

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? A success that should be cheered

Having spent much of my professional life debating left-wingers, I learned early on that a major difference between left and right ? apart from conflicting viewpoints, of course ? is that right-wingers will disagree but tend to enjoy debating the differences, while the left, typically, believes right-wingers are not just wrong, they aren't even entitled to hold such views.

Examples abound. But a current one involves the recent Tory nominating convention in Niagara West-Glanbrook, vacated recently by former leader Tim Hudak, where 19-year-old student Sam Oosterhoff out-campaigned the establishment hopeful, i.e. party president Rick Dykstra, to win the nomination.

The widely-reported ?problem? with Oosterhoff ? who even the opposition parties feel will likely retain the riding ? is not really that he is young and inexperienced but ? horror of horrors! ? he's an unapologetic social conservative.

Worse, he went out there among the conservative Dutch churchgoers in the area ? who are largely pro-life and against the Liberals' new ultra-liberal sex education policies ? and got them to vote for him instead of the candidate favored by Tory Leader Patrick Brown, a man who won the leadership partly on playing to social conservatives, only to turn his back on them once he got the job. Grimsby newspaper owner Mike Williscraft, who also sought the nomination, was quoted as saying Oosterhoff ?worked very hard? to sign up the large Dutch community. ?I know from speaking to him during the campaign that a significant part of his support was motivated by the abortion issue . . . that's part of their church's belief.?

If Oosterhoff were anything but a social conservative, his nomination would have been heralded as a great example of hidebound Tories bringing in much-needed new blood and fresh energy. But alas, such reportage was not to be for a candidate not prepared to mould his belief system to fit in with the predominately liberal views of the mainstream media and most elected politicians.

And so, his successful nomination, rather than being reported as a feel-good success story, was widely seen as a ?setback? for the Tories, something that will be ?devastating? for them going forward.

Comparisons were even made to Donald Trump by the normally sensible Toronto Star columnist Martin Regg Cohn, who characterized Oosterhoff's supporters as ?a cohort of myopic Tories fantasizing about a pro-life, anti sex-ed province.?

This remarkably snotty coverage prompted a letter to the Star's editor from Ridgeville citizen Michael Zweip ? who could be Dutch, so perhaps we should discount his views ? summing it up: ?Had the candidate promoted progressive values and policies, the narrative would have lauded the victory as ?party renewal' and ?change.' Rather than being afforded respect and civility, social conservatives in Ontario are once again disparaged and maligned for holding to politically valid and sincerely held beliefs and values.?

A followup story in The Globe and Mail was headlined: ?Student's by-election bid threatens PC party unity.?

Really? One young man holding socially conservative views ? which, by the way, are held by millions of other Canadians ? is somehow a ?threat? to the entire party?

Regular readers will know, but in the interest of full disclosure let me tell you that your correspondent is also a social conservative, one who believes that the fact that Canada is the only westernized country in the world with no laws governing abortion ? none whatsoever ? is not something we should be proud of.

If you believe, as I do, that a fetus is an unborn person in the first stages of life ? I can't imagine what else it could be ? and, except in some circumstances, i.e. the health of the mother, rape and/or incest ? should have the same shot at life as you enjoy, it seems you are a hopeless bigot who doesn't deserve the opportunity to participate in public discourse, let alone run for office.

Public opinion polls on abortion ? deliberately under-reported ? have long shown a majority of Canadians believe abortion should be restricted at some point in a pregnancy ? about 75 per cent say the final three months ? while less than 30 per cent actually believe there should be no restrictions at all.

So just who are the radicals here: the majority who favor some restrictions, or the mouthy minority who champion unrestricted abortion-on-demand?

Yet here's the kicker. Polls also show that 80 per cent of Canadian respondents believe there are legal restrictions to abortion ? there aren't. And the less we're allowed to even talk about it, the more that such ignorance rules the day, and the better it is for the champions of unfettered abortion.

Which is why, of course, one energetic 19-year-old kid is portrayed as a dire threat. He's prepared to talk about it. He also should be prepared to be smeared for his efforts.

