

Claire Hoy, National Affairs ? Pilloried for speaking the truth

There's a popular aphorism of undetermined origin that says the first casualty of war is truth.

Well, in many respects, the same things applies to politics.

Take the current media-manufactured ?scandal? over Justice Minister Peter MacKay's supposedly controversial comments about the different number of male and female judges in Canada.

It got nicely under way when the Toronto Star ? hardly a voice of reason and/or balance when it comes to anything or anyone Tory ? published an accusation that MacKay supposedly told a group of Ontario lawyers at a private meeting that women aren't as interested in becoming judges as men are.

MacKay flatly denied the tenor of the quotes attributed to him and asked the organisers of the meeting if he could make the tape of his speech public so that people can see he was actually lamenting the lack of female judges rather than dumping on women in the legal community.

But the organisers refused permission ? it was, remember, a private, off-the-record meeting ? so MacKay is left fighting a barrage of media attackers flailing at him for supposedly holding views on the roles of men and women that date from the middle of the last century.

No matter that he denies it. No matter that the organisers have blocked his chance to show what he actually said.

The left-leaning media hounds smell blood, and they don't seem to give a damn about the accuracy of the accusations.

MacKay's supposed sins were compounded when news was leaked that he sent different Father's Day and Mother's Day messages to his staff ? messages, by the way, which were substantially written by his female staff.

It seems he made the horrible mistake of suggesting that many working women still change diapers and get breakfast for their kids before heading off for a full day's work. Never mind, of course, that it's true. The mere suggestion that men and women still play different household roles in many cases was enough to inspire the mighty Globe and Mail to track down one of the country's most radical feminist lawyers and get her to express total outrage at the fact that the justice minister was treating men and women differently. They also wrote an editorial attacking MacKay.

All that MacKay had really done was remark on the differences that everybody knows exists and apparently must pretend they don't to avoid being attacked as a diabolical neanderthal not fit for public office.

Indeed, NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair ? no doubt looking for a diversion from a real scandal, i.e. his party's inappropriate partisan spending of hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars ? rushed right out and demanded that Prime Minister Stephen Harper should fire MacKay on the spot.

And when the Justice Department announced 13 new judicial appoints, and just one was a woman, that had Mulcair foaming at the mouth again, saying, ?Equality between men and women should be something the justice minister should be defending, and I really think Harper's got no choice but to consider removing him.?

Various media stories then quoted ?legal expert? Linda Robertson, chair of the women lawyers forum for the Canadian Bar Association, saying ?The frustration that we have is that under the Liberal government, they were making very healthy female appointments; it wasn't a problem under the Liberals,? Robertson said from Vancouver.

?It's only been since the Conservatives came in that the number of female appointments have slowed down. They haven't stopped, but they've sure slowed down.?

Really? Well, the Justice Department says 34 per cent of sitting judges are now women. That's up from 29 per cent when the Tories came to power, and given that only 37 per cent of the legal profession are women, that strikes me as pretty good.

Consider this, however. In an article Robertson herself wrote about the 2011 Tory appointments ? when she was still knocking them ? she said a big problem for women is that many don't have the necessary experience for senior judicial appointments and ? wait for it? ?Another challenge is that federally appointed trial judges must travel around the province to sit in smaller communities for a week and sometimes longer at a time. If a woman has young children (not uncommon for women lawyers who often have their children later in life in order to establish their careers) travelling away from home for such extended periods is simply not an option. For this reason, many women prefer to apply to the provincial bench where travelling to different courthouses does not usually require an overnight stay.?

Which, of course, is pretty much the point MacKay was making. But he's a man. Worse, he's also a Tory.

So he's not allowed to speak truth.

