

Bill Rea ? Trump is no trump card

There's going to be a federal election in Canada this year.

I plan to keep track of things as election day approaches, partly because it's my job and partly because I'm a Canadian, meaning I have a vested interest in the way things turn out. Things like the economy, tax rates, national security and Canada's standing in the world community impact upon me and mine.

It's far too early for any predictions. We don't even know who's going to be running in a lot of areas. As far as I know, the Conservatives and Liberals are the only ones who have nominated candidates in Dufferin-Caledon, so far. There's also lots of time for surprises.

Yes, the election later this year will be a serious time, as far as I'm concerned. True, there might be the odd amusing incident (there usually are), but for the most part, it's going to be all business.

But elections can also be fun, and fun is what seems to be shaping up south of the border.

While I have vested and professional interests in what happens in Ottawa, my interest in what happens in Washington, D.C. is more intellectual, at least in a casual sort of way. While I have no business trying to pass myself off as a scholar, the workings of the American government in general, and the presidency in particular, have held my interest for as long as I can remember.

I can name all the presidents since George Washington, and when that's a category in Jeopardy, I seldom get stumped (hint ? if you're ever in a trivia contest, and you're asked who was the only president to be sworn in by his father, answer ?Coolidge.?)

While I find American government interesting, that doesn't mean I want to move south. I'm content to watch things as an outsider.

There's going to be a presidential election next year, and an amendment to the United States Constitution says that incumbent Barack Obama is not allowed to seek another term (two is all he can get). That's a dumb rule, if you asked me, but no one did. When it comes to elected offices, I have always held the position that only the electorate should decide if a person has had the job for too long.

It does mean, however, that things are kind of wide open for the job next year. That also means there's lots of room for entertainment.

Fortunately for me, it seems that silly season has started.

Donald Trump has announced he's going to seek the Republican nomination for president. If I were a Republican, I think I would be looking for a hole in which to bury my head. When I first heard he was thinking of running, I thought a bit and concluded the person who had the most to gain from that news was Hillary Clinton.

Politically, I am generally a conservative, although I have voted liberal plenty of times, and once even voted Green. From that point of view, I figure the Democrats won the last two presidential elections, so it's the Republicans' turn. Since the middle of the 20th century, there's only been one case of a party winning more than two elections in a row.

On the other hand, I can temper my conservative leanings when the situation warrants it. Although I was hoping John McCain would get elected in 2008, I was neither surprised or upset when Obama bested him. I was pleased that Americans had passed over the hump when it came to the racial background of the president by putting him into office, and I was delighted four years later when they re-elected him. The last thing American society needed was history dismissing Obama's triumph as a fluke.

By the same token, I wouldn't be dreadfully upset if Clinton won next year, although it's far too early to be making any bold predictions, even stupid ones.

But like I stated above, it looks like silly season has started.

Trump has declared he's in the running, and right off the mark, he started making a fool of himself with remarks about Mexicans that were seen as racist. When I first heard them, the conservative in me cringed, and the student in me rejoiced that fun times were back again. I have read a lot about politics in my life, including memoirs of numerous politicians, as well as biographies of many others. To be successful in politics, one needs to attract votes from the uncommitted. And you don't accomplish that by telling certain other segments to buzz off.

I have never been a big fan of Donald Trump, but I'm not a big enemy either. I spent a day in Atlantic City about 25 years ago, and parted with some of my hard-earned money in one of his gambling establishments. In fairness, I should state that I patronized other casinos near Boardwalk, and they didn't add to my wealth either, so I hold no serious grudges against the man.

I have very little use for reality TV and seldom take the time to watch it. I have taken in a few episodes of The Apprentice, and have not been impressed, either with the program or the star. On such occasions, I have asked myself if I couldn't have found better ways to waste my time.

But the man has had a successful life, and he has some of my dollars, collected 25 years ago, to prove it. And he does know how to

attract attention, which can be a blessing or a curse in politics.

While he's attracted some positive attention with his antics so far, most of the reaction that I'm aware of has been negative. First NBC cut ties with him, and now it looks like NASCAR is doing pretty much the same. I suspect there will be more groups and organizations that will follow suit.

Having a guy like Trump in a political race can certainly liven things up, but it can also cause a lot of harm. Since he's running as a Republican, I would think a lot of the people in the higher echelons of the party are worried. If Trump is going to shoot off his mouth with dumb and inflammatory comments, and the party lets it slide, then the whole gang is going to look bad, and that's not helpful heading into an election.

And if by some miracle he was able to get elected, what would the governments of other countries think of him. Assuming he doesn't make any cracks about Canadians, would the government in Ottawa take him seriously? Or could our federal government afford not to? And what would the Mexican government think of him?

True, this all involves a foreign country. But it's a country with which Canada has had a long association, meaning what goes on there is not something we can ignore.

But we can also be entertained

