

RETURNS

“Boy am I glad that is over”. “What” I hear you ask, “your operation?” Well yes I am glad that it is over but that’s not exactly what I had in mind with my opening comments.

For those of you who have not yet heard, several weeks ago I had a total knee replacement and for those of you who knew and sent along best wishes for recovery, thank you and yes I am doing just fine.

It’s surprising how many people have had this operation. The hospital in Belleville has earned a reputation for its excellence with this surgery. I again comment on the fine care delivered by the nurses and other staff and say we are fortunate to have such dedicated people.

I said at the Rotary Club yesterday that I had never expected to be a ‘man of steel’ but am more than honored to join the group that carry around blocks of Titanium internally.

Enough of me except to say this event caused me to miss an article for the first time since I started in the Mirror. Hopefully, it won’t happen again.

What I really meant with my opening statement was that the election campaign is for the most part over and after spending \$300 million dollars; we are generally back where we started, with no majority. I say, for the most part, since the Liberals will be faced with sorting out the leadership role which will not necessarily be easy. I have lived through numerous elections over the years with varying degrees of interest. For a number of years, because of my position in the Public Service I was forbidden to even put a sign on my lawn although the rest of the family were not encumbered from participating as much as they wanted.

I lived in Peel County which had an odd record in that it usually voted Conservative Provincially (of course Bill Davis was born and raised in Brampton) and voted Liberal Nationally. There was a tight campaign one year, I don’t recall which, where outcomes were difficult to predict. One of my colleagues asked me for my views and I merely related to him what my farmer neighbor had said to me the previous day. It turned out that my neighbor was right and I became known, in a jocular way, as the back fence pundit.

There are many changes that have occurred over the years in the way campaigns are conducted and not all of the changes are positive. One of the major concerns for me is the continuing personal attacks on the candidates. It’s as though we have forgotten that we are all human and have

not necessarily lived a faultless life. I often think of the biblical admonition –let him among you who is without sin cast the first stone.

Modern campaigns are filled with innuendoes, mocking statements, personal comments about the candidate’s abilities, cartoons and caricatures ridiculing the candidate and his family and his abilities to speak perfectly in both official languages. We seem to spend so much time dealing with this sort of nonsense rather than a real analysis of what the candidate and his/her party stands for, which is lost in the fog of personal attacks.

I have no quarrel with serious debates and besting someone in an argument. Indeed I enjoy the cut and thrust of arguments made and arguments destroyed. It is this cut and thrust of politics that separates the leaders from the followers and leads to an analysis of the issues and the approaches the various parties will take in solving the country’s problems. It’s on this basis that decisions should be taken.

One of my favorite stories concerns Mitchell Hepburn who was a Liberal Premier of Ontario from 1934 – 1942. At the start of the campaign that led to his victory in 1934 he was at a fair in south western Ontario when some people prevailed on him to make a speech. They searched for a suitable place for him to stand so he could be seen by the crowd but all that could be found was a manure spreader. He opened his remarks while standing on the spreader by saying ‘This is the first time I’ve ever delivered a speech from a Tory platform.’ This type of humor could just as easily been used by his opponent to the same general merriment.

For those of you who are interested in this whole subject I suggest you read the latest MacLeans magazine which has a generally balanced analysis of the last campaign. Anyway, we undoubtedly will shortly be spending another \$300 million and have to go through all this all over again. Maybe they should introduce legislation again that sets the date of each election just to remind the Prime Minister and while they are at it they could add to the legislation that personal attacks should be banned – so there – I’m back!

- John A Jackson