

## **Martha's Monthly November 2006**

### **Slightly Unusual, Really Weird, and Totally Bizarre: A Tale of a Leadership Race**

Regular readers of Martha's missives may be unsurprised to hear that she is back on Ebay. Martha really loves Ebay...not for the bargains, but for the look into a subculture to which she would have no other exposure. One of her favorite places to start is the category names because if a category gets a name then it is likely that a few thousand items fall within that category. Last time she logged on to surf the sub-world she found that the category Everything Else had a new sub-category called Weird Stuff (with over 10,000 items). Weird Stuff was further divided into Slightly Unusual, Really Weird, and Totally Bizarre. By this time Martha was snorting her morning coffee. How exactly does a seller know that his piece of driftwood that looks like a human heart and washed up on the shores of Australia is Totally Bizarre and the Beanie doll of Jane Austen is only Slightly Unusual. (Martha couldn't possibly make this stuff up so these were actual sale items earlier this month. And, sorry, both auctions are done.)

See Martha's main concern is that the people who, say, own a Jane Austen look alike doll or treasure a piece of driftwood in the shape of a human heart are likely not the best gauges of what is just unusual and what counts as bizarre.

It is somewhat like the leadership race for the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta.

There are eight men running. (The one woman, Alana DeLong, who had thought of running dropped out before the race officially started) These are eight men who are all white, middle-aged, professional men. One is a medical doctor, one a lawyer, one a University professor, one an accountant, one runs a mixed farm, and three are businessmen. Only Gary McPherson stands out in any way because while he is a longtime Conservative and a business man he is also a recipient of the Order of Canada and uses a wheelchair. All of them have significant ties to the Klein kingdom (McPherson has never been elected but sat as Klein's appointee to Chair the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities). All but Dinning and McPherson were around the caucus table when Klein thought out loud and called it the Third Way.

When these eight men discuss health care listeners are told by Ted Morton that Dinning is "irresponsible" to suggest anything but a gutting of the entire system the way Morton does. Is that the driftwood collector calling the Jane Austen collector bizarre or what?

Sometimes sanity must prevail. Driftwood hearts and Austen dolls are okay as long as their collectors hold no power. But when the slightly unusual and the totally bizarre are all there is to choose from there is a problem.

Martha has steadfastly refused to join the Conservative Party in order to cast a vote but she might be persuaded to fork over \$5 and sign up if she could vote for the 9<sup>th</sup> candidate: NOTA. (None of the Above)

For Martha there is no reason to have to choose between driftwood hearts and Austen dolls. You can just say NO. And in this case, the population should be able to say, “Thanks for coming out guys but we want a better set of choices.”

So this month, Martha wants you to do something a little different. Usually she asks you to write a letter to the premier and express your feminist thoughts on a piece of public policy. But this month, just in time for the November 25<sup>th</sup> election of a new leader for the Progressive Conservatives, Martha wants you to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Consider elaborating on why you are NOT taking out a membership in the Conservative Party and why you won't choose between a bunch of men who don't speak for working people, single mothers, those not working in the oil patch, parents of kids with disabilities who can't get adequate support in schools, patients living in long term care because they can't find a PCA to work in their home, students, the families struggling to pay rent, the mothers who can't pay school fees, the new immigrants struggling to find work and learn English, and the families unable to find quality, affordable child care.

[Here](#) is a list of the newspapers in Alberta. Choose one in your neighborhood and write away. They all have ways to send your letter by email. They like short letters (less than 200 words) that are to the point. And smaller newspapers print everything they get. So go get published and speak out for all those who won't buy a membership either. Martha has included a sample letter you may want to use as a template. Please remember to email Martha your letter at [marthasmonthly@yahoo.ca](mailto:marthasmonthly@yahoo.ca)

Dear Editor:

I am one of the millions of people **not** buying a membership in the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta. The main reason I refuse to buy a membership and vote in the leadership race is that I do not believe the party has offered people like me anything to get behind or get excited about. I am an average Albertan, much like Klein's famous Marthas and Henrys, and I don't own an oil well. I do have a family to be concerned about, a home to afford, and a job to maintain. I am worried about my kids' education now, their post-secondary education in the future, my future, my environment, my neighbours, and our province. I think AISH rates need to be raised so that people with disabilities can live in dignity. I think school funding should be secure and predictable so I don't have to keep selling chocolates and paying school fees. I think water and electricity are basics and need to be regulated. The Conservative party might have got my vote one time but they won't now. We need leaders who speak for the real people.

Sincerely,

Your name and contact info so they can verify it came from you.