

Claire Hoy ? He?s not ready for prime time

In what seems like another lifetime, a Tory friend of mine, commenting on the short-lived prime ministerial life of Joe Clark, quipped: ?If God had meant Joe Clark to be prime minister, He would have given him a chin.?

While that is obviously a superficial observation on Clark's suitability, there is something to be said about the importance of a leader looking like a leader, and possessing that certain gravitas to give his (or her) words and actions clout, whether you agree with them or not.

And the whole Clark fiasco also shows that, in politics at least, sometimes what goes around comes around.

Clark, as you likely know, served briefly as Canada's youngest prime minister, after defeating the then-reviled Pierre Trudeau in 1979. He immediately announced he would act as if he had a majority, but, arithmetic being what it is, he subsequently lost a non-confidence motion in the Commons, moved by then-NDP finance critic, Bob Rae, thus allowing Trudeau the Elder to renege on his announced retirement and come storming back to defeat Clark in March, 1980.

Rae, you will recall, went on to a disastrous term as Ontario's only NDP premier before switching to the federal Liberals. He failed at two runs for the Liberal leadership but served well as the Liberal's interim leader until Trudeau's son Justin became Liberal leader. And just to complete the circle, Rae subsequently retired from elective politics and the by-election to fill his downtown Toronto riding is this week.

Meanwhile, back at the importance of a leader looking like a leader, there is no doubt that Prime Minister Stephen Harper and NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair, whatever you may think of their respective political views, certainly fit the bill.

But Trudeau the Younger, alas, lacks that air of authority.

He's certainly better looking than his two opponents. But that's part of the problem. Someone recently Trudeau looks like a vacuous pretty boy, a description which, unfortunately for him, seems to fit his actions as well as his appearance.

No doubt he's a bright guy. But he reminds me of one of baseball pitchers who seem to have all the ability in the world in warm-ups, but just can't get the ball across the plate, and therefore can't make it in the major leagues.

Asked once about his views on Quebec separation, for example, he actually suggested he'd prefer a separate Quebec to a Canada run by Harper. To be sure, Harper has his critics, but come on, somebody who wants to be prime minister would be that cavalier ? and partisan ? about the very future of the country. Please.

There are many examples of his vacuous flippancy, but none better than his recent response to a question at a ritzy ?ladies only? fundraiser in Toronto, an event which on its own has provoked considerable controversy for implying that women, unlike men, are really only interested in the fluffy side of politics, and which clearly promoted Trudeau as a national sex symbol. (More irony: the last Canadian politician promoted in that fashion was ? you guessed it ? Justin's father, Pierre. The difference was that Pierre was politically astute as well.

In any event, Trudeau the Younger was asked that, apart from Canada, ?which nation's administration? he most admired.

Taking a moment to ponder, Trudeau, incredibly, said this: ?You know, there's a level of admiration I actually have for China because their basic dictatorship is allowing them to actually turn their economy around on a dime and say ?we need to go green fastest ?we need to start investing in solar.' ?

(Apart from the absurdity of applauding a brutal Communist dictatorship, China isn't going green at all. It's opening two coal-fired electrical plants a week. Combined with the U.S., China produces 40 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Canada produces just 2 per cent. The much-maligned Alberta oil sands account for one one-thousandth of global emissions.)

Trudeau went on to say, ?I mean there is a flexibility that I know Stephen Harper must dream about of having a dictatorship that he can do everything he wanted that I find quite interesting.?

(He also added he admires the non-partisan governments of Canada's three territories. He got that wrong too. The Yukon, for one, does have political parties. Geez.)

After word got out, Trudeau's apologists tried to say he was just kidding. He wasn't. Watch the tape and see for yourself.

But then, Trudeau the Elder spent much of his final term kowtowing to various Communist dictatorships . He even took Justin and his brothers to China shortly after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, where they were treated as heroes.

So maybe Justin's appetite for Communist dictators is genetic. Whatever, it hardly makes him ready for prime time.

