

The politics of Mum



By Nate Smelle

WITH MOTHER'S DAY approaching I began thinking of all of the important life lessons Mum had taught me over the years. Too many to count, I whittled the list down to a David Letterman-style ?Top Ten.? Coming in a close second to understanding and practising compassion is the value of democracy and the meaning of vote. I have always enjoyed talking politics with my parents. Even before I was old enough to vote I remember taking part in discussions with her and my Dad about how our tax dollars were being spent. In the beginning the injustices being perpetrated by our elected officials disgusted me to such a degree that by the time I became old enough to vote I could not bring myself to cast a ballot. Thankfully, rather than getting angry at me for exercising my right to choose they asked me why I had decided not to participate. If it wasn't for the conversations that followed in the coming months as Jean Chrétien settled into his second term as prime minister who knows what kind of savage anarchist I may have become. Luckily for me, and for Canada for that matter, this was also the last time I didn't vote.

Hearing the news that Rachel Notley had led the NDP to victory in Alberta I had to pinch myself to make sure I was not dreaming. Pinch-test passed I looked out the window to check for any flying pigs. Nope, just birds. There is no way Canada's most ?conservative? province would take such a sharp left turn...is there? Must be the latest satirical public service announcement by Anonymous, I convinced myself. Writing off the story as a political prank or a gross miscommunication spawned by hearsay on Facebook I continued to browse through my emails and messages. Noticing the credibility of the news sources reporting on this story as time went on, it dawned on me that this was no joke; this was a case of history in the making.

For the first time in more than 40 years Albertans had demanded a change in leadership. No matter what side of the political spectrum you find yourself leaning towards there is no denying that this election signifies truly a historic shift in Canadian politics. Why would the province usually pushing for pipelines and all things petroleum suddenly elect a party openly calling for tougher environmental protection, renewable energy and a \$15 an hour minimum wage? Wanting to gain insight into how this political transformation had occurred, it was time to call the folks for a few words of wisdom. Having switched their political allegiances from blue to orange about 15 years ago, I figured they would be able to offer a relative perspective.

Answering the phone as if she knew it would be me on the other end, Mum couldn't wait to talk politics. Enthusiastically we went over the details of the election before getting into the big question of why. Asking what had motivated her and my Dad to start voting differently way back when she said they didn't have one specific reason other than it just made good sense. In light of the information they had available to them at the time, she said, it started to become clear that the Conservative Party was no longer looking out for their interests as small business owners.

Without a single explanation as to why Albertans collectively decided to turn away from a party promoting the merits of corporate-rule, and choose a party that gives priority to income inequality and the environmental either, she said there are likely as many reasons as there are voters. Asking her what she thought this meant for the federal election this fall she managed to respond like a true politician.

?The winds of change are blowing strong,? she said.

?Not just in Alberta... everywhere.?