

Politics: Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future

by Jim-beau Lloyceah

Oct.31st- Today is Halloween. Many people will be running around tonight in costumes. Some are even politicians, which is what I want to stamp my opinion on this week. So from the campaign trail, here are a few things to ponder...

IS THAT A COSTUME OR...

Is it the real thing? I found myself asking this recently. It seems most parties have no compunctions about bringing out former leaders to try to rally support. I want to discuss the most alarming example of this.

Joe Clark brought out former PM Brian Mulroney at a recent fundraising dinner. This simple act only goes to show the level of desperation that exists among members of the fifth most popular party in the country.

On the surface this looks like a simple reunion of Mulroney's glory days, when he installed the loyal Clark into any portfolio that needed a fireman. But regardless of how one perceives Joe, we must assume that he has a memory. Why?

It was Mulroney who came out of nowhere in 1976 to run a nasty campaign that he eventually lost to Clark for the Tory mantle. Bitter, Mulroney allegedly hit the bottle hard while he sharpened his knives for his planned comeback.

Clark won the ensuing 1979 federal election but an ill advised gas tax brought down his minority government. The then leaderless Liberals brought back the recently retired Pierre Trudeau and he trounced Clark in the 1980 election.

But in 1983, Clark was blind sided at a party convention. Members were leading a Mulroney inspired murmur when Clark rose to the challenge of a confidence vote. He lost that and Mulroney beat him the second time around. But Clark, a junkie of the sort that only Sid Vicious could rival in intensity, remained loyal to the party and served (or got served

by) Mulroney well.

The 1993 Tory disintegration revealed how serious the public backlash was towards the Mulroney administration. Old Brian disappeared for awhile quietly collecting lucrative board seats for multinational companies. But he has been back lately, trying to rehabilitate his image and, for reasons beyond my comprehension, attempting to thrust himself as one of Canada's great PM's. But this was, thankfully, a short lived comeback until last week. Why would Clark blot out all these cruel memories and bring out the architect of his own downfall and the primary reason for his own political comeback?

These are tough times for the Tory party. They are mired in debt. Mulroney has a few outstanding IOU's out there and he is still popular in Quebec, relative to both Clark and Chretien. But the biggest problem for the Tories is that they are on the edge of getting wiped out.

There core of support is in Atlantic Canada right now and three and a half years in opposition has netted the region very little. The Grits are targeting these seats to make up for expected losses elsewhere, primarily in Ontario.

The few Tory seats in Quebec will disappear as the party lack former leader Jean Charest, who was popular there. They have some hopes out west but the Alliance will be difficult to topple. Even in Calgary Center, where Joe is running, the Tories are in trouble. He's trying to conduct a national campaign when his own riding is anything but certain. If this continues, Clark might need to send in costumed voters to try to boost his sagging fortunes. Otherwise, Mulroney's appearance will be the least scary thing about the Tory campaign.

WEIRD COSTUMES SOUTH OF...

The border. On Nov.7th, Americans will be choosing the man to lead them into the 21st century. The challengers for this are former Tennessee Senator and present Vice President Al Gore, and former Texas Governor George W. Bush. The race appears to be extremely close and might only be decided when the results from the western time zones come in. Those waiting to stay up for the final results can expect to be up until at least 1AM AST and maybe even later. Why?

The Americans use a different system from us. They select their president based on electoral college votes. Electoral votes represent the total number of Senators and Representatives each state holds in Congress (The Senate and the House of Representatives together). These votes are represented by elected members from both parties who pledge to cast their votes for whichever party wins the state. A candidate needs 270 of the 538 electoral votes in order to gain the presidency.

The battle itself pits two very different southerners. Both come from political families. Gore's family has a long history of public service with his dad once representing the state of Tennessee as a Senator. Bush's dad is well known as a former Vice President, President, and perhaps the most powerful position of all, the head of the CIA. These long-term roots are becoming more important for candidates seeking the most powerful elected office in the world.

The battle itself pits Bush's raw conservatism against Gore's compassionate liberalism. The big question is whether Americans want to abandon a party that has led them through immense prosperity in the 90's. Bush is into law and order, which would seem to run counter to his own experience. In his time, he has sent more than 300 criminals to their death.

But old George Jr once had an affinity for illegal narcotics in the

70's. Such are the potential trappings of the wealthy. But he cleaned himself up and has done quite well for himself.

However, those who have gone through the same experience George did, have found that Texas, under Bush, willingly opens their prison doors to these folks. Frankly, this type of hypocrisy appals me. Further, Bush refuses to even acknowledge his bumpy past. And this isn't even something that bad but it begs the question, what else are you hiding?

As for Gore, he could potentially be the first pro environment president since Teddy Roosevelt at the turn of the last century. Gore has written extensively on this and is quite knowledgeable about the effects the path humanity is cutting right now and how it will affect the health of our planet. This is good; perhaps American leadership in this area could turn the tide and public interest into this increasingly important area.

I expect the race to be tight. Lots of money will be spent (Bush spent more than \$170 million just to become the Republican party candidate- God knows what was spent by him and his oil buddies on this campaign).

In the end, my instincts and my heart have blindfolded my brain and I believe that Gore will win. In the privacy of the voting booth, I think Americans will reflect on how the Democrats ran the economy and probably be a little scared about another Bush led government. But Bush is targeting the aging baby boomers as conservative votes. If he can convince women, who are overwhelmingly supportive of Gore, that he is the best man, then he could win.

But I doubt this will happen. And all of this is good. What better a president than one who acts like Mother Nature... or is that just what he is wearing?

GONZO OUT