

Claire Hoy ? So much for his promises

Bernard Baruch, the late American financier and statesman, once advised people to 'Vote for the man who promises least; he'll be the least disappointing.'

A bit cynical, but not much of a stretch considering politicians' penchant to say one thing while running for office and doing something entirely different when in office.

Which brings us to Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, the flashy, new-kid-on-the-block leader who, for the most part, is enjoying general adoration in the mainstream media despite his consistently empty rhetoric and some pretty stupid gaffes.

But one thing that Trudeau did seem to be sincere about was his promise to break with partisan tradition and allow the party membership to freely choose their riding candidates in an open and above-board nomination process. Well, so much for promises. (But then, his promise to avoid the temptation of acting dictatorially, as Stephen Harper is often accused of doing, also went by the wayside recently when, without even discussing the matter with his caucus or Liberal Senators, he booted the Senators out of his caucus on the spot. Whether that's a good idea or not is not the issue here. It's just that for a guy who loves to accuse Harper and NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair of being high-handed, it wasn't exactly a good example of listening to different viewpoints before taking action.)

But we digress. Back to the open nomination pledge, a promise he repeated many times but, alas, clearly had no intention of keeping.

Former Liberal candidate Christine Innes, the wife of former Liberal MP and junior cabinet minister Tony Ianno ? was hoping to get the Liberal nod to run in the next election in the reconstituted Toronto riding of Toronto Centre ? which, like many GTA ridings, is being split into three ? but was told in no uncertain terms by the Liberal honchos in Ottawa that she wasn't welcome.

Not only that, the party launched a public smear campaign against her and her husband, accusing them ? without supplying a shred of evidence ? of using ?intimidation and bullying? tactics in order to lure supporters to her side and away from the newly-elected Liberal ?star? candidate Chrystia Freeland.

(When Freeland was seeking the nomination in the riding ? which had been vacated by Bob Rae, thereby causing a by-election, it was equally clear that Trudeau wanted her as the candidate and the promise of an ?open? nomination system rang hollow then as well.)

Fact is, Innes, who has a much longer personal history in the riding, was doing better than Freeland, the Liberals' Chosen One, in recruiting votes for her side, a situation which Trudeau could not allow to develop.

So they came up with this scenario that the Innes-Ianno camp were these two long-time Liberals ? as opposed to Freeland, a classic political carpetbagger, who was parachuted in by the party with no meaningful connection at all to the riding ? were somehow being disrespectful of the process and doing horrible things to get the nomination away from Freeland.

Ianno said she was ?quite shocked? by allegations, which she said were ?totally baseless and without merit? The Canadian public's cynicism about politics can only be erased if we as a party refuse to accept backroom deal-making and intimidation,? she said.

But Ontario campaign co-chair David MacNaughton said barring Innes is intended to send all Liberals a message. No doubt it is. MacNaughton says that message is, ?We're not going to go back to the days of the Hatfields and McCoys in the Liberal party. ?Derogatory remarks were made to several young, enthusiastic Liberals about one of our leading MPs. Suggestions were made to volunteers that their future in the Liberal party would be in jeopardy if they were on the ?wrong side' in a nomination battle,? he said in an e-mail to Innes.

Really? Can he name names? Cite actual examples? Well, no, says MacNaughton, acknowledging that he personally has seen no evidence that Innes has been personally involved in such alleged conduct.

But then, why does that matter? The leader has spoken. And excuse is needed. And if Innes gets smeared, well, what the hell, that's politics.

And indeed it is. And the real message to Liberals is that forget about Trudeau's promises of an open process ? ?I'm in charge. And if you go up against me, you're toast.?

To quote Innes, in what is really an understatement on Trudeau's pledge, ?This seems to be at variance with the leader's commitment to open and fair nominations.?

It also tells you how much a Trudeau promise is worth.

