

April 19, 2009

Almost a month has passed since the BC provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Carole James labelled anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism; by so doing, she accused the anti-war movement, the Palestinian support movement and all those human rights organizations that oppose the political ideology of Zionism of being “racist”.

We were hoping that some sane NDP leaders, MP’s, MLA’s or candidates would pressure Carole James into reversing her outrageous conclusions, after all the public criticism and outrage that followed her ill-advised libelling of people who oppose Zionism (1).

However, it does NOT seem it is coming especially before such a crucial provincial election.

We feel we should make our position clear, so the leadership of the NDP will not take the working class, the anti-war and the anti-Zionist movements for granted.

Let us start with some History

The Zionist Movement is a settler colonialist movement that called for an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine.

Since its inception it worked on controlling the majority of Palestinian land and on changing the demography in Palestine and “reworking” the population to create a Jewish majority; all this was carried out through the barrel of the gun.

The settler colonialist movement wanted its followers to live on the land instead of the indigenous Palestinians rather than in peace and harmony with them.

The result was the Palestinian Nakbe (catastrophe) of 1948 where over 400 towns and villages were uprooted from the face of the earth and where two-thirds of the Palestinian people became refugees.

For Carole James information, the word Zionist does not always mean Jewish. There are 72 million Christian Zionists in the U.S. alone; it also refers to Muslims, Buddhists and even “socialists” who support the concept of an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine.

Ms. James herself would seem to be a candidate for such a definition.

Historically, the Jewish opposition to Zionism preceded even the Arab and the Palestinian opposition to it:

- In 1897, the Executive Committee of the Association of Rabbis in Germany issued an anti-Zionist manifesto on the occasion of the first Zionist Congress, where they declared: “Judaism obligates its adherents to serve with all devotion the Fatherland to which they belong, and to further its national interests with all their heart and strength.” (2)
- The strongest opposition to the Balfour Declaration within the British Government came from its only Jewish member, Sir Edwin Montagu, he wrote “When the Jews are told that Palestine is their national home, every country will immediately desire to get rid of its Jewish citizens, and you will find a population in Palestine driving out its present inhabitants, taking all the best in the country... I deny that Palestine is today associated with the Jews.” (3)

Many great leaders and historians of the twentieth century also opposed Zionism and Mahatma Gandhi was one such example. (4)

On the Canadian scene in 1935, the national leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) J. S. Woodsworth realised the dangers of the Zionist Movement in promoting anti-Semitism. He stated referring to Zionism that “if nationalism was ‘over-emphasized’ it would call forth a counter-nationalism that [would] be very disadvantageous.” He also said “the promotion of the interest of a sectional group tends to provoke a certain reaction in other sections of the population, and thus defeat the very object in view.” (5) (The CCF was the NDP’s predecessor and is the party that brought universal health care to Canada.)

Also in 1938, when Woodsworth was approached to get CCF support for the Zionist settler project by adopting a resolution seeking the right of Jewish settlers to enter Palestine, he was quoted as saying: “It was easy for Canadians, Americans and the British to agree to a Jewish colony, as long as it was somewhere else. Why ‘pick on the Arabs’ other than for ‘strategic’ and ‘imperialistic’ consideration...” (6)

As I recently told federal cabinet minister Jason Kenney when he tried to accuse Arab and Moslem Canadian organizations of anti-Semitism: “Zionism and anti-Semitism are two faces of the same coin; they both believe that Jews do NOT belong to their respective homelands because they are a “different race or nationality”, they are “superior” or “inferior” and they belong somewhere else. The founder of Zionism Theodor Herzl realised that early on. He made the connection and sought the help of anti-Semites to realize his colonialist project” (7)

It is outrageous, insulting and ignorant for Carole James to accuse us of racism. Human rights advocates, the anti war movement and the supporters of Palestinian liberation do not promote anti-Semitism; the ones who promote anti-Semitism are the ones who believe the Jews do not belong to their respective countries, and who libel all Jewish people by claiming that the atrocities and war crimes of the Israeli government are on the shoulders of every Jewish person.

Again, to educate Ms. James, Mable Elmore’s statement to “Seven Oaks” was very accurate. Local Zionists did support the war on Iraq, as did the government of Israel, and this was openly expressed on more than one occasion in local media. (8)

At the same time, large numbers of local Jewish Canadians were part of the anti war movement and part of the Palestinian support movement.

To equate Zionists with Jews is an insult to all those Jews who oppose Zionist practices and oppose Zionist war mongering in Iraq, Palestine, Central and South America, Africa and other countries in the world (9)

In a Vancouver Sun article “When asked if she has confidence in the vetting process, James said: ‘I’ll be talking to the party about that’.” (10) Yes, we agree that the NDP membership should have a vetting process where self-seekers and opportunists will not have a place in the party. The likes of Carole James, Ujjal Dosanjh and Bob Rae should not have a place in any party genuinely based on principles of democracy and social justice.

If you cannot win on your principles, deeds and practices, you cannot represent the people that entrusted you.

And if you dump your principles for the faulty perception that this will enhance your popularity with the electorate, this is the fatal mistake any party can fall into.

Finally, to Ms. James, all NDP candidates and the national NDP leadership, you will not get the Zionist (Jewish, Christian) vote whatever you do to appease or submit to them. Read what they say about you in their papers and pronouncements.

And if you really want to regain your reputation among the anti-war movement, the Palestine support movement including humane and non-racist Jewish Canadians, and all people in Canada struggling for human rights, we expect you to make a public apology to all these anti-racist organizations for calling them anti-Semites.

We hope to hear from you, although our previous experience in communicating with you and other NDP leaders does not bode well for any quick communication.

Finally; after seventy-one years, we would like to repeat what J. S. Woodsworth, the national leader of the CCF, said: "Why 'pick on the Arabs'?"

Hanna Kawas,

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1. <http://www.straight.com/article-209187/mable-elmores-controversy-over-zionism-truly-embarrassing> and <http://www.vancouversun.com/Life/candidate+forced+apologize+2004+anti+Semitic+remarks/1419716/story.html>
 2. Unease in Zion, Ehud Ben Ezer, page 22
 3. <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/United-Nations.-The-Palestine-Problem/Story714.html>
 4. <http://www.kamat.com/mmgandhi/mideast.htm>
 5. Canada and the birth of Israel, David J. Bercuson, page 18
 6. Ibid, page 19
 7. http://www.cpavancouver.org/Jason_Kenney_is_Promoting_Racism.pdf
 8. <http://jewishindependent.ca/archives/Mar03/archives03Mar21-08.html>, <http://jewishindependent.ca/archives/April03/archives03Apr18-08.html> and <http://jewishindependent.ca/archives/April03/archives03Apr04-06.html>
 9. <http://www.straight.com/article-210112/ndp-and-big-lie-about-israel-open-letter-carole-james>
 10. <http://www.vancouversun.com/Life/candidate+forced+apologize+2004+anti+Semitic+remarks/1419716/story.html>