

?Elder Trudeau? wasn?t that bad

I'm starting to suspect that Claire Hoy is maybe not a Liberal supporter.

In his recent column, ?Government by Chargex,? Hoy was appalled that Federal Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau made ?promises of full employment, real jobs, a clean environment, national unity . . .? Was he saying the Conservatives are much more sensible to pursue high unemployment, menial jobs, pollution and disunity? He also took issue that at our convention in Montreal, the Liberals adopted resolutions for ?a National Transportation Strategy, a National Energy Strategy, a National Grid Strategy, a National Manufacturing Strategy, several National Strategies for Childhood Development, a National Framework for Mental Health, a National Action Plan on Disability, a National Water Policy, a National Pharmacare Program, a National Youth Jobs Strategy, a Science-based Innovation Strategy and a Transformative Canadian Infrastructure Investment Plan.?

We know our Conservative government is against science-based decision making, but is Hoy also against having strategies in place to deal with our future?

Hoy's real concern seems to be that Liberals may engage in deficit spending like the Pierre Trudeau days. I suppose the even larger deficits the Conservatives subsequently racked up under Brian Mulroney were just fine and the 10 successive Chretien-Martin Liberal surplus years the Harper Conservatives promptly turned into seven years of deficits were OK. Of course, what really counts is the debt-to-GDP ratio ? how much we owe compared to how much we earn as a country. The fact is that according to government statistics, in the last 50 years, Canada's debt to GDP ratio hit its lowest point at about 12 per cent in 1975 under (surprise, surprise) Trudeau Liberals, down from 30 per cent the Diefenbaker Conservatives left behind in 1962. It is true that with a recession, 12 per cent inflation rates and world-wide ?stagflation,? we ended back at a 28 per cent ratio for Trudeau's last year. But that pales compared to the path the Mulroney Conservatives took us on, which peaked at a 72 per cent ratio before the Chretien Liberals tamed the deficit and started paying down debt in 1996. The Chretien-Martin Liberals set us on a fiscal path that brought us back down to a 32 per cent ratio by 2008, a trend the Harper Conservatives reversed to take us to 34.5 per cent today. Based on government documented numbers over the last 50 years then, it's the Liberals that presided over decreases in the debt to GDP ratio while the Conservatives have taken us ever higher into debt. Just who is the fiscally responsible party here, Mr. Hoy?

Hoy started his article with a diatribe against Pierre Trudeau. He stated ?Like father, like son,? as if that is a bad thing. I grew into adulthood in the elder Trudeau's time. Those were good and proud years. Trudeau as Justice Minister recognized that ?the government has no business in the nation's bedrooms,? a radical thought then that we take for granted today. He crushed the terrorist FLQ organization; Canada was known for our ?blue berets? who were respected world-wide for keeping the peace; Canada loved Kennedy but Trudeau steered us clear of Vietnam; he went to China before Nixon; he made peace with Cuba; our word meant something and we were sought out in NATO and the UN as honest brokers; we were admired with Americans disguising themselves as Canadian when they travelled the world. He brought us multi-culturalism, which today sees our widely diverse peoples get along remarkably well. He brought our constitution home and established our Charter of Rights and Freedoms that set principle as the basis of law.

?Chip off the old block? Hoy asks? We can only hope.

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