

Claire Hoy ? Government by Chargex

The apple, as the saying goes, doesn't fall far from the tree. Or, if you prefer, ?Like father, like son.?

The reason these clichés are appropriate, of course, is because they accurately describe the weekend performance of Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau ? or Trudeau The Younger ? to the delegates at the party's convention in Montreal.

Whether Trudeau himself or the party faithful missed an empty phrase in their rhetorical flourishes is hard to say, but the reality is that Trudeau, as they like to say in Texas, is ?all hat and no beef.?

What is slightly surprising, however, is that if you go beyond Trudeau's endless promises of full employment, real jobs, a clean environment, national unity and heaven on earth, the reality is that in order to accomplish this utopia he would have to take a page from his father Pierre's book of governance and plunge us back into unearthly debt.

Think we're exaggerating here? Well, let me just cite what National Post columnist Andrew Coyne called ?a small sample? of Liberal resolutions before the delegates, most of which were approved with little debate. Never mind that any one of which would require government borrowing and a worsening debt situation, the total of them all combined would make Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne's wanton spending? look fiscally responsible. Worse, they'd make the NDP look like right-wing fiscal conservatives by comparison.

Here's the list:

?A National Transportation Strategy, a National Energy Strategy, a National Grid Strategy, a National Manufacturing Strategy, several National Strategies for Childhood Development, a National Framework for Mental Health, a National Action Plan on Disability, a National Water Policy, a National Pharmacare Program, a National Youth Jobs Strategy, a Science-based Innovation Strategy and a Transformative Canadian Infrastructure Investment Plan.?

Readers of a certain age ? old enough to recall the 1970s and early '80s ? will remember that Trudeau the Elder left us with enormous debts, costs so burdensome that it took decades to dig us out from under.

In their latest budget, the ruling Tories announced that next year's budget should be balanced ? although there's still a significant debt to pay down ? and were sharply criticized by both the Liberals and the NDP for not introducing some new, costly programs. It has always bemused me that so many politicians ? and their cheerleaders ? don't understand the basic concept that things have to be paid for. Just as you must temper some of your personal desires based on economic realities, so too must governments pay attention to their books. To be sure, governments have far greater resources ? which means you, Mr. and Mrs. Beleaguered Taxpayer ? but out-of-control debt has a profoundly negative impact, not only on governments but on private industry and individuals as well. Nothing, dear hearts, is free, particularly interest on the debt.

The reality here is that Trudeau and his brain trust have decided to out-NDP the NDP, and the primary motivation, it says here, is to win back Quebec from the so-called Orange Wave. Quebec, you see, has always been fonder of huge government programs than the rest of Canada, perhaps because the rest of Canada ? or at least the part west of Quebec ? actually pays more of the freight for these things than Quebecers do. For example, everybody in the child-care business drools about Quebec's generous child-care program, where parents pay just a few bucks a day to leave their kids. It would be nice. But if Quebec actually had to pay for it ? instead of relying on the bulk of the money coming from the rest of Canada (which it always has for this program and many others) then I dare say they wouldn't have it.

But we digress.

Back to the newly-minted left-of-left Trudeau, who perhaps is prepared to gamble that since Trudeau the Elder spent us into oblivion and still got elected, the same tactics would work for him.

But attitudes have changed since those heady days. (In Ontario, during the 1970s, for example, during some of this province's best-ever economic times, the red Tory premier Bill Davis (whom lefties have long admired) never once had a balanced budget. It was many decades later before voters woke up to the reality that being in serious debt isn't any better for the government than it is for an individual household.

And now, it seems, Trudeau wants to drag us back to that era of government-by-Chargex, where no promise is too extreme and no cost too expensive.

Good luck with that.

