

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? If it's good for the Liberals . . .

It was former Liberal cabinet minister David Dingwall, responding to widespread public complaints about abuse of the public purse, who magnificently demonstrated the Liberal attitude of the day by saying, ?I am entitled to my entitlements.?

It wasn't long after that that the public grew weary of Liberal self-indulgence and threw the rascals out, replacing them with Tory Stephen Harper.

Clearly, with the Liberals ? and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in particular ? currently riding high in public esteem, the party is not a long way from re-creating its historical conceit as ?Canada's ruling party.?

Mind you, they are being assisted mightily by a national media which seems almost universally to have come under the spell of Prime Minister Peter Pan and his genius at popping up everywhere for well-publicized photo ops while at the same time studiously avoiding taking any real actions about things that really matter.

For example, as Ottawa consultant (and former Harper communications director) Andrew MacDougall wrote recently, a lengthy weekend puff piece on Trudeau in The Globe and Mail buried what would have clearly been the lead in any story about Harper by waiting until the very end to report that Michael McNair, Trudeau's policy chief, actually threatened a Globe reporter in the men's washroom because he didn't like the question he had asked Saint Justin.

The reporter had asked ? wait for it ? ?What's it like to be the most photographed person in the country?? ? hardly, as MacDougall rightly points out, a Woodward and Bernstein level of journalist probing. Even so, thinking this is what passes for a tough question in the Press Gallery these days, McNair warned the Globe reporter to consider the paper's ?relationship? with the Prime Minister's Office.

Quite apart from the cheek of a hired gun threatening a reporter for an innocuous question, the point here is that had a similar event taken place under the Harper regime, all hell would have broken out. The Press Gallery, I have no doubt at all, would have rushed into a special meeting to condemn Harper's man and it would have been headline news from coast to coast.

But a Liberal threatening a reporter? Who cares, apparently. After all, reporting such things would interfere in the ongoing love-in with the ?sunny ways? of Trudeau, and nobody wants that, do they?

But all is not lost.

Thanks to the recent efforts of Health Minister Jane Philpott and her valiant effort to remind Canadians just what it is that gets up their collective noses about Liberal hubris, many in the media have detoured from the ?sunny? script and given considerable coverage to her extraordinary ? and seriously partisan ? use of a limo service owned by one of her ardent Liberal campaigners in her home riding in Markham.

It seems that Philpott ? who appears to have misled the Commons by lying about it initially ? spent some \$3,700 of your tax money being chauffeured from her riding to various events.

Conservative MP Dan Albas had earlier asked about Philpott's extravagant use ? and remarkably high fee ? of the limo service only to receive a written reply from her department ? signed by the minister herself ? categorically denying that the luxury vehicles were rented.

?With regard to government travel for the period . . . the minister . . . did not use rented limousines while on official business within Canada or elsewhere,? the response claimed.

Turns out it's not true, unless, of course, you swallow the line from a political aide that it wasn't really a limo, it was just a car.

Actually, it's a Lexus ES 300, a high-end vehicle by anybody's description. And, as the CBC and others have discovered, the prices charged were well above the industry average, and certainly many times above what it would have cost simply to rent a car and have one of her staffers drive her around.

She has subsequently apologized ? after being caught ? and promised to repay part of the tab. And, at the time of this writing at least, Trudeau has been conspicuously silent on the matter. But then, he's pretty busy popping out of caves for ?spontaneous? photo ops and hugging anybody within reach of his arms, all the better to get yet another heart-warming picture in the newspaper.

Clearly, Philpott's arrogance isn't about to bring down the government, but it does show that underneath all the razzle-dazzle of the new regime there beats the steady heart of a party machine absolutely convinced that if it's good for them, it's good for all of us.

A few more years of this attitude and, who knows, the public may react again.

