

Don't Talk While I'm Interrupting!

Rod Taylor

Leader, CHP Canada

Democracy is a good deal better than dictatorship. At least our ancestors thought so and many died so that we could enjoy the privileges of citizenship in a democratic nation where most decisions are a group effort and national direction is guided in large part at the ballot box. The possibility, however, of maintaining a civilized society depends also on the moral character of those who make the rules and that of those who vote them in. Democracy can be defined by regulation but enacting laws is only the beginning. Without personal integrity in leaders, the best of constitutional law can be made irrelevant.

In last night's "leaders debate"—which some reporters are at least recognizing as limited to the "main" party leaders, we saw a breakdown in civil discourse (nothing new in Canadian politics) which—if allowed to continue—will accelerate the erosion of public morality in Canada. Young Mr. Trudeau distinguished himself by trying to extinguish real debate. He repeatedly overwhelmed Mr. Harper by interrupting him as he was trying to speak. The moderator, predictably, did nothing to restore the "rule of law" which Mr. Trudeau brought out as a convenient phrase to try to shame the elder Conservative leader on the topic of revoking the dual citizenship of convicted terrorists. While shouting over and drowning out the Prime Minister's remarks, the cocky leader of the Liberal Party abandoned decorum and respectful dialogue, not to mention the "rule of law" governing debates.

Are we really a country that rallies to the person who shouts the loudest, interrupts the oftenest and denies his opponent the opportunity to be heard? Freedom of speech is a great thing but unless one's message can be heard, that freedom is irrelevant. Yet, based on some post-debate analysis, many Canadians say that Trudeau won the debate. Not in my eyes. People who want to censor the ideas and opinions of others are either afraid of those ideas, recognizing their value and strength or they are so arrogant as to presume that no ideas are worth considering other than their own. As I mentioned at the beginning, democracy is better than dictatorship but a sham democracy begins to resemble a dictatorship.

In a dictatorship, only the ideas of the leader or the elite are allowed to be published or broadcast. In a dictatorship, citizens are compelled to demonstrate their loyalty to a person, a party or an ideology. In a dictatorship, those who think for themselves are shamed, excluded and denied access to jobs, housing and influence.

The current campaign environment brings out some of those exclusionary tendencies. We in the Christian Heritage Party feel this pressure in a unique way during elections. While Mr. Harper was shouted down, insulted and hindered in his ability to present his opinions, the leader of the CHP was not even allowed on the stage. Nor, by the way, were the leaders of the Green Party and the Bloc. Across the country, our candidates have always faced varying levels of exclusion, based solely on the size of the party and our past electoral results (which, in turn were partly influenced by exclusionary practices...) Where is the forward-looking openness of which we hear so much?

The CHP has had local candidates refused a place in local debates. Does this make sense? Why can Chambers of Commerce, TV and radio stations and newspaper chains pick losers and winners? Because Parliament has established rules which ignore fairness and favour those parties already in power. National media have generally failed to recognize, mention or in any way report on the campaigns of CHP candidates. Yet our candidates, our party and our leader have to meet all the same registration requirements as the Big Three. We're under the same reporting requirements and spending limitations. (Don't worry; the CHP will not be spending \$50 million on this campaign like some other parties may. The larger parties can do it with the help of taxpayer subsidies; we subsist on the generous donations of our members and don't spend money we don't have.)

Back to last night's debate. In many ways the CHP supports the foreign policies of the beleaguered Mr. Harper. We stand with him on the war against ISIS. We stand with him on the importance of properly screening refugees and with reaching out especially to refugees fleeing religious persecution (those in the most dire need would be Christians and Jews who are being killed for their faith). We stand with him on the revoking of citizenship for convicted terrorists. We question the wisdom or necessity of C-51—which some claim will sacrifice freedoms without meaningfully improving our security—but we agree that security is a high priority.

One other statement of Mr. Trudeau deserves to be challenged and the major media will not do it. He spoke of the importance of protecting Canada's "most vulnerable" and immediately promised to make abortion even more available than it is today. Who is more vulnerable than the pre-born child? Why is no major media outlet pointing out this hypocrisy? Why does Mr. Harper not point it out? As we all know, Mr. Harper has chosen not to defend the pre-born "refugees" already within our borders who are not only rejected but also killed. We continue to defend their right to life.

With that, I ask that all who are reading this (all of whom, by definition have been granted the tremendous privilege of being born) exercise the right of citizenship and help guide our nation with your vote. If you have a CHP candidate in your riding, please give him or her your vote and your support. If not, please ask the Conservative candidate where he or she stands on the issues of life, marriage, justice and freedom. Ask him or her what he or she will do if elected to defend life and restore traditional marriage? Vote accordingly. If you have no pro-life candidate in 2015, determine in your heart that you will not let that happen again.

The "main" opposition leaders—those on the stage last night—are attacking the PM recklessly, rudely and personally. Rudeness does not particularly qualify an individual for public office. If you want policies that consistently defend innocent human life and a commitment to righteous governance and a return to civility within our democracy, join CHP¹ and help us turn the tide.

Footnotes

¹ www.chp.ca/get-involved