



CAUGHT RED-HANDED

A new generation of Liberals is proving itself no better than the last

IT'S NOT QUITE WATERGATE, BUT THE LIBERAL theft of Conservative files is serious business—a violation of privacy laws and the Criminal Code (see cover story, page 26).

It's less serious than Watergate in that the Liberal party did not actively break and enter into their opponents' locked offices. Instead, when the Liberals swapped offices with the Conservatives after losing the election last year, Liberal staff took 30 boxes of files the Conservatives had packed for Parliament's movers. It's still theft, but it wasn't particularly premeditated.

In other ways, though, it's more serious than Watergate. To this day, the Liberal party has no compunction about what it did. Liberal operatives brag about how they spent a year going through the documents—including 174 personnel files of Conservative staff. The Liberals held a press conference to describe their “research” and made a video of the whole affair, brazenly posted to the official Liberal website. The video highlights various confidential personnel files, revealing the names of some of the staff who had their most private matters inspected for political grist. Perhaps a secretary was having problems at work because she was going through a divorce; perhaps a clerk asked for help in dealing with a substance abuse problem. Whatever private details were contained in those human resources files were read by voyeuristic Liberal “researchers” looking for dirt. That's not called being Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. That's called being a Peeping Tom.

The Liberals chose 32-year-old MP Mark Holland as their point man for the press conference and the star of the video. That's because Holland has consistently shown poor judgment as an MP, and doesn't demur from dirty

politics. *Western Standard* readers will remember Holland as the one who threatened Alberta oil companies if they didn't obey his particular environmental plans. Less well known is that, on the eve of Holland's showboating tour to the oilsands, someone leaked a report by the House of Commons' natural resources committee, breaching parliamentary confidentiality. Every MP on that committee was asked to swear an oath that they were not the one who broke the rules; Holland and one other refused to swear that oath.



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That rough touch was what the Liberals needed and Holland complied, telling reporters that he felt “absolutely” no obligation to return the files.

As I write, the Speaker of the House is considering a complaint against Holland by Scott Reid, a Conservative MP whose files were amongst those rifled by the Liberals. But Holland isn't the root of the problem, he's just a branch; it was the Liberal leader's staff who worked through the files for a year.

You would think that the party of Adscam would have found a new moral compass by now. That a young Liberal MP thinks the best way to get ahead is through unethical behaviour suggests the new generation of Liberals is no better than the last.

When I wrote a column about Holland in the *Calgary Sun* and *Toronto Sun*, he threatened them and the *Western Standard* with a defamation lawsuit, though his chief quibble was that he didn't personally rifle through all the stolen files—Liberal staff did and then briefed him on their findings. That's hardly an excuse. Imagine a corporate CEO blaming his underlings that way. But Holland's legal threat is an important part of this story: when the Liberals are caught doing something wrong, their instinct is to bully their opponents. Which brings us to Holland's threatened suit against this magazine.

The *Western Standard* didn't cover before much scarier Liberals like Alfonso Gagliano and Jean Chrétien when we published our cover story in 2005 about the Libranos. And we didn't go wobbly in 2006 when Muslim radicals threatened to murder anyone who reprinted the Danish cartoons of Mohammed. We're still fighting against two “human rights” complaints in the cartoon kerfuffle, thanks to our readers' support for our legal fund.

When an MP brags about 30 boxes of stolen documents, our readers can expect a news story about it. And if that MP tries to censor us with a lawsuit, well that just makes the story a little bit more interesting.

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