

Freedom or Repression of Speech at Alberta's Universities? A Point of Contention Between the NDP and the UCP

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*Is former NDP Cabinet Minister, **Shannon Phillips**, attempting to revive her waning political career by initiating a fear mongering campaign? Ms. Phillips is targeting Alberta **Premier Jason Kenney**'s plan to integrate the Chicago Principles on Free Speech into the operations of Alberta's colleges and universities.*

The University of Chicago put forward a statement in 2015 asserting that it is an essential duty of universities to foster debate even when some might find the certain arguments to be "offensive, unwise, immoral or wrongheaded." Rather than trying to constrain speech the academic mission calls on its champions to celebrate ideas by debating them with enthusiasm and respect.

In an Aug. 9 video posted on her Facebook account, Lethbridge-West MLA Shannon Phillips tries to make a case against the Chicago Principles. Instead of embracing free speech, Ms. Phillips would apparently prefer to continue the Alberta NDP's policy of trying to manage and control speech in Alberta's institutions of higher learning. This NDP hostility to free speech and to academic freedom has been most clearly expressed in the political party's shifting position on my case.

My suspension came in October of 2016 as an administrative response to a now-notorious Facebook scam mounted by B'nai Brith Canada and Joshua Goldberg. Goldberg's extremely reprehensible "Kill All Jews" post is said to have appeared very briefly on my Facebook wall without my sanction or agreement. Goldberg is presently in a US federal penitentiary convicted of terrorist charges.

See [this](#) and [this](#).

Ms. Phillips wants to confine the issues to my suspension at the U of L in October of 2016. Among the many issues she tries to ignore or downplay is the fact that the professional associations representing me locally and nationally defeated the U of L Board of Governors in the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench. The ruling came down in September of 2017. It indicated my suspension took place outside the terms of an administrative-faculty collective agreement. A judge ruled that my suspension was illegal.

It does not bode well for the future of the supposedly left-leaning NDP that one of its senior MLAs can be so flippantly dismissive about an administrative failure to live up to the terms of a collective agreement with a faculty association. Who does the Alberta NDP represent if it fails to uphold the rights of organized labour?

Is the NDP's position on Israel-Palestinian relations illustrative of the party's propensity to identify with wealth and power over the victims of injustice? The provincial and national branches of the NDP have disappointed many decent men and women who expect Canada to show some sort of balance in its international orientation to the Jewish state and the Palestinian people.

The former leader of the federal NDP, **Tom Mulcair**, was ruthlessly one-sided in his Middle East policies. Mulcair would not allow NDP MPs to criticize Israel. He prevented NDP members from seeking election to federal office if they manifested pro-Palestinian proclivities. Mulcair prevented **Libby Davis, Morgan Wheeldon, Jerry Natanine** and **Paul Manly** from running for public office. Paul Manly's father, James, is a United Church clergyman who risked his life on a ship seeking to deliver in 2012 humanitarian aid to the Palestinian inhabitants of the blockaded open-air prison of Gaza.

See [this](#).

In 2017 NDP federal leadership candidate, **Niki Ashton**, attempted to overcome Mulcair's reactionary legacy by emphasizing the need for the Canadian government to develop a more balanced position in the Middle East. Ashton's role in Parliament as MP for a large Manitoba riding with a majority of Aboriginal peoples was probably a factor in her developing a wise sensibility to the dilemmas of indigenous Palestinians.

B'nai Brith Canada intervened in the NDP leadership campaign to depict Ms. Ashton as an anti-Semitic bigot engaged in the process of befriending terrorists. As this lobby was trying to turn NDP members against the pro-Palestinian candidate, B'nai Brith Canada was deeply involved concurrently in my case. It put extreme pressure on the Alberta Premier to counter the court's decision to reinstate me to my professional responsibilities.

Premier Notley succumbed to the pressure. Seeking partisan political advantage she wrongfully intervened to undermine the juridical integrity of an internal investigation within the University. The President of the U of L Faculty Association wrote to the Premier indicating she "may have biased the outcome of any such fair and objective process." Shortly after Notley intervened to join in the attack on academic freedom, she was feted at a dinner hosted by B'nai Brith Canada.

See [this](#).

The coalition of the lobby group, the U of L Board of Governors and the very top officials in the Alberta government was aimed at bringing about a preconceived outcome before a genuine process of arbitration of my academic work had even commenced.

Left-wing parties in many countries have been pressured to ignore the Israeli government's violations of international law in its treatment of Palestinians. Those who insist on criticizing Israeli actions are often targeted professionally for defamation through the deployment of weaponized terms like "anti-Semitism," "conspiracy theories," "holocaust denial" and "hate speech."

The Israel Lobby's attack on the UK Labour Party of **Jeremy Corbyn**, a decent social democrat under vicious political attack, forms a telling illustration of the web of corruption that has ensnared Rachel Notley and Shannon Phillips. It is disturbing to witness the Tony Blairite propensities of the NDP survivors of Jason Kenney's recent electoral sweep in

Alberta.

In her video discussing the U of L free speech case, Shannon Phillips shows that she is deeply enmeshed in the deceptions and propaganda disseminated by B'nai Brith Canada. This deception began when B'nai Brith tried to pin on me the extremely offensive content of the Joshua Goldberg post.

An honest account of how this story has unfolded would mention that I retired on 20 October of 2018 in good standing as Emeritus Professor. I was not found guilty of anything. Shannon Phillips has conspicuously failed to do her homework in mounting her attack on free speech and on the protections for academic freedom in Alberta.

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