COMPLACENCY BREEDS CATASTROPHE

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In recent years Armenian community leaders in Canada knew that Turkey had renewed its efforts and called Turkey Jr. (Azerbaijan) to buttress Ankara's efforts to somehow water down Canada's recognition of the Genocide of Armenians. But our representatives did almost nothing in the face of vigorous Turco-Azeri campaign, perhaps preferring to sit on their laurels of 2004, 2005, and 2006 when the senate, parliament and the government respectively recognized the Genocide of Armenians.

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And now—predictably--the lackadaisical attitude has begun to harm Hye Tadd (The Armenian Cause). It's apparent that people and organizations trusted with the mission to represent the Canadian-Armenian community have dropped the ball. The fact that the fiasco we will address happened nearly a year ago and yet remained unknown underlines the need for a re-set to our effort to render inoperable Turkey's denialist campaign.

We begin the sorry tale in March 2011 when Senator Nancy Ruth was invited to Turkey by Canadian Ambassador Mark Bailey to give a speech on the economic opportunities of Canadian women and how this country deals with violence against women. So far; so good. Considering the rampant honor killings in Turkey, it was a good idea. However, when Senator Nancy Ruth (although her name is Nancy Ruth Jackman, the much-travelled senator prefers to be called Senator Nancy Ruth…no last

name, just like Madonna or Lady Gaga) returned from her $4,987.66 taxpayer-paid trip, she sent a letter to the chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budget and Administration Senator David Tkachuk, giving a summary of her meetings in Turkey. The letter contained a section titled "Next Steps." The third step was: "Keep working on getting Canada to drop the speeches on Armenian Genocide day. These are an impediment in our relations with Turkey. I have been asked to do this by our Ambassador. The Speaker of the Senate has also been asked to this."

That it took a year for this letter to be exposed is another clue that our lobbyists have been sleeping on the job. That it was Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Liberal—Scarborough-Agincourt) who exposed this despicable episode adds salt to the wound. A lobby is as good as the group or community it represents. Since Canada's recognition of the Genocide, our community has become complacent. We have autonomously declared victory and walked away from the Turkish-initiated campaign. Ankara, which established a school for diplomats in the early 19th century, knows it's not over until it's over. Unfazed by their 2004 to 2006 debacle, they have come back to fight until—their victory.

The second culprit in this unfortunate affair is Canada's ambassador to Turkey. The man whose job is to represent Canada in Ankara, apparently decided to decide Canada's policies re Turkey. Our lobbyists knew Mr. Bailey's crass attitude and didn't do anything to persuade the busy-body to become more circumspect. Luckily for us, Mr. Bailey has ended his term and is back in Canada. As Hon. Karygiannis said at the Feb. 14 press conference in Ottawa, "…the Houses of the Canadian Parliament have spoken. To not mention the Genocide on the anniversary is tantamount to denying that it happened. That is unconscionable."

The third culprit is Sen. Ruth, a controversial politician with a checkered history and a foul mouth. This politician, who depicts herself as a major representative of women's rights, has no problem using four-letter words publicly. On one occasion she told a women's international group to "shut the f--- up."

Ms. Ruth was defeated in the provincial elections of 1990. Switching from her tony St. Andrews-St. Patrick riding to the also tony St. George-St. David riding in 1993, she once again lost the election. In 1998 she again tried to get to Parliament Hill but failed to be nominated by her party.

And then salvation: the dithering PM Paul Martin. The Liberal leader appointed Ruth to the senate in 2005. Being born with a silver spoon in her mouth must have helped: she happens to be the sister of Hal Jackman, the millionaire former lieutenant-governor of Ontario. The latter, demonstrating a commendable allegiance to family unanimity, downplayed the Genocide during his tenure and never used the "G" word.

Since becoming a senator, Ruth's big "achievement" has been her clumsy ploy to hit the headlines. A

few years ago she wanted to change the words of the national anthem from "...in all thy sons command" to "in all of us command," according to her website, although a reliable source says that she wanted to change it to the arcane "thou dost in us command." Either way, her proposal created such a backlash that the issue was dropped by the government.

Ruth's website has a ton of information about her human rights work, about that she has several diplomas of theology and is "a United Church minister by training." Considering her brazenly self-promoting autobiography, it's amazing that she would play footsy with Turkey and join the campaign to cover up the Genocide.

At the end of the day, the fault lies with us and not ignorant, opportunistic politicians. If we want to protect the truth, we have to be its stewards. Rather than leave the job to lobbyists, every Canadian-Armenian should get involved in this sacred struggle. We should write to our MPs, MPPs, councilors and the media to condemn Mr. Bailey and Sen. Nancy Ruth Jackman.

And don't forget our Galahad—Hon. Jim Karygiannis. A long-time friend of Armenians, he unmasked the mischief makers and made sure Canadians heard about the underhanded stratagems of our former "representative" in Ankara and of the politician with no last name.