

Lies in the Branding: Justin Trudeau's Implosion

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Global Research, March 13, 2019

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [History](#)

"Trudeau came out and asked for strong women, and he got them." – Michelle Rempel, Conservative Party MP, The Atlantic, Mar 12, 2019

The gods have various roles, and most of them are intrusively irritating. They select humans, and drive them mad. They select them for special missions, praise them and drive them to death. They also select them to, if the time comes, commit foolish suicide. The going might be good for a time, but they shall utterly be vanquished, mortal snots that they are.

The situation with Canada's **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau** will either ensure his survival for some time, or his destruction. For many, his looks, his manner and his sense of presence have been prime excuses for avoiding sternly critiqued policy, pushing him up charts of aesthetics and chat shows. Like the Camelot of the Kennedys, the substantive nature of achievements have given way to a nimbus of awe and praise. In an appropriate [observation](#) from Jesse Brown, Trudeau was a "social media savant", "the political equivalent of a YouTube puppy video. After your daily barrage of Trump and terror, you can settle your jangled nerves with his comforting memes." Serious issues could hang, and Canada could resist growing up and challenging the lies of its label.

On some level, he was excused for simply being a half-decent, bearable presenter after nine years of the conservative Harper administration, one who caused the occasional flutter and quiver in appropriate audiences. Tickling an audience will get you some way.

He also, much like Tony Blair of the New Labour wave in Britain in the late 1990s, decided to fan progressive tendencies while caking them in the most god awful spin. He preferred conciliatory approaches. He ticked the boxes of the progressive report card, because ticks matter: go for a gender-balanced cabinet; chew over climate change policy; be sensitive to the First Peoples and seek their representation.

In 2015, when asked why he felt his cabinet should be evenly divided in terms of gender (on Ottawa's Parliament Hill, he sported the fine distribution of 15 men and 15 women), his response reverberated on the tarted waves of social media. "Because it's 2015."

Jody Wilson-Raybould, was one of the faces of that cabinet, appointed justice minister and attorney general, and the first indigenous person to attain that post. Full marks were given to the new leader. He was walking, not just on water, but well.

That period of uncritical Trudeau-ism is over. The dirt is coming in. The brittle realities of politics have become apparent. The glory boy has lost his shine, his coat looking that much more ragged. Wilson-Raybould has resigned from the cabinet claiming interference from Trudeau in her efforts to prosecute engineering giant SNC-Lavalin, a company which has

thousands of Canadians in its employ and a certain smell of bribery and corruption touching a number of Libyan business contracts. (The Qaddafi era still casts its shadow.)

Wilson-Raybould proved to be a true spoil sport to the Trudeau image. Jobs were playing on the prime minister's mind, and became a dominant intrusion. Going heavy on the company for grounds of fraud or corruption would lead to job losses, notably in Quebec. A criminal conviction would fetter the company from bidding on government contracts for a decade. Best keep SNC-Lavalin up and running, in a fashion. The company would be encouraged to confess, spanked with a manageable fine and be made to promise improvements. Wilson-Raybould refused.

On February 27, in [extended testimony](#) to members of the House of Commons Justice committee, the former Attorney General explained that between September and December 2018, she had "experienced a consistent and sustained effort by many people within the government to seek to politically interfere in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion [in her] role as the Attorney General of Canada in an inappropriate effort to secure a Deferred Prosecution Agreement with SNC-Lavalin."

Her refusal to accede to the deferred agreement for SNC, she surmised, led to her shuffling out of her cabinet position on January 7 this year. She duly resigned. Before the committee, she reminded members of the role of the attorney general, one who exercises discretion to prosecute "individually and independently." Cabinet's views on the matter were irrelevant in making such decisions.

The extensive cloud was irritating and morally vexing enough to compel another [resignation](#), a certain capable Jane Philpott of the treasury board.

"Unfortunately, the evidence of efforts by politicians and/or officials to pressure the former Attorney General to intervene in the criminal case involving SNC-Lavalin, and the evidence as to the content of those efforts have raised serious concerns for me."

If there is nothing more pronounced in outrage, it is those who felt faith and lost it; who adored stupidly, idiotically, only to understand that politics has a habit of feeding, and promoting, certain acts of self-interested and damaging imbecility. Trudeau's actions were those of a person caught up, concerned at the loss of jobs and votes. Accordingly, he massaged any principles.

Other parties have started to express interest at this fall from grace. Investigations have been mounted by the Justice Committee and the federal ethics commissioner. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has expressed concern over the SNC-Lavalin affair, feeling that it poses a challenge to Canada's reputation for upholding the rule of law. NDP MP Charlie Angus [insists](#) that the perception of Canada on the "world stage" was at stake. (Canada's sense of virtue tends to assume a strained rhetorical quality at points.) "If Canada is seen as a jurisdiction soft on corporate corruption, Canadians lose out."

SNC-Lavalin may well be the undoing of the prime minister in every sense, starting with members of his own party, though he seems to have retained support - at least for the moment - within his caucus. The two resignations did not precipitate movements for an imminent coup.

If he had simply set his sights lower, clinging to the grime of politics and the arithmetic of amorality, the fall would not only have softened but be lower. Not so. He felt better; elevated and irritatingly cocky, he could gaze from Olympus on the miscreants and assume that he had become exceptional in the frothy nonsense that is social media and goggle-eyed celebrity. He could dabble in the world of moose shit and look puppyish and cute. That time is at an end.

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