

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Flippant dismissal of the oil industry

Picture this: Imagine Prime Minister Justin Trudeau telling an audience in Calgary that, in his quest to save the planet, he plans to phase out Ontario's auto industry. Or, for that matter, Quebec's aerospace industry.

Ridiculous, you say?

Well, you'd like to think so, given the importance of those industries to both provinces and to Canada as a whole. But there he was, in his best Peter Pan performance mode, telling a town hall in Peterborough last Friday: "We can't shut down the oilsands tomorrow. We need to phase them out."

Really? Why?

To be fair, maybe he was still smarting because liberal icon Jane Fonda had just toured the oilsands on a helicopter apparently fueled by pixie dust and with a heavy heart no doubt, pronounced she was "disappointed" in the new liberal hero Trudeau because the cad had recently approved two new oil pipelines to carry Alberta oil to market.

Like so many other wealthy dilettantes who orchestrate a quick fly-by hit on the oilsands and have no worries about such mundane things as buying food for their family or meeting a mortgage payment Fonda joined that list of celebrity pedagogues attempting to elevate the oilsands as a symbol of all that's horrible in the world of business; a world-class eco-disaster-in-waiting.

Besides hoping to placate Fonda and the legion of well-financed eco fighters who pray at the altar of environmentalism along with her Trudeau may also have been channeling his late father Pierre, whose disdain for Western Canada virtually guaranteed that the Liberals didn't win a seat west of Ontario for decades.

Let us say that Trudeau does see his dream (nightmare?) come true and the oilsands are phased out completely. Outside of the obvious loss of livelihoods for hundreds of thousands of Canadians (and not just in the West, by the way), government statistics show that the oilsands industry currently accounts for about 8.5 per cent of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions or wait for it about 0.12 per cent of global GHG emissions. Not even enough to be called a blip.

But then, for the eco-nutbars, reality doesn't matter much. It's all about the symbolism.



Trudeau's hastily contrived tour of the country, you will know, was designed to take the heat off growing public outrage over his secretive and rule-breaking Christmas holiday retreat to the Aga Khan's private Bahamian island (where, it has to be assumed, Khan's helicopter which was put at the disposal of Trudeau and his party also operates on pixie dust. Certainly nothing as horrid as fossil fuels).

Besides his flippant dismissal of one of Canada's largest and most important industries, Trudeau was also besieged in Peterborough by 54-year-old single mother of four Kathy Katula who made an impassioned and poignant plea against him and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne for essentially imposing their green policies in such a way that she (and many like her) are being forced into poverty.

"I lived off Kraft dinner, hot dogs, whatever it took to survive, but I bought that home and I'm proud. But something's wrong now, Mr. Trudeau. My heat and hydro now cost me more than my mortgage. How do you justify . . . a carbon tax when I have only \$65 left of my pay cheque every two weeks to feed my family?"

Trudeau responded weakly by saying he hasn't imposed a carbon tax yet but he has announced he's going to, and Wynne already has. And his office later tried to claim former Tory prime minister Stephen Harper had also promised to phase out the oilsands which he had not done.

What's more, shutting down one of our major economic generators certainly wouldn't make Canada's fiscal situation any better for people such as Katula.

As you'd expect ? and quite legitimately ? Alberta politicians were outraged by Trudeau's casual remarks. Long-time Tory MP Jason Kenney ? now running for the leadership of the Alberta Tories ? summed it up neatly: ?This is the real Trudeau. He's his father's son . . . a trust fund millionaire who jets off for a holiday on a billionaire's private island. When he phases out the Canadian oilsands I'll tell you the Saudis, the Iranians, the Qataris and the Venezuelans are never going to phase themselves off of oil.?

The oilsands are the third largest oil reserves in the world ? third after Venezuela and Saudi Arabia.

We should be celebrating our good fortune. Dancing in the streets. And with Donald Trump taking over in Washington, we've never had a better opportunity to exploit our good fortune.

What is the matter with these eco-loons?