

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Liberals back enjoying double standard

Remember Tory Senator Mike Duffy?

He's the guy ? at least, according to the opposition and most journalists ? who threatened the very basis of our democracy (along with Stephen Harper, of course) because of some questionable housing expenses amounting to \$90,000.

Even though that total was paid privately by Harper's chief of staff ? and did not come out of the public's pocket ? you'll recall that during the months leading up to and during the last election campaign, Duffy was constantly in the news, with both him and the dreaded Tories constantly bombarded for what was claimed to be their quasi-criminal abuse of public funds. There is no doubt it helped Justin Trudeau win the election, as he milked this imagined ?scandal? for all it was worth.

As it turned out, a court found that Duffy was not only innocent of any criminal wrongdoing, but he had not even broken any Senate rules whatsoever. And, despite the best efforts of the media and the opposition parties to tie the money directly to Harper, not a shred of evidence was ever produced to show that Harper was directly involved in the matter.

Fast forward to Prime Minister Trudeau and his two most senior official apologists, Katie Telford and Gerald Butts.

As you likely know, these two highly-paid Trudeau pals have agreed ? under considerable duress ? to pay back \$65,000 in public funds in what they acknowledge were ?unreasonable? relocation expenses, part of the sweet deal they enjoyed shuffling off to the nation's capital to serve their friend the prime minister.

And they're not alone. It seems two more senior staffers have also agreed to return some \$55,000 in moving expenses. In their first nine months in office, the Liberals managed to wrack up \$1.1 million in relocation costs, a clear indication that the traditional overweening Liberal sense of entitlement is still alive and well in the new regime.

In a joint statement, Butts and Telford ? having been caught in the act ? said ?when we reviewed these costs, we decided that the amount called ?personalized cash payout' which is for miscellaneous moving expenses, is unreasonable, and we will both be reimbursing that amount.?

The Liberals tried to turn the spotlight away from themselves by claiming that the Tories chalked up even more in moving senior staff to Ottawa under this provision, a total of \$325,000 for 29 staffers. But the Tories ? many of whom came from the West, a more expensive move than from Toronto, where most Liberals came from ? covers nine years, as opposed to just nine months for the fatcat Liberals, hardly a legitimate comparison.

Here's the thing: where is the media outrage over this wanton spending? Where is the sort of non-stop attack that was launched on the Tories during the Duffy thing, even though, as we've said, the Duffy affair covered less money and wasn't even public cash to begin with?

Why aren't reporters questioning Trudeau himself over these expenses? While the Liberals, including Trudeau himself, claimed they were just following the rules as written by the Tories ? which was also Duffy's defence ? the fact is, unlike Harper's role in that affair, Trudeau personally had to sign off on those expenses before they were paid out.

So if Harper threatened democracy and everything we love about Canada over the Duffy affair, even though he wasn't directly involved in the controversial \$90,000 repayment, how is that Trudeau is enjoying mostly a free ride when he was directly involved and when he only got religion when his senior pals were caught flat-footed trying to squeeze tens of thousands of dollars from the unsuspecting public?

Talk about a double standard. If the Tories do something ? or even if they are accused of it ? it's an outrage. If the Liberals do the same thing, or worse, oh well, not to worry. Unlike mean-spirited Tories, after all, Liberal hearts are in the right place, so it's no big deal.

Another example of this double standard: you'll recall the phony outrage over Harper's supposed destruction of our way of life when he decided to end the long-form census by Statistics Canada? Trudeau, bless his heart, once again rode to the rescue of our nation and promised that he, as prime minister, would reverse that decision. And indeed he did.

And yet ? yet ? last week, StatsCan chief Wayne Smith resigned over continued Liberal meddling in his department, and you have to search for the few stories this resignation generated.

It was ever thus.

