

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Hypocrisy that makes the head hurt

Ah, how the worms turn.

In the early 1970s, as leader of the Ontario NDP, Stephen Lewis used all the political muscle at his disposal to crush a nascent internal group of radical lefties calling themselves The Waffle.

They, too ? much like the current NDP Leap group ? had a manifesto which would have yanked the party far to the left of where it already was, a scary prospect even for people who already tilted considerably left.

Lewis got the party convention in Orillia to order the Waffle to either disown their beliefs or leave the party. Some stayed on. Many left. But the move, which Lewis had hoped would lead his party to an election victory, did not appear to help him.

Fast forward to the current federal NDP blood-letting in Alberta, where the party, upset that leader Thomas Mulcair had overseen a collapse in party fortunes ? unceremoniously voted to send him packing.

This, despite the fact there is no obvious contender for the job and also ? something that is widely ignored ? the NDP showing in the last election wasn't even close to being as poor as many of their results and in fact was pretty close to the national average for that party's electoral history.

No matter. He couldn't duplicate the once-in-a-lifetime results of the late Jack Layton, so he was toast. Shut the door on your way out Tom, we're too busy making damn sure we won't get elected next time, either.

Which brings us once again to the same Stephen Lewis ? son of former federal NDP leader David Lewis ? and father of current NDP left-wing activist Avi Lewis.

Lewis, as a major speaker at the convention ? and I have to say, that whether you like what Lewis says or not (and I rarely do) he's the best political speaker I've covered in my decades in journalism ? was advocating for son Avi and his group's so-called Leap manifesto, the highlight (lowlight?) of which is essentially to shut down Canada's oil industry on the rather tendentious grounds that it will help save the earth from environmental disaster.

To bring such a platform to an Edmonton audience ? Edmonton, for heaven's sake ? would be tantamount to rushing off to Oshawa to advocate the end of the auto industry.

But that didn't seem to matter to the super wealthy Lewis clan and their fellow travelers, none of whom would be particularly impacted by shutting down the oil industry.

Oh yes, this Leap manifesto ? supported by the elite of the left-wing loonies in this country ? was actually advertised as a ?non-partisan? document. Avi Lewis himself wrote a piece bragging about the wide spectrum of interests that went into making it. Wide indeed. From the far left to the absolutely maniacal left and everything in between.

This was way too much for Alberta's NDP Premier Rachel Notley, who denounced the manifesto in rather direct terms. This may be because her province has already lost about 100,000 jobs in the oil industry ? much of it thanks to the implacable and unjustified opposition to fossil fuels (which we simply can't live without) in the guise of saving the planet.

We are told, of course, that the oil and gas people displaced would be retrained for other jobs. Which jobs would they be you may ask? Even if you buy the notion that fossil fuels are the root of all evil, there is nothing ? absolutely nothing ? that can currently replace them. There may come a day. But it hasn't arrived yet. And in the meantime, Albertans like to eat as well as the rest of us do. All of which is a roundabout way of coming back to Stephen Lewis.

As the leader of the party Establishment back in the 1970s, he saw the Waffle as detrimental to his electoral ambitions, and used his considerable clout to shut them down.

But now comes Leap, the current manifestation of the Waffle, and with his son Avi helping lead the charge, electoral considerations play second fiddle to principle ? whatever that principle may be.

As National Post columnist Rex Murphy has cogently observed, Avi's ?principled? stand against the Canadian oil industry apparently didn't apply to ?the oil-sodden sheikdom of Qatar? which owned Al-Jazeera, for which Avi worked as a journalist (a slight shift leftward upon leaving the CBC) for a decade or so.

Indeed, the Canadian environmental activists never seem the least bit concerned about oil from the Middle Eastern dictatorships ? complete with their laws against women, homosexuals, Jews and others ? but when it comes to Alberta, well, that's just too much for the planet to bear.

Such hypocrisy makes the head hurt. But it doesn't seem to bother the lefties.

