

Claire Hoy ? Trudeau fixing the process

It has become almost routine these days for the media ? and others ? to claim that Prime Minister Stephen Harper is consistently undemocratic in his efforts to govern the country.

Never mind it's not based on much beyond the fact that a good many people ? and most of the media ? don't like the guy and look for a conspiracy behind his every move.

There's a widespread belief that Harper has his mind set on thwarting democracy at every turn and the only way to apparently save us from him is to elect either Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau or NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair to restore Canada to what it was supposed to be before the dastardly Tories managed to con enough Canadians to get them into office.

It is in this context then that one wonders why real ? as opposed to imagined ? shots at democracy are so often ignored when perpetrated by Harper's political enemies.

Take Trudeau, for example.

He has made much of Harper's alleged penchant for stacking nomination meetings in favor of his pals ? a claim which is often repeated despite a serious lack of supporting evidence ? yet when it comes to Trudeau's own actions, well, even his dictatorial late father might be able to pick up a pointer or two.

You will likely know that Toronto MP Chrystia Freeland ? a former magazine editor handpicked by Trudeau in the recent by-election in Toronto Centre ? is slated to be acclaimed the Liberal candidate in the next federal election in the newly-created riding of University-Rosedale. That riding will be formed from portions of Toronto Centre and Trinity-Spadina (more on that riding in a moment) as part of the overall redistribution of ridings in time for the next election.

When news of the planned acclamation was announced recently, Hugh Scher, a constitutional lawyer and president of the University-Rosedale Liberal riding association, told *The Globe and Mail* that the acclamation notice was sent to their association from the party and came as a surprise.

?Without consultation to the executive of the association, they have gone ahead and booked the nominations and determined that Chrystia is going to be the candidate,? he said.

Adding that Freeland is ?a great lady and a very qualified candidate,? he nevertheless added that ?holding true to a commitment to open and fair nomination processes is essential to party development and renewal. Recent efforts to circumvent the usual nomination process and to bypass the duly elected community board representatives of University-Rosedale are contrary to basic Liberal and democratic values and to efforts of party renewal that put grass roots community interests ahead of political expediency and backroom dictates.? Oh my.

That's not something that Harper has done to our knowledge. Or, for that matter, Mulcair. Both men have essentially allowed the party process to take care of itself. It doesn't mean they have always been pleased with the results, or have never tried to influence them, but they're not in the habit of dictating the candidate and freezing out anybody else who may be interested.

So, you may ask, was anybody else interested or is Freeland the only really qualified candidate available?

Well, two-time Liberal candidate Christine Innes in Trinity-Spadina (the riding recently vacated by NDP Olivia Chow, who resigned to run for mayor) was certainly interested and had worked hard to garner a Liberal nomination.

But when she refused to sign a party pledge that she would not contest Freeland's nomination she was barred from being a Liberal candidate. Not just in University-Rosedale, but anywhere.

As a result, she is currently suing Trudeau and David MacNaughton, the party's Ontario campaign co-chair, arguing that they slandered her by making false public statements that she was guilty of bullying and intimidation in her attempts to win a nomination battle.

That, of course, is ultimately up to a court to decide, but there is no doubt that Trudeau himself intervened to fix the nomination process, rather than let the process play out in a fair and democratic way.

You don't have to possess a great imagination to figure out what the media reaction would be if it had been Harper instead of Trudeau acting in such a grievous, undemocratic fashion, to make sure one of his favorites got the nomination.

And one can only hope that those Liberals in University-Rosedale, whatever they may think of Freeland as a candidate, will be annoyed enough to either stay home on election day or support another candidate.

That's something even Trudeau can't control.

