

Albert Jack's Election Viewpoint - 16th April 2007

It comes as no surprise to see that the Conservative Council candidates standing in the forthcoming local election are claiming the credit for their Save the Royal Surrey Campaign. But most locals will treat this electioneering with the contempt it deserves. Whilst it is obvious all parties have joined in the effort with equal energy, none of them should be applauded for it because it is expected of them. The idea that anybody trying to win a vote in Guildford would not support the campaign is too stupid to even consider. That anybody should applaud themselves, or worse still, be elected on the strength of them carrying out their duties as, on this occasion, we would expect them to should be seen in context. Because, more importantly, the reason we have this problem in the first place is thanks to the Conservatives and their voters. Allow me to explain.

Most of us know the current Labour Government should be arrested and will cling onto power by using whatever desperate measures they can. So if they are going to treat boroughs like Guildford with any respect at all during the run up to national elections they have to believe there is a vote or two to be won down here. They will not be sending any Health Service money to any Tory town when there are votes to be had in more marginal boroughs across the country that return a decent percentage of Labour Councillors in May, so we need to become more enlightened with our voting in future.

I am not for or against any party because I don't believe there should be any in local politics. But I remember the response of a dear friend of mine, the late Tony Banks (Lord Stratford) when tackled by a voter during his bid to become Mayor of London. 'Why should I vote for you Banks? called a passing bus driver. 'You shouldn't', replied Tony, 'You should be voting for yourself and whether you think I can deliver your sort of London.'

Of course, that is what we should all be doing. Voting for ourselves, without blind allegiance to any party in order to mould the sort of Guildford we personally would like to live in. For example; if you want to see the Civic Hall project cancelled and the current building renovated and reopened by the end of the year, ask your candidates what their personal views are. If you agree with them vote for them, regardless of if you have voted Tory all your life but that candidate is Labour, Lib Dem or Monster Raving Looney. In the words of the good Lord, vote for yourself.

Albert Jack's Election Viewpoint - 23rd April 2007

I have had several conversations with both good friends and strangers during the last few days. And I am in despair. Last week I explained in this column that we should all be voting for ourselves and for whatever candidate we thought would best represent our own interests, regardless of which political party they are signed up to. Because if you blindly remain loyal to a party, without reason, then your vote is as wasted as it is by not voting at all, even though that is tempting.

One friend read what I had written, laughed and said to me, 'you are dead right.' So I asked him who he was voting for and he said, 'Despite the Labour Party being rubbish around here I am voting for them, always have done, always will do.' So, obviously, I shot him. Another close friend, who is a fully paid up member of the Conservative Party also agreed with what I had written but told me he wasn't voting this time as he 'could not vote for any of the Tories around here.' Then I dropped him off in the wrong place and he had to walk home.

Last night I had a great conversation in the Kings Head with an eighteen year old political student, who will, I have no doubt, become Prime Minister one day. She also agreed with me and cheered me up when she said she hadn't decided who to vote for yet and I bought her a drink. However, she then added, 'but probably Conservative because my Dad always has.' So I took it back again and drank it myself.

Last year me and my oldest friend (dating back to our school days) were on our way to dinner in Fleet when he insisted I took a detour so he could go and vote in the local election over there. I then asked him which way he had swung and he replied, 'I didn't. I spoiled my paper so they can all get stuffed.' The idea that we had made ourselves late just so he could stick his two fingers up to his local council made me laugh, because it is the sort of thing we did at school and just the sort of thing I am tempted to do myself now. But it doesn't really help does it. He would have been better off simply voting for whoever was not currently in office, and try to have his current councillor replaced by somebody else, whatever party they represented. Anybody would do.

So what have I learnt this week, apart from that I obviously need to find some new friends? Such is the private and public dissatisfaction some people of Guildford have with our current group of town Mothers and Fathers they should all go to the polls on May 3rd, and then vote for whoever is not currently a councillor, despite the political party they represent. Let's all start again, afresh, with a new lot on May 4th. It could be the best thing we ever do for each other.