

# David Swann's planet is a good one

JACK LOCKE

With the recent departure of Dave Taylor from the Alberta Liberals, news reports quoted Taylor as saying he didn't know what planet leader David Swann was living on. I know which planet.

I first met Swann when I was challenging the City of Calgary's water fluoridation bylaw in court. It was the early 1990s.

Swann had worked for the local health authority promoting water fluoridation during the 1989 municipal plebiscite. And despite our diametrically opposite views, we became good friends.

He was concerned about the health of Calgarians, I was concerned about the health of Calgarians. He was a doctor, I was a baker and a freelance writer.

No one can accuse Swann of not caring deeply about his community. The same holds true for Taylor. So why can't two Davids work together?

In Taylor's resignation letter to constituents, he says he lost confidence in Swann's leadership.

"The trouble with the Alberta Liberals is that nobody's leading, nobody's following, and nobody will get out of the way," says Taylor.

I suppose he includes himself when he says "nobody." However, a resignation is one way of taking the lead — not exactly a collegial way, but in politics it's always a struggle to get diverse opinions to coalesce.

Taylor's flight to independence indicates failure, but no one is to blame except me. I blame myself, because I didn't do enough to pull those bull-headed warriors together.

I did not really know Dave Taylor, but I once had an opportunity to see him in action.

I had brought Richard and Lois Boonstra to Calgary to explain why they were having troubles on their northern Alberta farm with Wiebo Ludwig.

Taylor and QR77 invited them to tell their stories to Calgarians. As Richard explained his upbringing, being a child in The Netherlands during the Second World War and seeing Canadian soldiers liberate their town, the true Dave Taylor came out.

Taylor explained that those Canadian soldiers, who liberated Boonstra's town from tyranny may have included his father.

As I watched Taylor express himself, extolling the values of peace and a willingness to die for democracy, I could see the human connection between all persons involved in struggle.

Taylor recognized that there was a problem in Alberta in relation to oil and gas development. And he was not satisfied to sit idle as Albertans were suffering. The guy opposes injustice!

Likewise, David Swann opposes the financial, social, environmental and health inequities that exist in Alberta. This is Swann's planet. After working with Swann in the Healthy Cities Association on a water conservation project, I had the opportunity to paddle downstream on the Bow River with him from Calgary to Medicine Hat.

The majestic Bow was suffering from over-consumption, forcing numerous portages, and Dr. Swann informed me that eating the fish was not advisable, at least not in great quantity, because of the toxic load carried by the trout.

This is also Swann's planet. About the time Swann was fired from his job as medical officer of health by the provincial government, for expressing concerns about air pollution and atmospheric degradation, the government of Alberta was also intercepting my communications. The government's measures to protect the degradation of Alberta's natural resources knows no bounds.

This is our planet. And the departure of Taylor from the Alberta Liberals is part of Swann's evolving political ecosystem.

I do hope that the good doctor is able to take surgical-political measures to cure the Liberal injury.

In Swann's official reply to Taylor's exodus, he writes that he was caught off guard. This surprises me, because Swann was always an advocate of advance illness prevention.

"The choice was his — it's unfortunate that our caucus members learned of it through the media, and we regret that he chose this course of action without speaking to us first," writes Swann.

Duh, what ever happened to communication? Communication is both a doctor's and a politician's first line of assessing illness.

Taylor's departure is a loud message that all is not well in Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

However, I know Swann is a fine physician, and that in the serendipitous world of medicine, a fever is the first sign something is wrong.

So long as the patient has not died and been buried, there is always a chance for recovery.



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Dave Taylor



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