

Insanity and the seat of power

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In a conversation over coffee in one of our esteemed coffee bistros, a discussion ensued of how the 16th and 17th Centuries monarchs behaved, how they turned society on its head and then prosecuted those who refused to join in the turning. Prosecuted them so harshly with torture and painful deaths.

The conversation, with this week's elections across the Province, left me thinking about the seat of power, whether inherited by accident of birth, roughly acquired by dint of battle and violence, or honestly, by the trusting hand of the electorate.

The struggle between the power pack of folk at the top of any given assemblage of humanity, those revered as deities or wearing the family crown, has its own lineage. From ancient times, when monarchs or gods ruled ? some absolutely, others agreeable to consulting with peers, who had similar families, just not the ones with the crowns ? there was less work and thinking for the peasants, the lower classes to trouble themselves. Yet, rarely do the history records show that, even on a reasonably secure throne, did its occupant rule with true benevolence and wisdom.

Throughout our history as humans, rulers, people in power ? absolute or otherwise -have rarely given peace a chance. If they were not pursuing real or, even, imagined villains and traitors to the crown ? that is, those that did not agree with them absolutely ? if they were not the subject of revenge or defence, then history demonstrates over and over, that the inhabitants of the the thrones necessarily felt the need to do battle anyway. Away from home territory, far or not as far; even right next door.

What is this irrepressible, irrational, impulse to inflict pain and real suffering on our fellow species?

As the point of power is lessened by the size of the government from national to provincial to municipal, the permission to be violent is reduced by the greater need for accountability to higher levels of power. Having said which, a provincial or territorial leader will certainly bring in police or other enforcement to quell protests in the streets of people taking umbrage at unreasonable policy making. Sometimes, quite violently.

Decisions leaders make can be violent, when they go against the common good in favour of the few, one of the most consistent types of violence inflicted on the general populace. Don't diminish it as not really violent even if weapons are not involved.

Power is a weapon, all too frequently brandished to inflict hardship, also the inevitable result of violence and usually the intention but, sometimes, simply the foreseeable consequences.

This can happen on all levels of power, right down to the office or the home.

All violence is born of mental, intellectual or emotional imbalance. To inflict pain or harm on another being is to relinquish sanity, to a greater or lessor degree.

By ?another being? let us include ourselves, all the creatures in the air, on the land and under the waters; even further, include this very living earth, for, in a growing number of countries, documents, laws and constitutions are being written or changed to grant that Nature is a living element, ?a being,? that must be given rights, like human rights, call them ?being rights.?

Already, the new seat of Ontario's power is occupied by a violent ruler, whose dictums to lead the province backwards in a harmful way, on several platforms, have incensed much of its population. Do they push back too hard, never doubt that he will call in such physical forces as he deems necessary to quell protests.

This week's municipal elections were, on the smaller scale, as important as any in the past few years have been.

Here in Caledon, some of the elected are firm in their win, others, a bit tenuous, yet strong enough. Many are returning to their seats and it is important for them to understand the numbers of how they won and what those numbers say. Was there a split vote that led to a satisfactory conclusion for the winner? What were the messages in some of the other voting?

Caledon is constantly under attack by developers who will say things like, ?Caledon can no longer consider itself rural.? Yet, some of the finest farmland, some of the most important natural resources ? water, wildlife, heritage landscape and rivers ? in Canada are here in Caledon. The importance of keeping all that intact is paramount- not under the concrete and housing that is always being pushed at council.

Money does not matter at all in the face of an increasingly damaged environment. Between this and accepting that Caledon is populated by many well informed and wise people, council might take on a more consultive approach to power, inviting civil and constructive input from the community that always talks about the benefit of the whole, not just those whose ?bottom line? is all that matters.