

Claire Hoy ? Ford's supporters sticking with him

In what may seem impossible looking back ? and surely must have been in another universe ? then NDP leader Bob Rae surprised Ontario ? and himself ? by winning an election and becoming premier.

As shocking as this was ? and fortunately, Ontarians quickly came to their senses and booted him out the first chance they got ? we still didn't see a campaign of sustained, unrelenting, vicious personal attacks from the right against him.

Sure, there was the odd rally ? one featured a group of businessmen on the Queen's Park lawn , complaining politely of course ? but overall, those who viewed the election of an NDP government as a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions, pretty well accepted the results and carried on.

As you likely know, Rae (who later jumped to the federal Liberals) lasted one term and was replaced by tough-talking (and just plain tough) Tory Mike Harris.

From the day Harris was elected by a clear majority of Ontarians, an equally clear majority of union activists and assorted lefties vowed to seek revenge on Harris, and, by extension the voters who dared support him, and spent the next four years constantly doing battle with him. Mammoth anti-Harris rallies were commonplace. Pretty well everything bad that happened ? including perhaps the weather ? was blamed on Harris.

The result of this four-year-festival-of-indignation was that Harris won an even bigger majority the next time out.

And that bit of history, dear hearts, brings us to the current hysteria being generated by the left ? led by the Toronto Star ? against Toronto mayor Rob Ford.

A prominent Star columnist pooh-poohed the notion last week that there is some kind of ?political-media conspiracy? at work against Ford. She's right.

There is no conspiracy. The Ford haters are quite open and above board. They'll do anything they can to overturn an election which ? like the Harris election years before ? they simply can't accept.

My long experience ? as someone right of centre, I confess ? has been that generally speaking one thing that separates right from left (excluding fringe lunatics from both sides) is that the right accepts the fact that people have different views, even though they don't agree with them, while the left generally believes that not only are their opponents wrong, they have no right to even subscribe to their views.

Writing recently in Maclean's Magazine, for example, Nicholas Kohler ? who did at least acknowledge that Ford has done some things well ? was shocked to discover that even in Ward 20, which includes NDP MP Olivia Chow's federal riding, ?arguably one of the most progressive neighborhoods in the county, almost a quarter of the ballots cast went to Ford. People who really should have known better ? avid newspaper readers, politically astute elites ? voted for Rob Ford.

Imagine. Don't they know that Ford is a menace? A clown? A fat pig? Don't they know Toronto will never survive unless he's ousted? Apparently not. Even some of those who, oh my god, actually can read and write, don't understand this. How is it possible?

In a frenzied attempt to right the huge wrong of the last election results, rarely a week goes by ? indeed, a day ? where we don't ?discover? some other terrible ?truth? about Ford, pretty much based on unnamed sources and innuendo. And with every ?new? revelation we see the repeat of all the ?old? allegations, presented for your reading and/or viewing pleasure as if they were all true. Despite this, however, or perhaps because of it, public opinion polls continue to show that Torontonians who voted for Ford last time intend to vote for him again. You can include me in that category.

To be sure, Ford has done and said some stupid things. What politician hasn't? But he's also cut the spiralling municipal costs. He cut a deal with the unions without either breaking the bank or plunging the city into a strike, something the previous union-friendly mayor couldn't do. He said he'd cut spending growth and he has.

He privatized some garbage collection and studies show it's working better than the public collectors. Just last week we learned Toronto ended 2012 with a ?SURPLUS? of \$248 million, and this despite the concerted vicious personal attacks against Ford ? much of it beyond anything I've ever seen in the media and elsewhere.

Ford says he's running again. I hope he does. I'm not sure why he wants to, given the nature of the ongoing attacks against him, but hey, he's a tough guy. That's why so many people support him.

Those who hate him always did. Those who like him, still do. That's not going to change, no matter how much vitriol the haters toss at him.

