



FORD NATION + TORONTO

November 7th, 2013

The headlines about Mayor Rob Ford rebounded across the entire world on October 31st. Within 24 hours all daily Toronto newspapers called on him to resign. Even the Toronto Sun, his biggest booster and editorial apologist, joined the chorus. Whether he goes sooner or later, the damage to this city's reputation will last for a long time to come.

Ford is not the first person in public office to deal with personal problems, and he will not be the last. Unions often assist members who are dealing with substance abuse, and the first priority is to get that person help in overcoming their dependence. It is not unusual for someone in that situation to exhibit a pattern of deceit and denial. But in denying the behaviour, Ford and his brother went after the professionalism of the journalists and police who were trying to discover the truth, all the while continuing to play the victim card.

The more disturbing issue seems to be that time and again Ford gets away with breaking the rules. Any other person seen dozens of times by police receiving "packages" in their car in random locations would long ago be facing criminal charges. It is ironic that despite the conservative creed that deplors gangs and drugs, this mayor has a long history of consorting with individuals heavily involved in those activities. The fact that one was later murdered speaks to the nature of that sub-culture that does so much harm to many poor communities in the city.

Nevertheless, the millionaire Ford brothers keep pretending to be the underdogs being "picked on" by some mythical elites. It's not a surprise – it's a classic Republican/Conservative strategy to pose as an outsider while implementing an agenda favoured by the wealthiest forces in society.

But the real elites in Toronto cannot wait to move Ford out of the way. Bay Street would much prefer a leader such as John Tory or Karen Stintz – who clearly said that she supports and would continue Ford's fiscal approach to the city and its workers. It is notable that her election team includes some of the key Liberal Party players that guided the McGuinty regime into its divisive austerity role. At a time when the Conservative brand - under Harper at the national level or Ford locally - is rapidly losing credibility, there may be little patience for another Conservative moving into the Mayor's seat.

There will be much more drama in the twelve months leading to the next Municipal election. The labour movement will continue to work hard for the kind of city that serves working families in every neighbourhood. There is a lot at stake in the ongoing fight for a healthy city where prosperity and respect are shared by all. Let's hope the public does not lose sight of that real prize in this turbulent political time.