

No grand and glorious principle

It's been almost a year since the voters in the Toronto-area riding of Mississauga-Streetsville decided, again, that they wanted a Liberal in Ottawa. MP Wajid Khan, a Muslim, car dealer, and former Pakistani Air Force pilot, was their man.

In April, Khan was on stage with former Liberal immigration minister Joe Volpe, openly supporting Volpe's pathetic bid for the Liberal leadership ultimately captured by Stéphane Dion.

In July, after Liberal MP Jim Karygiannis quit as Volpe's campaign manager over Volpe's unconditional support for Israel in its' conflict with Lebanon, Khan became Volpe's Ontario leadership campaign chairman.

In August, Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed Khan as his special adviser on South Asia and the Middle East, a move hailed by Harper's

parliamentary secretary Jason Kenney as an example of the prime minister "thinking outside the box in the context of a minority Parliament on an issue where there should be a national consensus rather than just narrow partisanship prevailing."

Khan himself dismissed claims that Harper was using him to build bridges to the Muslim community, upset over the prime minister's unequivocal support of Israel, saying he gave Harper "a lot of credit ... Canada must be able to utilize, I believe, all of its resources, even if it means putting aside partisanship, in order to get the best long-term results."

Liberals, of course, weren't buying this 'non-partisan' stuff, and within days Khan announced he wouldn't be attending Liberal caucus meetings and would step down as the party's associate defence critic.

Even so, he said his new role was "outside of partisan politics" and he remained a dedicated Liberal and supporter of Volpe's leadership ambitions.

Earlier this month, of course, Khan ended his "non-partisan" charade, bolting the Liberals to become a Conservative MP, thereby giving the Tories a terrific opportunity to win a heavily-Muslim Toronto-area riding in the next election, something the party has had little success in doing.

The Liberals, as you'd expect, cried foul, apparently forgetting that before the last election, the Liberals had lured two Conservative MPs - Belinda Stronach and Scott Brison - to their party and rewarded them with cabinet posts.

At least Harper didn't put Khan in cabinet, although if Khan wins his riding next time out - which he likely will - you can count on his elevation then.

So what's the point of all this?

Khan is certainly not the first elected politician to change sides - and won't be the last - but that still doesn't make it right.

Lots of people rob banks too, but that doesn't mean it's okay.

This writer has been covering politics on all levels for more than 40 years, and has probably witnessed at least two dozen defections from one party to another.

They all have two things in common: they're based on raw, political ambition rather than some grand and glorious principle; and they rob their local voters of their democratic right to be represented by the party of their choice.

And that, dear hearts, is the rub.

In the last federal election, the voters of Mississauga-Streetsville dutifully trudged off to the polls and decided, in their best collective wisdom, that Khan, the Liberal, was their man.

People vote for many reasons, but one of the primary reasons in our system - where we don't actually vote directly for our prime minister - is to vote for the party which you want to see running the government.

Regular readers will know that had I been a voter in Mississauga-Streetsville, the Liberal candidate would not have been my choice. However, once the votes were counted, I would have accepted the reality that my federal representative was a Liberal. And, as in all levels of government, he was elected not just to represent those who voted for him, but to represent everyone in his riding.

Sounds pretty basic, eh?

Yet, by defecting from one party to another, Khan - in the same way that previous defectors have - has robbed the people of his riding of their democratic rights to be represented by a Liberal. He has stolen their vote.

He didn't ask them for permission. Nor did they give it.

He just took it upon himself to give them the electoral finger.

I think this is wrong and there is a simple solution: if you want to change parties you should, by law, be forced to resign and then run in a by-election. If the voters re-elected you, fair enough. If they don't, you're toast.

But it's not going to happen. Why? Because all parties, nomatter what they say about their support for democracy, want to retain the opportunity to buy and sell each other.

And they wonder why people don't trust politicians. Hah!



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

Pondering the big picture: we're related to bananas!

We are all living on borrowed time, you know.

I suppose it's not really time that's borrowed, but space. We're biological renters, nothing more.

Many of us spend our lives in disarray, moving from one milestone to another turning point as much by chance as by design.

As Forrest Gump said: "I don't know if we each have a destiny, or if we're all just floatin' around accidental-like on a breeze. But I, I think maybe it's both."

Once we arrive in early adulthood our worries begin. We worry about employment, money, car repairs and the rate of inflation. We spend a great deal of our time consumed with worry and doubt. In this civilized nation of ours, our current legacy is "status anxiety." It's like being on a treadmill of desire and materialism - as we achieve more, we are slaves to the uphill trek. We're chained to the machine and can't find the off switch.

We have created a world, here in the west, where luxuries - that fancy car and nice big house - have become necessities. Personal debt, as reflected on credit cards nation-wide, is just one example that we're living way beyond our means.

Maybe because I'm a product of immigrant parents who worked hard and earned average incomes that my take on things is a bit different. These days, my extravagance consists of surprising my family with Chinese takeout.

I know, I should be spoiling myself with lavish things, drinking martinis after work and buying \$1,000 suits. But you know, allowing my children to play sports and learn to skate seems to be a better use of my limited funds. And, making a regular contribution to their RESPs is vital to their future success. If I have to eat Mac and Cheese a while longer, so be it.

But what's come to my attention (and perhaps slipped by others) is that in keeping up the Joneses, we not only lose our own identity, but the things we seek become commonplace. What's the big deal of owning a BMW when the parking lot at the grocery store is filled with them? And, any \$400,000 subdivision home in Bolton is just like the next one.

We are attaining things once considered status symbols. But in reality, they are now just common, everyday "things." Unimpressive and replaceable all.



Mark Pavilons

Do we keep aiming for bigger and more because that's what we think we want?

I wonder if affluent types, even those in our own community, spend as much time, effort and money on their kids as they do on their expensive "toys."

In recent years, I have seen more nannies at local parks than ever before. What that says to me is more and more affluent couples are finding surrogate parents for their young.

Last summer, when my family was at an Ontario resort, we came across one or two surrogates. The only time the whole family was together was the dinner hour. The rest of the day, the kids were in the care of the nanny, giving the parents time to lay around soaking up the UV.

And here I thought a family vacation was just that - fun time spent together making memories.

Call me judgmental if you like, but I just don't get it.

We trudge through our daily routines, taking out the trash with surprising gusto and doing the dishes by hand when the dishwasher is sidelined by a leaky hose. Whether you're making minimum wage, or raking in \$100,000 per year, these humbling tasks equal the playing field.

And we don't manage our time very well. We're rushed, to the point where eating on the run is a luxury.

Some of us still care - we work at low-paying jobs because we think we're making a difference. I know that's archaic thinking and I should see a shrink, but alas, my health plan doesn't cover one!

Since our time on this planet is limited, should we be wasting it by stressing ourselves over unimportant things? That's the question every generation has likely asked itself at one point, but I have yet to hear a comprehensive answer and game plan.

We're suffering - as individuals and as a species. More of us are dying - at

younger ages and from previously "rare" or "unusual" cancers. With that fact staring us in the face, why do we continue on our ignorant path to self-destruction?

If Forrest Gump (and others) is correct and we each have a destiny, I doubt that destiny involves European sports cars, TVs the size of swimming pools, buying low and selling high and ignoring our fellow human beings.

There's strength in numbers. Maybe we're more connected to our world than we think.

While we have yet to find the missing link and prove our ancestry, humans do share 98% of our DNA with chimps. But we also share 85% of our genes with mice; 46% with yeast; 60% with fruit flies and even 50% with bananas (I'm not making that up).

One could argue that we have a rather odd family tree, being related to everything from primates to fruit.

Of course, it's misleading science. Alter just one genome in the 3.2 billion base pairs and you change us completely.

But it also begs the ques-

tion - why do we have anything in common at all with a banana? A banana can't enjoy the craftsmanship that goes into a fine German automobile, nor can it wear Armani with ease. And yet, we're long-lost "cousins!"

Maybe everything on Earth is connected in some microscopic way. That in itself is fascinating. Are we all part of the bigger picture, and are there bananas in heaven?

On a larger scale, do we all share an inherent energy (aside from genes) that makes us part of the whole? We've been on this planet for roughly four billion years and still, we know so little about our world. Aphids, snails and coral may all have "souls" and a common link bestowed by the Creator.

Each time a species dies on this planet, we are affecting our own future. We should shudder each time we hear their cries.

And here we are demanding GPS on our cell phones.

Attention passengers, the plane to Gamorrah has been overbooked. Seats are still available for Hell. Have a nice flight!

Consultant is retained

Clarifica Inc. was recently retained by Caledon council to complete a comprehensive storm water management facility inventory and maintenance plan for the Town.

Clarifica submitted a bid of \$49,543 which was higher than two other proposals, but staff ranked the proposal from Clarifica the highest overall.

The Town owns 32 storm water management facilities which treat and/or control the storm water runoff from most of the urban areas within the Town.



2007 BUDGET MEETINGS

The Town of Caledon's draft 2007 Budget will be discussed at the following meetings in Council Chambers at Town Hall:

Members of the public are invited to attend presentations of the Town's proposed 2007 budget.

Tuesday, January 30
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Tuesday, February 6
(in lieu of regularly scheduled Council meeting)
1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

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