



Editorial

The Enlightened Camp

Jonathan D. Halevi

Shimon Koffler Fogel CEO, The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), outlined in an editorial in The Canadian Jewish News his vision of managing an advocacy campaign. In his article, it is evident that Fogel wishes to counter CIJA detractors who claim that the organization he heads is contented and responds feebly to anti-Jewish and anti-Israel activity such as "Israeli Apartheid Week", boycott, divestment and sanctions efforts, that endeavor to depict Israel as instituting state apartheid towards the Palestinians both within its sovereign territory and the West Bank.

Responding to his critics Fogel maintains resolutely that there are only two possible approaches to manage an advocacy campaign. The Canadian Jewish community has developed an advocacy approach that's evidence-based and empirically tested, and embraces a strategic plan seeking the long-term, meaningful advancement of the community's interests. He contrasts this with the field activists at anti-Israel rallies, or those who try to out-shout or out-spend those bent on delegitimizing the Jewish state. Experience, he suggests, show that such efforts only achieve an ephemeral sense of emotional satisfaction. These tactics do not work, they don't change opinions, nor discredit our adversaries.

An organization engaged in lobbying and advocacy strives by its very essence to garner the broadest possible support for its positions and swell its ranks, and obviously does not wish to distance those supportive of its practices. Yet reactions among Jewish field activists in Canada to Fogel's article convey a sense of rage towards what they construe as disaffection and rebuff of their selfless activity, by the Jewish community leadership.

The activists do not contest the need to base CIJA advocacy on a considered and measured strategy, but in their view Fogel's terminology is especially smarting, as it portrays them as wasting their time on superfluous and insignificant activity, seeking gratification for their most basic needs in order to achieve a

sense of emotional satisfaction, or wandering blindly in the darkness.

Fogel's editorial was written several days after Jewish and non-Jewish activists left Toronto to



Shimon Fogel

protest against a demonstration in front of Canadian Tire in Hamilton calling on the public not to purchase the products of the Israeli Soda Stream company. Is protest activity not officially sanctioned by CIJA indeed unwarranted and insignificant activity, achieving only momentarily satisfaction? Were the activists protesting against the 'al-Quds' rally last August in Toronto just wasting their time? And what about those speaking out at the anti-Israel demonstrations in front of the Israeli consulate in Toronto? And those writing talkbacks and sending letters to the editor in response to hate articles? And the bloggers? Is the participation in the "Walk with Israel" of no merit? And what about the small donations to the UJA which finance CIJA activity?

Fogel wished to emphasize the principle of 'think before you act', but his sayings were construed as rejecting the independent activity of the individual (without referring specifically to any organization or particular group) not carried out within the framework of a calculated strategy like that of CIJA. Beyond the sense of rage this may have far reaching consequences, whether broadening independent activity without regard to CIJA, or leading others to descend into apathy and abandoning advocacy activity to the experts.

Last week Jspace held its founding conference in Toronto. Its initiators identify Jspace as a progressive leftist organization attempting to present an alternative to the radical

left and right, expressing their love and support for Israel while opposing settlements in the West Bank and favouring Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries as a way to promote peace with the Palestinians.

I was taken by the word 'progressive'. Jspace was not the first to use this term, and it is intended to convey a message differentiating between those holding 'enlightened' views and all the rest who adopt a 'narrow-minded' approach. On this 'progressive' basis, Jspace supports withdrawal to the 1967 lines, leaving the state of Israel to defend itself within boundaries 14 to 17 kilometers wide (Kalkilya-Tulkarem) in central Israel (the Tel Aviv region) and the Ben Gurion international airport at the mercy of small weapons fire from the Palestinian territory.

According to the 'progressive' approach Israel does not need minimal defensible borders (through territorial compromise, exchange of land, etc.), and only peace waiting around the corner can secure its future. The 'progressives' believe wholeheartedly that the Palestinian 'president' Mahmud Abbas, can sign an agreement in the name of all the Palestinians, even though his organization – Fatah –rejects any compromise with Israel, all the groups belonging to the PLO are unwilling to reject the 'right of return', and Hamas (ruling the Gaza Strip) and the other Islamic organizations do not recognize Mahmud Abbas as representative of the Palestinian people.

The 'progressives' do not contend with the question of 'the day after' the withdrawal from the West Bank, neither with the consequences of the 'Arab Spring' (or rather the 'Islamic Winter') for Israel, and Iran becoming a regional force striving to attain hegemony in the Middle East. For them the settlements are the disease and withdrawal is the medicine. All the rest is background noise. A reality so simple that only 'progressive' people can fully comprehend.

And I am left to wonder when a Jewish organization called 'Realisty' will be formed, a group not blindly following empty slogans and basing its positions on cold and objective analysis of the situation.



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