

Fighting for freedom

I wonder if I should make a human rights complaint (I write sarcastically). Perhaps I could get a hundred or more journalists to go in with me. The complaint would be lodged with the human rights bureaucracies for Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, and perhaps Ontario — simultaneously, the way the Canadian Islamic Congress has brought its case against *Maclean's* magazine for publishing Mark Steyn. Better yet, since the Canadian taxpayer is paying the bills for nuisance suits to these kangaroo courts, perhaps we should bring a hundred or more separate complaints. They would all be against the "human rights" commissions and tribunals themselves.

Each one of us would explain how we, as members of the class "journalists," are being subjected to hatred by the acts of the HRCs. We could go on imaginatively about how we felt personally demeaned and humiliated by what the HRCs were doing to such colleagues of ours as Mark Steyn, Ezra Levant, and Rev. Alphonse de Valk of *Catholic Insight*. We could write tear-jerkers about how sensitive we are, and just how badly our feelings have been hurt by the sight of human rights tribunals undoing all the advances in press freedom that had been achieved over more than three centuries. For that is the sort of thing that really wrecks your day.

It would be fun to watch the HRCs investigate themselves. Several hundred thousand people — mostly abroad, alas — have watched the tapes Ezra Levant posted on his website, of the ludicrous interrogation of him by Shirley McGovern, an officer of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Why not tapes of Ms. McGovern interrogating herself, and going through her standard checklist, to see what thought crimes she has committed?

In drafting the complaints, we might find a model in the rambling, hand-scribbled, semi-literate effusion of the Calgary imam, Syed Soharwardy, that launched the "human rights" case against Mr. Levant — after Calgary police told him that, under Canadian law, Mr. Levant could not be simply arrested and imprisoned for publishing cartoons in his magazine that Imam Soharwardy didn't like.

That's why you go to an HRC: because your case is not good enough to stand up in a legitimate court of law. And because you don't want to invest your own time and money, but would rather the taxpayer provide officers to do the paperwork, and pick up the tab. Instead, you want a slam-dunk way in which you can victimize someone you don't like, by playing the victim yourself, without any financial or legal consequences, except to him. "Human rights" commissions were designed to provide just this service, for the use of persons who are both litigious, and lazy.

Since Imam Soharwardy's training is in Shariah — in Saudi Arabia and in Pakistani madrassahs — he perhaps needs advice on getting protection from a Canadian court against his own HRC problems. For women from his mosque — the Al-Madinah Calgary Islamic Assembly — have brought an HRC complaint against him. They allege that he discriminates against women, to the point of uttering abusive language, ignoring their ques-



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tions, making them sit at the back of the hall, threatening them physically and verbally, pushing them out on the streets, and pursuing them with threatening letters and phone calls.

Poor Imam Soharwardy. He should argue that if any of these complaints were substantial, the women could have gathered evidence and made formal criminal charges. Harassing women is a serious charge, in this country, and physically abusing any human being is against existing laws that have been on the books since time out of mind. He should himself allege that these women in his mosque chose an HRC because they weren't very sure of their case. The imam should seek an injunction against the women for harassing HIM. Unless, of course, he's not very sure what might emerge in that court, in the course of his own action.

Seriously: I think those with the means (*Maclean's* magazine, for instance) should now be applying to proper courts of law in Canada, to obtain injunctions against harassing "human rights" suits, brought with the purpose of abridging freedom of the press. And other media in Canada, whether or not already under attack themselves, should be giving continuous front-page coverage to this issue, in which freedom of the press is itself at stake.

For there is something even more seriously wrong in Canada, than HRCs, when these appalling cases are getting more attention abroad than here at home.

David Warren's column appears Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday.

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It should be no surprise, in an economy, that the effects of the strike in the U.S. have been worldwide. Writers are active in every aspect of our lives, even news — although you might not be aware of this — there is no doubt they withheld their services all over the world in sympathy with their American colleagues.

An experienced observer of world politics could tell. American politics provide the most dramatic examples. Those who lost the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire couldn't help noticing that all of the candidates talked about change, and have made speeches about a new America, such as their families and their love of the flag, but change is not stressed. Why? Obviously it is being shared the same writer, perhaps available, perhaps a replacement.

The speech about change sat on the shelves of some candidates that other Republicans who have supported the administration got an odd look when they recited the lines about change. They knew, however, these lines they would have no effect.

Replacement writers for political reporters were also in evidence. When the New Hampshire polling showed a rookie and there was a heavy barrassment of analysts going on about the political consequences of the breaking down in tears when the was clear that she did not break down.

We Canadians can laugh at ourselves immune. We should remember that we are not. Last week the page stories in some Canadian newspapers about an airplane that didn't crash, a clear violation of journalistic procedure around Christmas time there were involving nasty letters to little children from Santa Claus.

Clearly, all this was the work of writers, and their labours do not stop. You have to do is look out the window and think about the weather we have since the writer's strike began. The fog, heavy rain, warm temperatures, winds, snow, then more rain, then more. It is a dramatic example of what happens when substitute weath brought in and don't know what to do. Inexperience is quick to deny.

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