

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Trump's media attacks are justified

In another lifetime, when I was the daily political columnist on Parliament Hill for the Toronto Sun, then prime minister Brian Mulroney made a point of avoiding me.

If I approached a scrum, he would leave. And I was the only press gallery member who didn't get a Christmas card from the Mulroneys.

This is not to brag. Had I been Mulroney, I wouldn't have spoken to me either.

That's because, although I hadn't set out to do it, I morphed into his most severe critic, particularly after my book *Friends In High Places: Politics and Patronage in the Mulroney Government* topped the charts. To add insult to injury, nobody could accuse me of being a bleeding heart liberal out to bring down a Tory government.

In those days, however, it wasn't something we wrote about often. The journalists and their relationship with the prime minister wasn't seen as a story of any particular interest to the public. In retrospect, I did focus more on the negative than I could have, but I didn't ? and most other journalists didn't ? deliberately tailor my reportage to make Mulroney look bad.

Things change.

Witness the non-stop media whining over what they collectively have decided ? with few exceptions ? is the unacceptable rule of Donald Trump as U.S. president.

Any veteran journalist has seen hundreds of news conferences and scrums, but it's unlikely they witnessed one as candid and controversial as Trump's 90-minute news conference in Washington last week.

It is no secret ? and certainly not new ? that the vast majority of journalists are liberal ? or worse. Not necessarily in a partisan sense ? although most were openly cheering for Hillary Clinton in the last election, focussing on Trump's lies and distortions while ignoring Hillary's. But there you are.

Having missed the fact (along with pollsters and the Democrats) that middle America was sick of the business-as-usual antics in Washington, most journalists still have not accepted the reality that they helped Trump through their own blatant hostility towards him ? and to those ?deplorables? (to quote Hillary) who supported him, pretty well all of whom, we're told, are not only dim-witted, but racist, homophobic and misogynist to boot.

Most reporters loathe Trump. And, not surprisingly, he loathes them right back.

Trump's news conference produced an extraordinary number of major ?news? stories ? e.g. an update on repealing Obamacare, a promise of early tax reform, a rewrite of the controversial travel ban ? yet the overwhelming theme of the reportage both in the U.S. and in Canada was ? ta da! ? Trump's ongoing feud with the media.

Trump feels the media does not give him a fair shake. That's because it doesn't, certainly by comparison to the mostly fawning coverage of both Hillary and Barack Obama.

But Trump understands the general public isn't enamored of the media either. He too can read the polls. And he understands how to use this to his own advantage. The more they go after him, the more he can point to his supporters and say ?see, I told you so.?

Witness the aforementioned news conference. Trump, dumping on the media, said: ?Tomorrow they will say, ?Donald Trump rants and rave at the press.' I'm not ranting and raving. You're just dishonest people.?

Anybody who watched that exchange would know he was not ?ranting and raving? when he said that. He was quite calm. Yet, sure enough the next day's headlines reflected exactly what Trump had predicted. The Toronto Star's ? no worse than the others, by the way ? front-page headline was: ??I'm not ranting and raving,' Trump rants in wild presser.?

Two pages later, the Star says it could have given readers ?a dozen front pages from . . . Trump's chaotic press conference,? offering five other issues (which it obviously concluded weren't as important as his relationship with reporters).

Here again, the Star makes Trump's point. He doesn't get fair reportage. Just two examples: they cite his quip that sinking the Russian spy ship off shore would boost his ratings, but don't report the fact he said he wasn't going to do it; and they edit an exchange with a black reporter about meeting the Congressional Black Caucus to make it appear he's being racist, conveniently editing out his repeated comments that he wants to meet with them and wants to tackle the grave inner city problems, especially in Chicago, an issue which Obama, to his shame, essentially ignored.

Nobody will ever confuse Trump with Mother Teresa. But then, nobody would ever confuse Clinton and/or Obama with her either. Or, for that matter, any politician.

But the point is, if the media could reign in its collective ego and report fairly both the good and the bad ? instead of just the bad ? then the public might start believing them again. As things stand, Trump has higher believability ratings than the media. Sad, but true.

