

The perils of social media

There's an old saying that fire is a good servant, but a bad master. The same could easily be said about social media. But there's an important difference: If your house is burning down, you know the fire has got the better of you. With social media, it's not so easy to tell when you have lost control.

The recent, remarkable election in the U.S. revealed how thoroughly healthy debate has suffered. On social media like Facebook and Twitter, our friends invariably hold the same views as us. Anyone who ventures a contrary opinion is condemned by the multitude; it is often so unpleasant that the best option seems to be to stay quiet. Thus we remain in an echo chamber where only one political opinion is expressed continuously.

Many factors contribute to this problem. One is the rudeness of many people when they're online and unable to see a real person at the other end of the conversation. Who wants to confront someone like that? Another is the way social media works.

On Facebook, for example, the algorithms note what you click on, then give you more of the same. That's fine, if you like videos of pets. But on political issues, receiving more and more of what you already agree with will eventually suffocate you. We all need to be challenged, if society is to stay healthy, democratic and civil. All of this marks the advent of the so-called post-truth society. In this divisive world, feelings are more important than objective facts. Extremist commentary pushes nuanced views out of the way. An angrily typed retort is more satisfying than an honest conversation. As stories pass from one online outlet to the next, accuracy gets degraded. Outright hoaxes disguised as news are accepted as true, while legitimate fact-checking features are disregarded.

No one who uses modern communications technology is immune to these difficulties. But if we can't discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems. President Barack Obama said recently. Perhaps one answer is to help young people better differentiate between accurate, richly reported news and shallow, fake information.

A renewed emphasis on media literacy as part of the compulsory Grade 10 civics class would be a constructive move. It is also a hopeful sign that Facebook and Google have responded by vowing to choke off advertising dollars from the merchants of fake news. The Internet is still in its chaotic infancy, with many rules waiting to be written.

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Letters to the editor

Time to vote independent

Kathleen Wynne admits that she is the reason for these immoral, unlawful, unconstitutional, abusive electricity charges — another breach of trust. Liberals are not the only reason — it is every party.

Ontarians should face the reality of the party system. Every political party would do the exact same thing if they were in power.

Look at what Bob Rae did when the NDP were in power. We must be thankful it was a very short time, but the NDP did more damage during that time than any other government, except the Davis PCs.

Next, the Liberals were in power. They attacked the justice system and made it extremely hard for people to stand up for themselves. They changed the oaths sworn by the Justices of the Peace. They only have to swear to do a good job (?) — not an oath to the Queen, so does this

mean the lower courts are part of the Queen's courts?

Then we had the Harris/Eves PCs taking their marching orders from the failure Davis and the New Demo-Progressive Con-Liberal back-room boys. Davis PC's started the over-legislation of Ontarians and it was Harris that came out wanting to privatize Hydro. Now it's the Wynne government looking to do the same thing. All parties will want to because of their own mismanagement.

As stated by the Right Hon. G. H. Chalkies, in the Ontario Legislative Assembly Hansard Vol. 4, 1946, It is the power of the people, made usable for the people, by the people. It is the people who paid for the infrastructure through their taxes, their hard work and it was to be at cost without insidious delivery charges, without Global Adjustments, without paying for wind/solar monopolies (Samsung/Korea Consortium).

The pricing of electricity was not to be used as a weapon against the people; it was to make life easier to

live. Electricity pricing should not, in any way, shape or form, be something that the average person, in Ontario, should have to seek assistance to pay for.

I've seen the application from the Ontario Electricity Support Program. Question — how is the CRA to share information with OESP when it isn't to disclose your information with anyone?

And when you are paying over a \$1,000 a month, will \$30 really help? What an insult to humanity. This is unconstitutional and violates moral, as well as legal, norms.

This is the evolution Wynne was talking about — The New-Demo Progressive Con-Liberal Party, because they know you will continue to vote at least one of them into power, in spite of yourselves.

Isn't it time for a complete change. Find an independent to vote for because, you may be able to hold, at least, them accountable.

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