

Claire Hoy ? Oliver's views misrepresented

Early last year, with considerable fanfare, the federal NDP announced it was launching what it called its ?Civility Project?, which even includes a ?Civility Project Facebook Page,? all designed to stop MPs from using ?harassment, threats, personal attacks, or extreme misrepresentation of facts.?

It is to laugh, particularly coming as it does, from some of the worst abusers of the above-mentioned political transgressions. There are no end of examples of the holier-than-thou NDP launching personal attacks on their political opponents and dramatically misrepresenting the facts in order to make themselves look better than they are.

But let's just go back to earlier this week, when NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair greeted newly-appointed Finance Minister Joe Oliver ? named after veteran Jim Flaherty stepped down ? by saying Oliver is an ?embarrassment? in that portfolio.

Why? Well, for one thing, says Mulcair, ?He has denied global warming as a scientific reality,? this, supposedly, in his previous role as natural resources minister.

And for another, says Mulcair, citing a B.C. First nations chief, Oliver's ?attacks on First Nations go beyond mere paternalism. They're tinted by racism.?

According to Mulcair then, Oliver is not only a nincompoop, a climate ?denier,? but he's also a racist.

Well, so much for civility. Not to mention Mulcair's disturbing lack of honesty.

For starters, Oliver did not ?deny? climate science at all. (And just as an aside, people such as Mulcair who use the term ?denier? should be ashamed of themselves, since it's a term historically associated with heinous ?holocaust deniers.?) Disagreements over climate change usually involve different views on how serious it is and how much humans contribute to it, hardly the same as denying that the Nazis murdered 6 million Jews.)

Anyway, in a recent interview with a Montreal newspaper, all Oliver said is, ?I think that people aren't as worried as they were before about global warming of two degrees?? He said scientists say ?our fears (on climate change) are exaggerated.?

Well, many scientists do say that. And pretty well every public opinion poll extant says we are not as worried about it as we were a few years ago when those pushing the issue were predicting pretty much the end of the earth.

Disagree with him if you wish. But that's hardly an example of ?climate change denial.?

As for Oliver's alleged ?racism,? that too is completely bogus, coming from his support for oil and gas pipelines despite opposition from First Nations groups. Oliver had the tenacity to point out that many First Nations people are benefiting from oil and gas and stand to be among the main beneficiaries of the Oil Sands and pipelines. Again, not all Chiefs buy into that. And that's fair enough. But it's hardly ?racism? to disagree.

And on both accounts, Mulcair is guilty of gross misrepresentation of Oliver's expressed views.

But then, this is the guy who not long ago ? when the NDP was riding high, and the Liberals were in la-la land ? declared, without equivocation, that we would never, ever, seek a coalition with the Liberals, only to turn around recently and say a coalition with the Liberals might be a good way to beat the dreaded Tories.

He's also the leader of a party which is clearly abusing federal taxpayers' money meant for Parliament Hill by having set up two ?satellite? NDP offices ? in Montreal and Quebec City ? involving at least a dozen staff members paid by the House of Commons to promote the NDP brand.

In 2012, this same NDP demanded an inquiry into a single Bloc Quebecois official in Montreal who was also being paid by the House of Commons, a practice clearly outside the intent of paying House of Commons staffers.

And in the most preposterous comment of all, despite the existence of all that paid political operatives working far from Parliament Hill, the NDP defended their satellite offices by saying they are just there to assist the general public. In an email, Karl Belanger, Mulcair's principal secretary, said, ?In absolutely no case does taxpayer money go to funding partisan activity.?. Oh, please.

Whether Oliver makes a good finance minister or not remains to be seen. He certainly has a tough act to follow, but it's hard to fault his credentials for the job. He has two degrees from McGill, one in civil law, and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He was an investment banker, executive director of the Ontario Securities Commission and the CEO of the Investment Dealer's Association. But he's not a climate ?denier? and he's not a racist.

Mulcair, for all his bleating about civility, should at least keep his chin on the curb rather than letting it wallow in the gutter.