

Victims of the revolution



DAVID WARREN

At the moment, a number of “interesting” cases are coming before Canada’s inaptly-named “human rights commissions.” I have mentioned in this space before the case being brought against *Maclean’s* magazine, for publishing an excerpt from a book by Mark Steyn, by the Canadian Islamic Congress.

Ezra Levant has just gone on “trial” before an Alberta “human rights” tribunal, for what he had published in the (now defunct) *Western Standard* newsmagazine two years ago. He ran examples of the Danish cartoons on the Prophet Muhammad — to show readers that the fuss over them was overblown. His right to publish is being contested.

Catholic Insight, a monthly published from Toronto, is being prosecuted by a man in Edmonton for upholding the Catholic position on homosexuality (“hate the sin and love the sinner”), and for having vigorously opposed the “gay rights” agenda.

There are other meandering cases in the works, or that were in the works, often against Internet website owners or the contributors to their online forums. It is almost impossible to get clear information about these. In the notification process, the recipient of a human-rights complaint need not be told who the complainant is, or what he is alleging. The recipient is just left to guess for a while, as the bureaucratic machinery of quasi-legal “justice” proceeds at its glacial pace. Truth and rumours become hard to distinguish in this kafkaesque environment.

From the above we may begin to deduce that there are two classes of Canadian writers (including journalists, authors of books, and contributors to the Internet) who should not, at this moment, feel threatened with the loss of their freedom. These are gay activists and fanatical Islamists. I would guess that radical feminists are also pretty safe — for the moment. And perhaps also those who harbour deep racial resentments against people with white skins. Everyone else is a fair target.

The situation may change, however, for whimsical ideas about what constitutes a thought crime can and do vary from day to day. It may well be that the protected groups listed above become the hunted groups, in the next round, and I, an unambiguous supporter of free press and thought, will find myself defending gay activists, fanatical Islamists, radical feminists, and anti-white racists, when they take their turns before the kangaroo courts. “*La révolution dévore ses enfants*,” observed Georges Danton, the great French revolutionary, when he himself fell victim to the Revolutionary Terror. “The revolution eats its own children.”

Danton was a special case — not in getting himself beheaded, which people did by the countless thousands in revolutionary France, but for the way he went down. What made him special was the component of his character that was not fanatic, but capable of moderation, and genuine reason. That was how he fell out with Robespierre, and the “extremers extremists.”

Though appalled, I am not myself surprised by the nature of the cases now being brought before Canada’s “human rights” commissions, with a view to extinguishing free speech in Canada. I have seen this coming for decades, and have argued all along it would come to this. My only surprise is that it took more than three decades for the ideology behind

“multiculturalism” and collective “human rights” to bear this kind of fruit.

This is the ideology of Canada’s “liberal” elites. (I stand it in quotes because it is another Orwellian reversal of a term: the contemporary liberal has views directly opposed to those traditionally associated with liberalism.)

Every society contains people who are seething with resentment against some individual or class — sometimes with cause, and often without it. The creation of any quasi-legal bureaucracy to purge notional sins plays into their hands. If that bureaucracy also subsidizes complaints, and strips all defendants of due process, of course it will be used for execrable motives. The complainant can’t lose, the defendant can’t win, under such a system. Canada’s “human rights” commissions were designed to be abused.

There are many, many other examples of the same principles at work in the Canadian bureaucracy: where the victim is “tried” before a secretive chamber, often in absentia, or without proper representation. Where the charges are vague; where he cannot face his accuser; where there is no presumption of innocence; where there are no rules of evidence, or of procedure; where there are no fixed penalties; where he will be shaken down financially and put under extreme stress whether or not he is nominally “cleared” at the end of the day; where there is no recourse against a frivolous suit. The tax system and family law in Canada are now riddled with just such arrangements, and grant-giving bureaucracies run them in reverse.

Re-establishing the rule of law in Canada is a huge task. But it has to start somewhere, and getting rid of the obscene “human rights” commissions is a good enough place to start.

DAVID WARREN’s column appears Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday.

