

Dignity, Respect and Doug Ford: governing for HIS people.

2018 10 26 Rene Jansen in de Wal

As long as you are not one of those who are subjected to disrespect, division and attack on dignity you may be “the people” some now govern for.

Disrespect, division and attack on dignity do not respect people. An attempt to caricature “others” works to create the sense of “other”. The sense of disconnect this seeks is used to dehumanize others. It is also a disconnect with the faith teachings I had in my education in the TCDSB. Dignity and respect are the hallmarks of a faith that sees the image of God in everyone.

We are in a new era of politics. We have politicians who do not govern for the people. They play politics to a base. Listen carefully to the language and you can hear they respect “their” people.

Making appeals to fear and emotion, undermining understanding, a vision of individuals struggling to get along, does nothing to contribute to the common good. What role does our faith play in the broader context of community in our modern world?

When we witness obscene wealth and greed growing next to increasing poverty and the loss of the working class and the growth of precarious work, we feel like we are insecure, falling behind or even struggling. This is noteworthy because there is now more money and corporate profit than ever in our history. It is an interesting political twist when we prioritize corporate welfare over personal welfare by distracting the working class by throwing some scraps their way, scraps that are only used to reinforce the economic structures that have created the problems.

We live in an economic system that has made all workers feel more insecure despite greater and greater accumulated wealth. If you make people feel insecure enough it is not hard to distract them with scraps. It reminds me a bit of Oliver Twist. It is easy putting a few hundred dollars or even a thousand in our pockets when the economic system has left people so tight for money and feeling insecure. We live in times when almost everyone will welcome scraps. Please Sir can I have some more. For corporate wealth these are the best of times; why are these also the worst of times for the people? We have all been setup to settle and fight for scraps that get thrown our way without challenging a system that is failing average people.

Corporate profits and executives have not had a wage freeze. In fact, their salaries and “compensation” continue to escalate in obscene ways. They have not been asked to expect less for pensions. They have not been expected to downsize their homes. To be clear, there are many enlightened business owners and wealthy people. It is heartening to hear someone like Billionaire Warren Buffett publicly state his secretary “should not be paying a higher tax rate” than him. On the other hand the TD bank having record billion-dollar profits this year helped argue against a minimum wage of \$14? Really! TD Bank Group reported a profit of nearly \$3.11 billion in its latest quarter, up from \$2.77 billion in the same quarter last year. Notice they break up profit into quarters. Do the math \$3B+ per quarter would be \$12B+ a year. A footnote is that their profits went up in a year where minimum wage they argue against was raised; ironic eh?

If you work for a company that wants to pay minimum wage that is most often just a bad business model. By actions companies or bosses show a lack of respect for the workers. Paying better wages gains loyalty, reduces turnover and decreases the losses incurred by turnover and training. Companies that value their employees are the ones that have better productivity and stability. Productivity focus rather than minimum wage focus is a better business model. However bad bosses are almost epidemic, but they do not represent business needs. Rather bad bosses represent bad management or greed.

We need to recognize the rhetoric of bad bosses. We also need to recognize that enlightened corporations demonstrate we can do better. There are some good bosses and we cannot forget that. We live in Canada and we have more wealth in our country than ever in history. Canadians should expect to have fair living wages. They should expect to have their loved ones receive proper health care and long-term care. They should expect world class public education and safe communities. They should expect to retire in dignity. They should expect that we and build a better community rather than throw scraps and let people fight amongst themselves

We are asked to respect the dignity of all people. If politicians respect only those who vote for them they undermine community for personal gain. It is like the boss who has his favourites and does not know fair treatment and respect. Workers know how corrosive and insecure the workplace becomes but it makes it easier for bosses to do what they want by bully management techniques rather than leadership. They create fear and division. They are the ones who say they talked with employees and know what they want when they listened only to the voices they wanted to hear.

We must not accept bad bosses and bullies. They promote a model that made people vulnerable in the first place. We must expect more. We need leaders not politicians. Look for leaders who help us to be better, not bitter. The Common good and respect for ALL people are guiding principles that are more important now than ever.