

What is generational change is a question that is often asked in board rooms by decision makers, consultants and even trade unions and employers. I do know from experience that the Defence Force, political parties, communities and employers are always seeking to answer the question and yet always fall for the trap of believing that it must have something to do with youth replacing the elder. The wiser ones amongst us have a different point of view and look upon generational change as a means of revitalising their industries to ensure that they employ individuals who are well versed in new and emerging technologies, concepts ideas and even practices that will give them the edge over their competitors.

On the other hand, a more direct definition of a generational change can be obtained by the capture of an online description provided by major search engines. In this case Google for example found: “generational change was a difference of opinions between one generation and another regarding beliefs, politics, or values”. I am not convinced that this definition will meet with everyone’s approval as the word “generational” has its roots in differences between the past and present generation. In this article I will refer to generational change within a political atmosphere and its impact on the generation being replaced being the elders of the party who have been traditionally seen as conservative in their outlook.

This takes me back a number of years ago when I stood for preselection knowing very well that I would not win under any circumstances no matter how good I performed in front of an audience that had already made their mind up about who the successful candidate was to be. In my case, I was advised that I performed well but that I was considered too old at the age of 65 and that the numbers were against me. In other preselection battles the preferred candidate fails to shine and is overshadowed by a brilliant young performer who may not have the numbers but has performed so well that it casts doubt in the minds of the preselectors. Again it is not all about the youth replacing the old but more about who is the better candidate for the role.

I on the other hand believe that generational change within a political party should be a conglomeration of processes designed to attract the best to replace the worst performers no matter what age they are. There may be times where an elder in their fifties may be better suited whereas a younger performer in their late twenties or thirties may well fit the role in an electorate that requires a youthful representative who understand the electorate and feels at home with them. Generational change at the staff level is always fraught with many hidden punji pits if decision makers are not careful. There must always be a core of elder employers to make the transition easier for the more youthful members and thus take the organisation to greater heights.

At the moment we have amongst us in parliament a youthful looking bunch of aspiring leaders who are biting at the bit so to speak to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and their concept of what they perceive a bright future for those they represent. Then on the other hand are the many eager and enthusiastic young troubadours politically dancing from one group to another in order to attract as many votes possible to win a much sought after governing role within the party.

These young troubadours or entrepreneurs can be found amongst any political party and we who are of the older generation look upon them as more meat for the political grinder unless they can impress us that they are worthy of our mentorship. In my 28 years of political activism, I can truly say that I have met a few a few that were able to rise to the occasion. I can honestly say without naming them that only three out of 40 stood out and made it to parliament. In all three cases the successful candidates were youthful, plenty of support, performed well, had the numbers and worked long before being preselected to stand out from the crown of hopefuls.

At the present moment, I can say without any shadow of doubt, we in the Liberal party are being faced with an avalanche of young aspiring politicians eager to demonstrate their mettle in in the political arena. Not only for high office but also for roles within our organisation that will lead the party forward towards a bright and invigorating future that promises to be full of technological achievements at the nano molecular level that will change the face of politics forever.

We the generation of baby boomers despite our vast knowledge and capacity to have created wealth must at one point walk off the political stadium and make our way towards the supporters stands and allow the next generation to play political football. There are the exceptions that will cling to power by the very fact their supporters want the representative to remain and are afraid to make the necessary changes for the future. These types belong to the Jurassic era and I consider them political Neanderthals.

Therefore if we as political elders of the party do not take the plunge and swim to safer waters, we must be prepared to swim with the sharks and the barracudas that will inevitably frequent the political pool. Those who refuse to swim offshore may soon find themselves drowning and be forcibly removed unceremoniously from the political pool. I for one made my mind many years ago to distance myself as I did not my use by date to become an issue that would cause dissension and aggravate supporters. I have seen a number that refused to move and soon found themselves in an embarrassing accruements situation which left them high and dry, wondering what tsunami hit them.

We have in my opinion about two years left before a new generation of leaders take the stand and make their mark upon the party. They are here already, they make mistakes no doubt about it, they are young, some married, some not and others in relationships, but all with one thing in mind, the holy grail of being the captain that leads them onto the political arena. Mind you, let us not be fooled by the new generation s many have powerful mentors and those mentors hold much influence amongst the majority of the party faithful. Identifying those mentors, their agendas and supporters is another matter.

We are facing a State election that will decide who is to govern the State of Victoria and as such we as a party must be united in order to win government. The stakes are high, the players already on their blocks ready to sprint out at the moment of the Electoral Commission starting pistol and hit the track at breakneck speed. We have two years to prepare for such an event and as an observer, I would like to ask all members to put aside their differences and work together for the good of the State of Victoria and assist the leader of the Opposition Matthew Guy win that coveted prize of Premier of Victoria. To do anything less is sacrilege in my book.

Mathew Guy is the new generation that I spoke of, he has now matured into the role, he has surrounded himself with great and experienced advisers who are extremely loyal to him and are working night and day to ensure a Liberal party win at the upcoming elections. My other message to the party faithful is to give it your best shot, select the best of the best candidates at the next State Council and give them your support.

Michael Kroger has been steadily patching up old rivalries, seeking new and aspiring younger members without alienating the elders. A smart move on his part and his work behind the scenes need to be acknowledged. He has been instrumental in removing the dead wood, the sycophants, the yes individuals and those who have since passed their use by date. This in my view is the perfect example of generational change that a leader of a political party can provide.



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