

Canadian Jewish news

CUPE faces more fire for anti-Israel resolutions

By PAUL LUNGEN

TORONTO - One of the oldest social service agencies to unionize in Ontario has pulled out of CUPE Ontario over a resolution that slams Israel and accuses it of practicing "apartheid."

Local 265, which represents about 100 workers at the Jewish Family and Child Service in Toronto, notified CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan it is withdrawing from the regional labour association because of the "one-side and insensitive" resolution.

The resolution, passed unanimously by 896 delegates at the union's convention May 27, calls for boycotts and divestment from Israel unless Israel recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination. It also condemns Israel's security barrier as an "apartheid wall."

In a letter to Ryan, local president Teena Grund noted that members of local 265 were "pioneer members of both CUPE National and the Ontario division. Maintaining a sense of pluralism and inclusiveness seemed always to be important pillars of belief within the labour movement. From our perspective, these beliefs have now been indelibly stained. We will not allow ourselves to belong to an organization so intent in both excluding us and making us feel unwelcome."

Grund urges CUPE Ontario's leadership to rescind the resolution.

Criticism of the CUPE Ontario resolution was widespread. Columnists and editorial writers blasted the union for dabbling in foreign policy instead of sticking to labour issues, for focusing on Israel while ignoring human rights violators around the world, and for disregarding steps Israel has taken for peace.

In Winnipeg, New Democrat MP Pat Martin stated, "contrary to CUPE Ontario's resolution calling for economic sanctions and boycotts against Israel, I am proud that my union, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, has significant investments in Israel through its benefit and investment plans. I will certainly be encouraging our leadership to ignore any appeal to join this misguided activism."

"Israel is a modern and progressive multi-party democracy with a free and independent trade union movement, freedom of speech and religion, and a profound and frequently tested commitment to human rights. If anything, the State of Israel deserves the support of the international labour movement for fostering and encouraging these values in spite of overwhelming adversity and relentless attack."

In a column in the Toronto Star, Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers, wrote, "The Canadian labour movement and the left could play an important role in supporting a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict. To do this, however, we must get past simple rhetoric - like the claim that Israel is equivalent to the former South African apartheid regime."

In a column in the Toronto Star, Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers, wrote, "The Canadian labour movement and the left could play an important role in supporting a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict. To do this, however, we must get past simple rhetoric - like the claim that Israel is equivalent to the former South African apartheid regime."



PAT MARTIN, NDP MP for Winnipeg North Centre: The CUPE Ontario resolution was "misguided activism."

Hargrove called for an end to finger pointing and for more constructive advocacy of dialogue in the region.

Some CUPE members were scathing in their denunciations of Ryan. Carolyn Roberts, president of CUPE National local 21237, which represents Jewish Vocational Service workers in Toronto, said Ryan "has become an embarrassment to the dignity, equality, respect and goodwill associated with the CUPE name."

Roberts accused Ryan of ignoring union protocol by staging the vote without proper notification and on the Jewish Sabbath, when observant Jews would not be present.

Ryan responded to his critics in a column in the Toronto Star, saying that the vote "to support an international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel has to be seen in the context of our union's overall policy in the Middle East and our history of union democracy and social justice."

The CUPE resolution was intended to "draw attention to [Palestinians'] inhumane suffering through a peaceful form of protest against the policies of the state of Israel, which are clearly contrary to international law."

His Star column accused Israel of "debasement and dehumanization" of the Palestinians and said international sanctions and Israeli security restrictions were increasing Palestinian poverty and hunger. He said construction of Israel's security wall - deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice - amount to a unilateral creation of a border and a land grab, and he said expansion of "illegal settlements in the West Bank" violated UN resolutions.

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Ahenakew's hate crime conviction thrown out

By PAUL LUNGEN

TORONTO - A Saskatchewan judge has thrown out the hate crimes conviction of former native leader David Ahenakew and ordered a new trial.



DAVID AHENAKEW: The judge ruled that according to the evidence, he didn't plan in advance to promote hate.

Queen's Bench judge C.J. Laing overturned the conviction after finding the trial judge failed to adequately consider a defence contention that Ahenakew did not wilfully intend to promote the hatred of Jews.

Ahenakew was convicted in July 2005 by a Provincial Court judge based on statements he made to an assembly of native leaders in December 2002 and in comments he made shortly afterward to a reporter from Saskatoon's

StarPhoenix newspaper. Ahenakew called Jews "a disease" and told the reporter: "The Jews damn near owned all of Germany prior to the war. That's why Hitler came in, that he was gonna make damn sure that the Jews didn't take over Germany or Europe. That's why he fried six million of those guys."

Ahenakew appealed the conviction, with defence lawyer Doug Christie arguing Ahenakew's interview with the reporter was not intended as a public statement. He also contended the evidence showed Ahenakew's remarks did not show he had planned in advance to promote hate.

Laing found Ahenakew was an experienced public spokesman and would have known his remarks would be published. But Laing concluded, "With respect to whether [Ahenakew] was 'wilfully' promoting hatred against people of the Jewish faith... the trial judge did not... consider all of the evidence surrounding the making of the statements."

Laing found the trial judge did not consider that some of Ahenakew's remarks were prompted by a request for an interview by the reporter, that the interview lasted around three minutes, that Ahenakew cut the interview short, that he hung up when the reporter called him later and that he twice said he did not want to continue talking about Jews.

Canadian Jewish Congress, which had intervened in the case to argue for the validity of Canada's anti-hate laws, said, "We respect the judicial process and have every confidence in the Crown to make appropriate choice as to whether or not it will appeal [the] decision, or proceed directly to a new trial."

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U.S. Jewish news

Jury punishes matchmaker after date doesn't live up to expectations

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES

(JTA) - Sure, ladies, you want to meet the right man, but would you shell out \$125,000 U.S. for an introduction? Anne Majerik, a 60-year-old widow and grandmother, paid that amount to Orly Hadida, who bills herself as a former Miss Israel and now as the Beverly Hills-based "Rolls-Royce of matchmakers."

The fee wasn't even a record for Orly, who goes by her first name. She charges \$200,000 U.S. for her "money-back guaranteed billionaire search with international men having estates worth up to \$50 million U.S."

But in her lawsuit against Orly, Majerik told a Los Angeles civil jury that her promised dream date with a supposed international banker ended up in a meeting with a lowly interpreter who worked in a bank. Orly filed a counterclaim for \$700,000 U.S., arguing that Majerik was a serial

suer of matchmakers who turned off dates by rude questions about their income and wealth.

In its verdict last month, the jury hit Orly with a \$2.1 million U.S. judgment, but wasn't exactly taken by Majerik either. Several jurors said they had voted for an award of \$20 million U.S., on condition that all the money go to charity. The judge turned down the idea.

Even in a city famed for its self-promoters, Orly holds more than her own. In videos, testimonials and press interviews on her Web site - www.orythematchmaker.com - Orly lays claim to having been an Israeli beauty queen, model, actress and soldier and a listing in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's most expensive matchmaker. She has also written an advice book on successful relationships, which includes the caveat, "Do not have sex on your first date."

During 25 years in the business, she has been a ubiquitous guest on radio and television chat shows.

In one appearance, she managed the considerable feat of preventing TV host Bill Maher and comedian Martin Short from getting a word in edgewise.

Neither Orly, usually avid to talk to the media, nor her lawyer responded to requests for more specific details about her life.



Matchmaker Orly Hadida's Web site.

Taking it to the streets: N.Y. rabbi peddles Judaism

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) - Some

walk by briskly. Others view the large, "Gotta Minute" sign with sheer curiosity. It's hard to tell, even among those who stop to chat, just how much they're really taking in. But Pete Stein isn't discouraged. "Do you have a minute for the Torah?" he asks them, standing at the corner of 112th and Broadway.

While such outreach tactics are usually employed by Chabad leaders, Stein is a newly minted Conservative rabbi. Stein, who graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary last month, has built a tiny sanctuary for Jewish life here, nestled among the hustle and bustle of New York City.

Though the tools of his trade are simple - a small card table, a few leaflets - the idea to engage random Jews in a "Torah Minute," or brief exchange on the weekly Jewish text is anything but. "Outreach is something all Jews need to get into, not just Chabad," Stein says. "People are out there yearning to learn."

Stein began his Friday afternoon "street outreach" pilot in November, initially using it to gain seminary course credit. But now he plans to expand its reach to New Haven, which he says lacks a Jewish center for young professionals. "All the synagogues moved out to the suburbs 40 years ago," he says. "All that is left is Hillel of Yale and a few Chabad institutions."

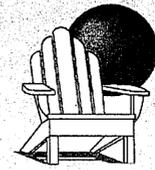
Stein would know - he grew up in

the area and graduated from Yale University in 1999. His vision includes bringing Shabbat dinners and Jewish classes to the community. "My biggest market will be the unaffiliated," he explains. He has applied for funding from the Jewish federation there.

Stein is not the only one emulating the Chabad model. The Jewish Outreach Institute runs similar programs based on what its organizational leadership terms "public-space Judaism." Passover in the Aisles, Chanukah in the Mall and Color Me Calendar are national initiatives that offer basic information about Jewish holiday observance in supermarkets, shopping malls and other easily accessible locations. Through these programs, volunteers target unaffiliated and intermarried Jewish families.

Paul Golin, the institute's associate executive director, said the idea is to "take Judaism to them, rather than waiting for them to come to us." "Jews are not coming through doors of Jewish institutions in nearly the numbers we want them to," he explained. "In general, professionals are still hesitant to leave their buildings. They may have just done a wonderful capital campaign or built a beautiful JCC, and they feel like if we build it they will come."

"But that's not necessarily happening," he continued. "The bottom line is, we need to better articulate why be Jewish."



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