

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Liberals caught pulling a con

Well, that didn't take long.

Less than a week into Canada's new national bliss, the Liberals got caught fudging and tried to lie their way out of it.

It happened after iPolitics ? one of the few media outlets apparently not completely starry-eyed over the Second Coming ? actually read the details of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's much-heralded cabinet mix and discovered, alas, that five of the 15 women (and none of the men) were, in fact, not full cabinet ministers at all.

They were introduced as full ministers, but instead, were actually junior ministers of state, entitled to less pay and less clout than the full ministers.

The only reason this matters, of course, is because Trudeau et al chose to play the great gender card ? making a virtue out of appointing ministers based on gender rather than merit ? and got caught doing it. Otherwise, it wouldn't have mattered a bit. Every cabinet has junior ministers, which is why there is a statute ? which the Liberals now have to change ? outlining the different priorities and pay for them.

So what did the ?sunny? Liberals do when iPolitics discovered the truth of the so-called gender parity? Easy. They lied.

Despite the fact that all the new cabinet members were sworn in as ?ministers? ? unlike previous swearing-ins which clearly differentiated between full ministers and secretaries of state ? Liberal officials, when caught by Elizabeth Thompson of iPolitics ? who actually went beyond the press release and read the orders-in-council ? the Liberals claimed, well, they are meant to be full ministers, it's just a matter of changing the statutes.

?We really do consider them full ministers and it has to do with the technicalities around the bureaucracy and legalese and things like that but they are, in our minds, full ministers,? explained a Liberal insider.

Ah yes, the old ?bureaucracy? and ?legalese? excuse.

In fact, there is a considerable difference between full ministers and ministers of state, and the Liberals know that as well as anyone else. But they were so anxious to bask in the glory of gender parity and so confident that the starry-eyed media would continue to laud their every breath, that they didn't care about the details.

(And, by the way, despite many stories trumpeting this gender-equal cabinet as a ?first? in Canada, it's not. Former Quebec premier Jean Charest's 18-member cabinet had nine men and nine women in 2007, and 14-14 when he enlarged his cabinet a year later. And Alberta Premier Rachel Notley appointed six women and six men to her cabinet in May.)

Despite the Liberals' claim that the five ?junior? ministers were always meant to be full ministers, the Nov. 4 order-in-council puts the lie to that. Beside each name, we are told the new ministers are to ?assist? the appropriate senior ministers in carrying out that minister's responsibilities. It's clear from the outset that the Liberals were pulling a con.

Not that it matters a whole lot in the scheme of things, it's just that with all the fawning media about the new regime, it's instructive that at the first sign of even a small bump in the road they resort to the big lie. If they can't be honest about a relatively minor scam, are we going to be able to believe them on things that really matter?

Another thing. Now that the Liberals are going to make the five junior ministers into ?full? ministers once the House resumes and the law is amended, whatever happened to the idea of equal pay for work of equal value?

The new ministers will get the same pay as the full ministers, yet they do not have the same responsibilities at all. They don't even have departments to run as the full ministers do, yet they will get the same pay and perks for a lot less responsibility. Perhaps you have to be a Liberal to see this as fair and equitable.

And finally, on the subject of Trudeau's cabinet, he came out and crowed that it represents the ?real Canada.? What does that mean, exactly?

Do the Liberals really believe that the previous Tory ministers ? who actually were as diverse as the new Liberal cabinet (The Tories had 12 women, three fewer than the Liberals, but also, for those who like to play this game, they had Asians, Italians and others missing in the Liberal cabinet) ? were somehow less Canadian?

The answer, of course, is yes.

There are few conceits in the world to match the inbred Liberal conceit that they, and they alone, are the real Canada. Everybody else is chopped liver.

Eventually, we will rue the day.

