

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Just another Liberal tax grab

Sometimes you have to wonder why smart people get so stupid when they get elected.

Take Immigration Minister John McCallum, for example.

He's certainly smart enough. A former Dean of Arts at McGill and one-time chief economist for the Royal Bank, McCallum also held portfolios in the governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin.

Years ago, when your humble correspondent co-hosted Face-Off on CBC Newsworld, McCallum regularly appeared ? and also when I was a regular on Michael Coren's show on CTS ? and he was always a thoughtful and delightful guest.

But that was before he got elected in 2000. Now, it seems, he is suffering from the apparently contagious disease of political nonsensicalism. Happens to a lot of them, alas.

Recently, appearing on CBC ? the go-to favorite for both small and large ?L? Liberals everywhere ? McCallum mused that while he's certainly ?not anti-military? he thinks it's time to rewrite the 68-page ?Discover Canada? booklet given to all newcomers to Canada.

Too much military stuff, he claims, particularly all that copy about the War of 1812.

?If you ask an average Canadian what Canada means, maybe they'll say hockey, maybe they'll say something else, they're not likely to say the War of 1812,? he said.

No, they're not. But then, the booklet doesn't claim that it's what Canada stands for, and the sad fact is that most Canadians aren't likely to know anything at all about the War of 1812 or even Canada's extraordinary contributions to the First and Second World Wars, because ? unlike most countries ? most provincial education systems don't even bother to teach our history and those that do have made it so politically correct that it's basically useless.

As for the Liberals, of course, they have this misleading ? and completely self-serving ? narrative that Canada is best known as a nation of ?peace keepers.?

For a few decades beginning in the 1950s ? when then UN ambassador and later prime minister Lester Pearson promoted the notion of a UN peace-keeping force ? the idea did have considerable merit and was widely used as a buffer against warring factions in various parts of the world.

But for the past few decades now, most developed countries have gotten away from the notion. Not because they're against peace, but because today, as opposed to the 1950s, most of the conflicts do not lend themselves to blue-helmeted peacekeepers. Can you imagine a troop of UN-sponsored do-gooders trying to convince ISIS to lay down their weapons? Ah, no.

No doubt McCallum understands real Canadian history as well as the next person, and he knows damn well that our military contributions form an important component of our overall national history, yet he is quite happy to demean these contributions in order to push the phony Liberal narrative. Shame on him.

The last numbers I saw was that in 2006 Canada ranked 55th out of 108 UN peacekeeping nations, yet the Liberals and others continue to promote this false story about Canada being the world leader in this pursuit. Fact is, since 1950 Canada sent 120,000 troops to various peacekeeping projects and suffered 114 fatalities as a result.

Good for us. But compare that to our contributions in the two great wars of the last century (or even the Boer War, where 7,000 Canadians volunteered to fight and 260 died).

In the First World War, for example ? when Canada's total population was only 8 million ? 619,636 Canadians served and about one in 10 gave their lives in the effort. Another 173,000 were wounded, and the 1917 Vimy ridge battle is generally considered the moment when Canada came of age as an independent country to be reckoned with. In the Second World War, 1.1 million Canadians served ? most of them voluntarily ? and almost 47,000 died. Even Korea, with 516 deaths, and Afghanistan, 157, outstrip our total losses in all UN missions.

For McCallum to muse that there is too much military stuff in the booklet is an extraordinary insult to those who gave their lives ? and those who came back as well ? to keep this country free.

To hear him tell it, you'd think that the citizenship guide drones on and on about our military history. In fact, military matters compose a mere 1,500 of the guide's 40,000 words, less than four percent of the total.

Given the importance of that contribution ? and the extraordinary sacrifices made ? it's hard to fathom that a decent man such as McCallum can really be comfortable trying to debase that history.

The pre-politician McCallum certainly wouldn't have done it.

