortunately, as is the case with just about everything in the adult world, there are lots of participants who don't live up to adult expectations. They help provide guys like me with things to do.

I have also noticed that everyone seems to be nice to Trudeau, giving him a pass on certain things that I think the likes of Stephen Harper would have been stomped on.

For example, in taking the oath last Wednesday, Trudeau, quite rightly, promised to "bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors." I have always understood the H in the word "heirs" is silent, but not the way Trudeau pronounced it. I noticed that immediately, but have only heard one radio commentator make note of it, observing that Harper would surely have been called on it. I agree.

But the mood in this country is a lot different now that Trudeau has taken over from Harper. I have already read a couple of pieces making the point that Canadians are commonly referring to the new PM by his first name. There have been notations that few Canadians referred to his predecessor as Stephen. Indeed, thinking back over all the prime ministers of my memory, I can't recall any of them being commonly known by their first name. Even south of the border, I don't recall any presidents being referred to by first names. The closest exception was Eisenhower, who was known as Ike, a nick name he had had since he was a kid.

Much of the writings I've read so far are very complimentary to Trudeau, even to the point of being sickening.

There was one I was referred to in a New York women's fashion magazine called The Cut.

"Canada's foxy new Prime minister is more than just great hair" was the title, and just reading that made me wonder why it had been referred to me.

"Might this sudden interest in the parliament of our neighbor to the north have something to do with the fact that Trudeau is kind of foxy, in a wholesome, Canadian way?" went the second sentence of this article, which also acknowledged that the Cut "has an official stance on objectifying men."

The article went on to make a few comments on some of Trudeau's policies (any one of which can be debated), and point to the fact that he has a tattoo. I didn't know that until I read the article. I quickly realized I didn't care. I don't know if Harper has a tattoo, and the truth is I don't want to know.

I do know that I am interested in how Trudeau is going to govern, but that remains to be seen. Harper and company spent the last couple of months trying to drive home the message that, "He's just not ready."

Time will tell.

I have been surprised that there hasn't been more (for want of a better term) Trudeau bashing. Even the Toronto Sun seems to have been taking it easy.

Last Thursday's editorial, offered the new PM best wishes, and is evidently ready to give him a bit of time to settle in before letting him have it.

Lorrie Goldstein's column that same day was devoted to Harper, praising him for saving Conservatism in Canada (I am assuming he used a capital C for Conservative throughout the piece for a reason).

While I respect Goldstein as a man of great intelligence (he's frequently on the CFRB and I enjoy listening to what he has to say), I seldom agree with him politically, and his assessment of Harper followed along those lines.

Harper didn't save anything. He simply helped repair some of the damage he helped cause as one of the founding members of the

Reform Party of Canada.

I will go along with Goldstein's assertion that Reform was born from Western frustration that Red Tories had swung too far to the left. I'm not saying that I think that was true, but that was certainly the perception at the time. And I guess the idea of trying to change the Progressive Conservative party from within was scrapped in favour of creating another party that basically split the conservative (note the small C) vote and gave the Liberals open access to the PMO.

It is a fact that if a party is hoping to form a majority government in this country of ours, it needs appeal across a broad spectrum, because relying on the staunch conservative element isn't going to cut it.

As proof, I cite the numerous majority governments that Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Brian Mulroney and Jean Chretien were elected to form, basically by appealing to that broader spectrum. Harper, with his impressive victory in 2011, is a notable exception to that. But he was helped by an ineffective Liberal party and leader in that election, just as Chretien benefitted from ineffective and fractured conservative (small C again) opposition.

Government in a democracy is cyclical. One side is on top of the heap for a number of years, then they give way to another side. That is the way it has always gone, and that will continue.

The Conservatives will pick a new leader in due time and will probably be ready to put up a good fight in the next election, probably to be held in 2019. Who ever gets the nod will have to make sure there's appeal to that broader spectrum, while making sure the conservative elements are not ignored either. In time, they might even bring back the word 'Progressive' to their party name.

People in Alberta might even go along with it. You know Alberta. It's the place with an NDP government.