

PAPER SUBMITTED TO CPMCA

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### ***Introduction***

The present all-party Canadian Parliamentary inquiry into anti-Semitism will affect many areas of Canadian life. The final report may influence a broad spectrum of areas including: how a consistent policy on immigration is established; how war criminals are pursued and prosecuted; how new Canadians are integrated into Canadian society; how Medicare applies to all citizens even those who are accused and found guilty of war crimes while they are in Canada; what effect policy will have on city demographics. The final report on antisemitism must not only encompass the place of Jewish Community in Canada but Canadian life as a whole - the everyday, ordinary lives of Canadians, including Canadian legislation and the legal system. Consequently, the report must take into consideration the findings of Quebec's Bouchard-Taylor report of "reasonable accommodation".

Antisemitism must not be viewed simply as a clash of Jewish and Muslim perspectives. History has not fully disclosed the cause or causes of anti-Semitism. There is a subtlety to its rise among civilized people as was the case of the German people in Germany. However, there are indirect causes that may be less difficult to discern and these may serve as a basis of our understanding of how a people can be scapegoats for the ills of humanity.

The Roman Catholic Church and its relation to Judaism is well documented in James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews- A History*, yet the Church as an institution has never had a moral reckoning as we are reminded in the book of Daniel Joshua Goldhagen, *The Moral Reckoning of the Roman Catholic Church*. The Church has apologized for individuals

who may have been responsible for anti-Semitism but the Church qua Church has not accepted any responsibility for its role in perpetrating anti-Semitism.

The singling out of the Jewish people for the killing of Jesus Christ has been historically central to the Church's overall attitude of anti-Semitism because there could be no greater crime than deicide. The complicity of the Jews with the Roman authorities were the Jews in authority who, with the Romans, overburdened Jews and Romans alike, the poor, through over-taxation and general oppression. The clarification and distinction between Jews in authority and Jews as a people removed the "blood-libel" stigma from all generations, including those present at the time of Jesus' crucifixion and for the subsequent generations of Jews. However, the Church continued until the Second Vatican Council to pray, on the most solemn day of the liturgical calendar-- Good Friday, for the conversion of the perfidious Jews. In 2008-2009 there were documents circulated that permitted the return of this prayer to the Good Friday liturgy, the publishing of *Dominus Jesus*, and other documents that have caused consternation in Jewish-Catholic dialogue. How much better would it be to pray in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples on a weekly basis for each other as the congregation of St. John Brebeuf parish in LaSalle, Quebec does "May we as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, people of faith and people of goodwill work and pray for God's Reign, a Reign of mercy, love, justice and peace."

The possible canonization of Pope Pius IX and the silence of Pope Pius XII are true bones of contention as when the study group of Catholic and Jewish scholars were given access to the Vatican archives and then were prohibited from an exhaustive study of the era of Pius XII.

There is a general feeling that the study of anti-Semitism will result in the establishment of a dialogical solution between Islam and Judaism. However, this should not ignore the hard-learned lessons the Catholic (Christian) religion can teach from the mistakes the Church has made. There is a great need to learn the lessons obtainable from Christian (Catholic) history and how anti-Semitism grew to the extent that it did in the Holocaust.

## **General Comments**

Graffiti and the desecration of holy places is more than often a person's crying for attention and religious institutions have big walls with great visibility. Often religious graffiti is nothing more than the work of pranksters and audacious thrill-seekers trying to prove their bravado.

Anti-religious sentiments are not the norm among the majority of Canadians. Any anti-religious expressions must be studied and documented to separate true anti-religious expression and those that are hate crimes.

Hate crimes are to be prosecuted and the laws must be applied when applicable. Fear cannot motivate people to declare all anti-religious expression as hate crimes.

The difficulties of seeking a dialogue with the perpetrators must not be abandoned because of the difficulties encountered.

A bridge-building template must be established with the expertise of crisis-management principles to facilitate greater communication between all of society.

The evolution of anti-Semitism must be documented so that trends can be determined and short-term and long-term processes can be put in place.

The study of anti-Semitic sentiments and the confusion of **anti-Semitic** and anti-Israeli comments have roiled the peace process.

Anti-Semitic expression can be a hate crime, while adverse comments on Israel's political policies may simply be the process of the political system.

Anti-Semitic comments are still fashionable in today's world because the old stereotypes are still prevalent in society.

Anti-Semitic is real and inexcusable ignorance when it includes denial of the holocaust

Anti-Semitism as anti-religious blight on society requires study and consultation that brings veracity to the process of determining and understanding anti-Semitism.

All nations and all people must offer and share new possible directions to find solutions to the growing and repulsive anti-Semitism that is evident too often.

### ***Summary***

There are many directions to be taken for solutions to anti-religious, and more especially anti-Semitic comments, actions, and destructive behaviour, physical or verbal.

1. There is a great need for education.
2. There is need for on-going and permanent dialogue.
3. There is need for Political statements that all parties will support.
4. There is a need to revamp hate laws so that they can be applied throughout Canada.
5. There is a need to report all anti-religious and anti-Semitic occurrences and to compile them and make them available to law enforcement agencies throughout Canada.
6. The need for all churches, mosques and synagogues to include by name all religious faiths in the prayers of all the communities.
7. The need to establish a common symbol of inter-religious efforts that would be designed by all dialogue partners and worn by as many people as possible.
8. The need to keep the threat of anti-Semitism in the public consciousness.
9. The need to build a national storehouse of anti Semitic hate crimes committed locally and nationally.
10. The need to establish a permanent Canadian body funded federally to be the watchdogs.

*Note: The exhaustive Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism: Government Response in England, Scotland and Ireland is an exhaustive study and could well serve as a template for what needs to be done in Canada.*

## APPENDIX

Selections from the Report of the *All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism: Government Response*, Great Britain, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

(The selections were made by Ron Deleskie, a retired *Superintendent of Education* in Ontario, and any changes were few with some highlights in bold that were added by myself. The final paper is now submitted to the CPCCA)

Until recently, the prevailing opinion both within the Jewish community and beyond was that anti-Semitism had receded to the point that it existed only on the margins of society. However, the evidence we received indicates that **there has been a reversal of this progress since the year 2000**, which has created anxiety and concern within the Jewish community.

During the course of the inquiry, we have become alerted to a form of **anti-Jewish prejudice** which takes the form of **conversations, discussions, or pronouncements, made in public or private, which cross the line of acceptability.**

**We heard that the recent surge in anti-Semitism is closely linked to the periodic outbreaks of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; but given that the majority of victims are neither Israeli nor displaying support for Israel at the time of the attack, the precise reasons for this link require more investigation.** This, in our opinion, reflects the complexity of anti-Semitism in Britain today; it is not one dimensional and is perpetrated by different groups in different ways

**Anti-Semitism on campus** is a serious issue, especially because we feel that better education has a significant part to play in community relations

**We conclude that it is the Jewish community itself that is best qualified to determine what does and does not constitute anti-Semitism.**

Broadly, it is our view that any remark, insult or act, the purpose or effect of which is to violate a Jewish person's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him is anti-Semitic.

“There is probably a greater feeling of discomfort, greater concerns, greater fears now about anti-Semitism than there have been for many decades.”

The author Howard Jacobson, writing of today's Britain, referred to **“a certain grinding, low level of anti-Semitism all Jews learn to live with”**

**Modern anti-Semitism has, out of necessity, become more nuanced and subtle.** Many witnesses told us that the latest mutation of anti-Jewish prejudice is now infused with a 'social conscience', focused on the role of Israel in the Middle East conflict. Jews are seen as natural supporters of Israel, regardless of whether or not they actually are, and some of those who are hostile to Israel make no distinction between Israelis and Jews. Jews throughout the world are seen by some extremists as legitimate targets in the struggle to establish a Palestinian state or to eliminate the State of Israel.

**Far right and radical Islamist organisations are using the internet** as a key component in their campaigns of hatred. Some witnesses spoke of the 'globalisation of hate'.

Historically, where anti-Semitism has been allowed to gain a foothold in societies, other forms of prejudice have fed off this and flourished.

In his oral evidence the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews explained the anxiety and vulnerability felt by the Jewish community. For many years the community has had to provide security guards for synagogues, Jewish schools, buildings and events.

In addition physical protection measures are provided for Jewish community buildings.

The expense, in financial and personnel costs, of such protection costs the Jewish community millions of pounds annually. **(ed. *The reality is that al religious institutions are in the same boat.*)**

**51. We conclude that given that all police forces in the United Kingdom are required to have the capacity to record racist incidents and provide annual data to the Home Office irrespective of the size of minority ethnic communities in their areas, it is inexcusable that there is not a similar requirement for the recording of anti-Semitic incidents.**

One of the most difficult and contentious issues about which we have received evidence is the dividing line between anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel or Zionism. For example, criticism of Zionism is not in itself anti-Semitic. This definition of Zionism bears no relation to the understanding that most Jews have of the concept; that is, a movement of Jewish national liberation, born in the late nineteenth century, with a geographical focus limited to Israel. Many witnesses described how anti-Zionism has become the “*lingua franca* of anti-Semitic movements”.

**We recommend that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office examines ways of convincing the governments of countries where anti-Semitic internet sites originate to take action to close them down.**

It can be a matter of some controversy, and sometimes even a trigger for anti-Semitism in universities, when pro or anti-Israel speakers are invited on to campus by the student societies. **(ed. *The Concordia incident with the barring of Benjamin Netanyahu*)**

**We recommend that Vice Chancellors take an active interest in combating acts, speeches, literature and events that cause anxiety or alarm amongst their Jewish students. We recommend that Vice Chancellors set up a working party to make clear that British universities will be free of any expression of racism, and take robust action against anti-Semitism on campus.**

**We conclude that community cohesion is vital to combating anti-Semitism and recommend that increased levels of public funding should be directed towards**

**promoting good community relations projects that encourage an environment of respect and understanding.**

**We recommend that the Jewish and Muslim communities and interfaith groups promote joint leadership programmes for young Muslims and Jews.**

**We believe that the Government has a critical interest in and role to play in ensuring that interfaith dialogue is undertaken by key leaders in all minority communities**

**We conclude that there is a new awareness of the need to explain to school-children the history of anti-Semitism**

Just as the problem of anti-Semitism is complex and multifaceted, so too are the solutions. (**ed.**  
**See full submission to CPCCA above and below.**)

We believe that the solutions lie in a combination of:

- Richer statistics
- More effective policing and prosecution
- Education and community engagement
- A greater exercise of responsibility and sensitivity in public and private discourse

Racism and intolerance must be challenged wherever they exist.