

Claire Hoy ? Trudeau?s astonishing claim

For centuries before the birth of Christ, the ?science? of the cosmos was ?settled? ? the earth was flat. Period. Then Greek philosopher Aristotle in the fourth century, to the chagrin of many, argued that no, the science wasn't ?settled.? The earth was orbital.

And so it goes. Things that are declared ?settled,? often turn out to be wrong.

Which brings us, alas, to Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau's astonishing claim last week that the issue of abortion in Canada is ?settled? and that henceforth, any candidate for the Liberal Party is forbidden from straying from the so-called ?pro-choice? philosophy, the only exceptions being sitting MPs who are pro-life and will be allowed to cling to their apparently outmoded moral views ? presumably as long as they keep these views to themselves and make no attempt to act upon them.

In that respect, Trudeau joins NDP Leader Thomas Muclair, who has also made it clear that no NDP MP ? either current or future ? is allowed to hold, or even consider, a pro-life perspective.

And people accuse Prime Minister Stephen Harper of being dictatorial. Geez.

True, Harper won't allow his government to introduce any law on abortion ? leaving Canada as the only advanced country in the world with no gestational limits on abortion ? but at least he allows sitting MPs to hold pro-choice views and hasn't stopped several of them from bringing forth private members' bills pushing various aspects of the debate.

And there is a debate. A recent public opinion poll ? albeit paid for by a pro-life group, but still conducted by a professional polling firm ? found that 60 per cent of respondents felt there should be some limits on abortion. What sort of limits, and under what circumstances, vary greatly. But despite Trudeau's ridiculous claim to the contrary, not all Canadians are happy with the status quo. The issue is far from ?settled? for millions of Canadians.

To be clear, your correspondent is decidedly pro-life. Not to the point where I believe that abortion is never acceptable, however regrettable it may be. For example, if there is a clear choice between the life of the mother and the life of the unborn child ? a pretty rare occurrence ? saving the mother's life is a moral imperative. Cases of rape and incest are also in a different category. But for the vast majority of cases, I believe that the entity growing inside the mother's womb is a human being, and not, as some ardent pro-choicers describe it, a blob of flesh and blood that can be disposed of for any reason the mother deems fit.

Well, not exactly any reason. Many who argue that abortion-on-demand is a sacred right for Canadian women, somehow see no contradiction in trying to stop people in certain cultures who favour boy babies over girl babies and chose to abort their babies just because they are girls. You can't have it both ways. If you have the absolute right to abort, that's what you have.

But the issue at stake here isn't abortion per se. The issue is what has happened to our parliamentary system when leaders decree ? with no internal debates with their members, and no apparent urgency (nobody is proposing an abortion law that I'm aware of) ? that long-established and widely-held moral views are not only beyond debate, but are simply not allowed.

The 18th century French essayist Joseph Joubert put it well when he wrote, ?It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.?

During his successful leadership contest, Trudeau promised a new openness. Really? This from a guy who has subsequently booted all Liberal senators out of his caucus ? again, with no warning and no debate ? and, despite repeated promises of an ?open nomination? process has stepped directly into nominations, most obviously in barring former Liberal candidate Christine Innes from running in Trinity Spadina against Trudeau's hand-picked favorite.

And now those who do not worship at the altar of pro-choice theocracy need not apply.

Does this mean Trudeau doesn't want any votes from the millions of Canadians who hold various shades of belief on abortion? Will he demand a moral purity test to determine beforehand that Liberal supporters, not just their MPs, hold the ?correct? view? Toss in edicts for the ?correct? view on other ?settled? issues, e.g. same-sex marriage and mankind's contribution to global warming, and he could be seriously affecting his future electoral chances. Trudeau may have inherited his father's ambition and arrogance, but he falls sadly short on political smarts and the importance of democratic debate. Pierre Trudeau didn't fear debate. He relished it.

Trudeau the Younger is so wrong-headed here that even the Toronto Star ? which regularly treats Liberals with reverence ? editorialized Saturday that despite Trudeau's solemn promises of openness ?his actions don't match his words.?

Oh my.

