

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? We've seen the real Trudeau

So much for the sunny ways.

Prime Minister Peter Pan, it seems, allowed his inner teacher to flood his good judgment last week when he barrelled across the Commons floor and attempted to use physical force to drag Tory House Leader Gord Brown to his seat away from a gaggle of NDP MPs who were milling about in front of their seats.

In the process, as you likely know, he used foul language in ordering other politicians out of the way and managed to elbow NDP MP Ruth Ellen Brosseau square in the chest, causing her to visibly wince and ultimately leave the Chamber to compose herself. Trudeau subsequently offered a series of lame semi-apologies for his bully-boy behaviour, but the fact remains he is the first prime minister in our history to resort to physical manhandling to hasten a vote that he wanted to get passed.

Now there's a record to be proud of.

As you'd expect, some of the opposition have exploited Trudeau's unseemly behaviour, including the lament from one female NDP MP that women can no longer feel safe in the Commons. Really?

Clearly, Trudeau did not intentionally elbow Brosseau. And just as clearly ? despite some nasty innuendo from Trudeau apologists ? Brosseau was not faking it when she grabbed her chest and turned away in obvious pain from the blow. But the elbow would never have happened had Trudeau acted like a civilized person, let alone a prime minister, and not physically assaulted the opposition. The problem with all this emphasis on whether or not he meant to hit Brosseau, and whether or not she was really hurt, and whether or not that indicates an unsafe workspace for women (keeping in mind also, that it was a man, i.e. Gord Brown, that he actually targeted), takes away from the real issue here. To wit: who on earth does Trudeau think he is? In other words, we have seen the real Trudeau, and it isn't Mr. Sunshine from the campaign.

Stephen Harper, even on his worst day of muscling legislation through the Commons, never resorted to actual physical intimidation to get his way. And if he had, the Toronto Star and others would still be writing stories about it to this day.

The fact is, the opposition politicians had only been milling about for less than a minute before Trudeau ? apparently forgetting all those campaign promises about decorum and decency in the Commons ? left his seat and charged across the floor.

Ever since Parliament began, opposition politicians have lingered when there is a vote coming up that they particularly don't like and that they know, arithmetic being what it is, they'll lose when it gets down to counting heads.

And really, when it gets down to it, does it really matter if a vote is a few minutes later than the government had hoped?

Then again, as sometime happens, a considerable amount of good came out of this unparliamentary event.

First, it undercut the fairy tale nature of Trudeau and his new government, revealing once again that when it comes to entitlement, nobody feels entitled to their entitlements (to quote a former Liberal cabinet minister) as Liberals do.

Second, it meant the withdrawal of an extraordinarily undemocratic motion to transfer historical powers from the elected Commons to decide on procedural affairs to Trudeau's own cabinet ministers, a faint echo of Trudeau's father, Pierre's oft-repeated sentiment that MPs are ?nobodies? once they leave the Hill.

It also means the Liberals will not likely be able to ram their controversial assisted suicide law ? or, more accurately, state-induced death bill ? through the Commons in time for the Supreme Court's arbitrary June 6 deadline. It is because of this deadline that Trudeau was attempting to remove any opposition say in procedural matters.

It's not the actual elbow shot that people remember most out of this incident. It's the fact that Trudeau is a bully, and worse, was only upset because he wanted to use his majority to squash the historical rights of opposition parties ? who, keep in mind, are also elected representatives ? to have any say in how legislation proceeds into actual law.

Much was written about Harper's so-called ?undemocratic? tendency. But, as we've said, he never tried anything as blatant and undemocratic as Trudeau's attempted power grab.

And he certainly never laid any hands on the opposition to get his way.

