

These are the Jims I know...and don't know...by David Russell

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, November 22, 2005

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To paraphrase Dr. Evil: “quit your frickin’ whining!”

Sam Sullivan of the Non-Partisan Association handily won back city hall and the mayor’s chain in Saturday’s civic elections in Vancouver. Like him or loathe him and his policies, the fact remains he won the race fair and square.

Unless you’re an embittered Jim Green supporter.

From a policy standpoint it’s probably not fair for me to comment on the choice the city’s electorate made: I don’t live in Vancouver (a dedicated suburbanite) and didn’t follow the policy issues with much scrutiny. For that matter, as in most elections, policy issues likely had about as much to do with winning the race as quality writing has to do with getting a sitcom produced on CBS: the deal is done more on personality than anything else.

But lo, Vision Vancouver supporters Sunday conducted much wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth when it was determined the third place candidate received more votes than the margin of votes between Sam Sullivan and Jim Green, first and second place respectively.

The controversy: third place candidate was *James* Green, not to be confused with *Jim* Green. Actually, he was to be confused with Jim Green and therein lay the problem with the election, according to that category of voters best described as sore losers.

To clear up any legal confusion let’s begin with the assurance that no electoral law exists prohibiting candidates with the same name from running in an election. However unlikely, there is nothing illegal about an entire field of Jim Greens, hardly a John-Jacob-Jingleheimer-Schmidt of a moniker to begin with.

Let the conspiracy theories begin. Was James Green an NPA plant to steal votes away from the legitimate candidacy of Jim Green? Was this an elaborate and expansive ruse to confuse the obvious simpletons of the electorate into voting for the wrong candidate, despite the party affiliation listed with each candidate on the ballot. As electoral strategies it would be risky at best.

But even if it were so, it would be a deserving electorate who foolishly chose the wrong candidate when faced with such a simple task.

Mussolini once noted that Fascism as a mechanism for selecting governance was far superior to democracy in that the average citizen scarcely had the intelligence to understand what was needed to run a country. If the Vancouver conspiracy theorists are correct – that Jim Green lost the election because the average Green voter was too stupid to know for whom they were casting a vote, *Il Duce* would be

chuckling in his grave.

Spurious too are the arguments that ballots are too difficult to understand for those who don't speak English. Last time I checked, English is one of the official languages of the country. If voters' basic grasp of language is so limited as to not understand for whom they're voting, should they be participating in democracy anyway? True, I've never checked, but I have to believe that both Jim and James Green are both Jim and James Green in English, French, Hindi, Vietnamese or Swahili.

Just once I'd like to see people lose with grace. It's not the fault of James Green that Jim Green was unsuccessful at the ballot box. If James did, in fact, "steal" votes from Jim, the fault lies with Jim and his gang for failing to make himself, his policies and his party well enough known that even the unintelligent masses could determine who was whom.