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THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AT THE UNIVERSITY: THE CASE OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Edward C. Corrigan

Mr. Corrigan is a graduate student at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ont., Canada. He was the founding president of Canadians for Peace in the Middle East (now known as Canadians Concerned for the Middle East) at the University of Western Ontario.

In the wake of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatila massacres, controversies erupted at many North American universities over events in the Middle East. What transpired at one Canadian university provides an interesting case study of the politics often associated with discussing Mideast issues in the West and gives some insights into the attitude many North Americans have toward the Palestinians.1

On December 9, 1982, the University Students' Council (USC) at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) by a vote of 34-10 refused an application from a student group called Canadians for Peace in the Middle East (CPME) for official club status.2 For many, this was the culmination of a campaign to prevent the establishment of a functioning pro-Palestinian student organization at the university, but for a small group of students it marked the beginning of a long campaign to reverse a decision that they viewed as an act of discrimination and an infringement on basic freedoms.3

From October 1982 through March 1983 a full-scale political war raged at the University of Western Ontario in the pages of the campus press and among those in the student government and the administration, and in fact well beyond. Local press clippings dealing with this issue number in the hundreds, and eventually the dispute received national attention. During this time substantial personnel changes occurred in the various student organizations, but there was also a fairly large degree of continuity with respect to all participating groups.

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1 The author would like to thank members of Canadians Concerned for the Middle East, The Palestine-Israel Committee, the UWO Arab Students Association and the London Ontario Canadian Arab Society who reviewed this paper and made many valuable suggestions. The author, however, bears full responsibility for the views expressed and for any errors.


3 The club's constitution would have to be described as fairly moderate. It explicitly recognized "all states in the Middle East" and called for the establishment of an independent state for the Palestinians. It recognized the representative of the Palestinians "as accepted by the General Assembly of the United Nations." It also "condemned all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism and apartheid."
In October 1982, controversy first arose over a new student group's sponsorship of two Arabs—Dr. Ghassan Rubiez, the Middle East representative on the World Council of Churches, and Dr. Eugene Makhlof, head of the Beirut Palestine Red Crescent Society, which is affiliated with the International Red Cross—to speak on campus. The *Gazette* (the principal student paper at UWO) editorial of October 8, 1982, was captioned "Holding Back the Tides of Hate," and the ears on the masthead read "Breweries Are Welcome . . . Propaganda Isn't." The *Gazette* argued that on the subject of the Middle East, it was best to "leave it alone" and not introduce such a volatile issue to the campus. The two Arab speakers were attacked before they even had a chance to speak. The Arab viewpoint was, of course, "propaganda"; the integrity and the right to speak of the numerous pro-Israeli speakers that came to campus was never questioned. (During this same period, October 1982 to May 1985, at least 18 pro-Israeli speakers came to the campus.)

After the Rubiez-Makhlof event, the *Gazette* editorial of October 19, 1982, was titled "Middle East Forum a Disgrace," and this writer was attacked as having "no business organizing conduits for militaristic propaganda on this campus." This criticism of the meeting sharply contrasted with the *London Free Press* article, which reported a more conciliatory tone and what one would normally expect from representatives of the World Council of Churches and the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

However, there was a fairly large organized contingent at the meeting who seemed intent on disrupting the forum. According to the *Gazette*, the new Mideast club was responsible for their actions and the reaction of some of the several hundred people in the audience, many of whom were Palestinians and Lebanese, still traumatized by the Israeli invasion, to what they viewed as deliberate provocations.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) reviewed the early coverage of this issue in the *Gazette*, and in a report to the paper's editorial board demanded that a "printed apology be made."

This ADC report, however, was never publicly acknowledged or responded to by either the local press or the university.

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A prominent member of the University Students' Council was quoted as saying "We are not associating our name with a group with a pro-Palestinian viewpoint."

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Another incident involving the *Gazette* was an article that was submitted in response to its initial editorial for what was a regular column for nonstaffers. This was not published. After numerous inquiries and vague, noncommittal answers and much delay, it was submitted to the university administration's paper and published with a note indicating the *Gazette*'s refusal.

The UWO administration's attitude, for the most part, was fair throughout the course of the dispute and, despite pressure, the administration did not interfere with the operation of the Mideast club. The admin-

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4An unrelated issue at the same time was whether or not to allow breweries to sponsor activities on campus.


6See American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Report to the *Gazette* editorial board, Nov. 30, 1982.

7Interestingly, the article was titled "On Censorship," published in the *Western News*, Dec. 2, 1982.
istration also adopted a policy of nonintervention with the actions of the Students' Council and let the battle be fought through student channels.

From the very beginning, members of the USC executive attacked the new club for its views, and shortly afterwards the Students' Council launched a review of its club policies. A clubs' commissioner was quoted as saying "the [CPME club's] constitution has a fair chance of going through," but, he added, "as a group, we can defeat them if we do it properly." The USC adopted its new clubs policy immediately before debating ratification of CPME.

Hillel, the Jewish students' club, organized an intensive lobbying campaign to argue against ratification of the new club. A war of words raged about the issue in the letters column of the campus press. The pro-Cpme side more than held its own in the letter war, but the Gazette attacked the club through its editorials.

The new clubs policy now made "the ratification of any club . . . a privilege not a right" and gave the USC greatly expanded supervisory powers. The Students' Council, in front of a large audience and despite the support of the vice-president for student affairs, who was in charge of clubs, and letters of support from the London Red Cross Society, the UWO Muslim Students' Association and the London Canadian Arab Society, refused to accept the new student club and its 40 members.

The minutes of the USC meeting reported that the USC legal affairs commission "read excerpts from the club's current constitution before Council in order to substantiate his assertion that the club is very pro-Palestinian." A prominent member of the USC was quoted as saying "We are not associating our name with a group with a pro-Palestinian viewpoint."

Allegations were made at the ratification debate that the late Dr. Frank Epp, a professor of Middle East history and Mennonite scholar who spoke at CPME's founding meeting, was "anti-Semite" and a holder of biased views. Members of CPME's executive were also subjected to personal attacks.

The Gazette, in its editorial "Final Thoughts on CPME Debate," December 10, 1982, sighed, "Now that it's all over, maybe there will be peace again." Little did they know that with the refusal to ratify the club the real battle was only beginning.

After the USC's rejection of the club, a handful of CPME members carefully prepared their case and sent out a report to several dozen organizations and prominent individuals who were felt to be sympathetic to the club's situation.

A somewhat similar controversy occurred at the University of Ottawa during this same period. However, instead of be-

8Minutes of the University Students' Council UWO, Dec. 8, 1982, p. 5.
10Dr. Frank Epp was a professor of history and a past president of Conrad Grebel College at the University of Waterloo. He was one of the leading members of Canada's Mennonite community and had a long and distinguished career in both academic and public life. He was the author of numerous books on Mennonite history and published extensively on the Middle East, including Whose Land Is Palestine (1970); The Palestinians: Portrait of a People in Conflict (1976); and The Israelis: Portrait of a People in Conflict (1980). Dr. Epp was also the Liberal candidate for the Riding of Waterloo in the 1979 and 1980 federal elections. During the 1980 election he was subjected to a massive campaign attacking him for his views on the Middle East, considered by some as too sympathetic to the Palestinians, and he was accused of being "anti-Semitic." He lost the election by only 155 votes. Dr. Epp died in 1986.

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ing an attack on a pro-Palestinian club it was an attempt to deny rights to a Zionist Jewish Students’ Union (JSU), and there are a number of interesting parallels to the CPME dispute. The Ottawa club controversy was in fact the model that was employed by CPME to help guide its own campaign.

One member of the Ottawa JSU was quoted in the Gazette with respect to their denial:

This is a human rights issue. They’re interfering with our civil liberties and going against the Canadian Constitution. They’re trying to control the political environment at the university, allowing certain people to express their opinions and others not to.\(^{13}\)

Ironically, in that same article, the USC vice-president for student affairs said that “such a situation could never happen” at UWO and that “any club with a proper constitution will be ratified.”\(^{14}\)

During the summer of 1982, the Students Federation at the University of Ottawa (SFUO) had adopted a resolution condemning the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Zionism and Israel’s expansionistic policies. The SFUO also took the official position that Zionism was a racist ideology and adopted as policy that they would not lend support to any campus group that supported the state of Israel. However, when someone from the SFUO attempted to enforce this regulation, the University of Ottawa’s administration overruled the Students Federation and ratified the Zionist club as an official campus organization.\(^{15}\)

Whatever are one’s views on the “Zionism is racism” issue, tactically, the enforcement of the ban on pro-Israeli and Zionist organizations was a disaster for the pro-Palestinian point of view. The university administration intervened on behalf of the pro-Israeli group, and the issue received extensive coverage in the national media, together with allegations being made of anti-Semitism, violation of fundamental rights and infringement of academic freedom. The executive of the SFUO eventually were impeached, and a great deal of sympathy was generated for the supporters of Israel’s policies.\(^{16}\)

There were, of course, some obvious differences in the University of Ottawa JSU club situation and what happened at UWO—primarily in the readiness of the University of Ottawa administration to intervene on behalf of the Jewish student group and the readiness and speed with which the media picked up on the issue. There also appears to be a massive disparity in the professional support services available to the Ottawa JSU (and to those opposing CPME as well) and the degree of community support for an organization that supports Israel.

This contrasts sharply with the manifest lack of professional support and the qualitative difference in community support for pro-Palestinian groups. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee provided some organizational support in the form of letters and a review of the Gazette’s coverage which addressed bias against Arabs. Other than that, the UWO student group was primarily left to its own devices.

Back on the “Western front” and shortly following the USC refusal to ratify the club, CPME—much to the shock of its opponents—hosted James McDermott, the director of the London (Ontario) Red Cross Society;\(^{17}\) Professor Danny Amit, from the

\(^{13} “Jewish Club Denied,” Gazette, Oct. 1, 1982. Some people contend that the SFUO did not interfere with the JSU club but that this issue was a political ploy to attack and discredit the SFUO for their passage of the anti-Israel resolutions.\(^{14} “Ottawa Jewish Club Ratified,” Gazette, Oct. 5, 1982.\(^{15} “U of O Executive Faces Impeachment,” Gazette, March 11, 1983.\(^{16} “Lack of Caring Blamed for Most of World Conflict,” London Free Press, Jan. 21, 1983.\(109\)
The battle was largely fought through the media, and despite the glaring hostility of the main student paper, the Gazette, and also the small campus radio station, CPME was very successful in getting its case across to the public. (There was, of course, considerable behind-the-scenes activity as well.)

The UWO administration paper, the Western News, the UWO journalism paper, the UWO graduate student paper, the London Free Press (the main regional paper in southwestern Ontario), as well as the local TV and radio stations, were very fair in their coverage and often openly sympathetic. The ratification issue was also picked up by several other Ontario university papers which were critical of the actions of UWO’s Students’ Council.20

The role of the Gazette (UWO) was central to the dispute, as it was one of the primary catalysts in the controversy. Several of its editors were adamantly opposed to the club and became increasingly defensive upon meeting resistance to this opposition. The Gazette editors continually sought to marginalize the club and, in particular, vilified its leaders. To some extent the issue developed into a personal grudge match or political slugfest among several individuals. However, since the Gazette’s staff was large, a wide range of opinions was present there.

In fact, CPME had a fairly large contingent of support (personal and otherwise) within the paper, including supporters on its editorial board. This sometimes provided the club with interesting and valuable information. The politics within the paper eventually changed, and, after two years of strident hostility, the paper eventually adopted a more neutral stance. Moreover, the Gazette’s clumsy attempts to suppress information eventually proved to be a most valuable asset to the club.

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17“Prof Active against Lebanon War,” Gazette, Feb. 4, 1983.
19“Nothing but a lot of correspondence was generated by this complaint. The UWO ombudsman is an employee of both the UWO administration and the Students’ Council.
20“A UWO: Pro-Palestinian Wins Recognition after OHRC Intervention,” Imprint (University of Waterloo), Nov. 16, 1984. This issue also received extensive coverage in La Rotonde, the French-language student newspaper at the University of Ottawa.
In response to the refusal to ratify CPME, the UWO philosophy club, in an entirely independent initiative, organized a petition and with the support of 13 other campus clubs attacked the new USC clubs policy as “an objectionable and discriminatory document.” It was at this time that letters protesting the actions of the USC started arriving both at the Students’ Council and university administration, with copies to CPME.

In total, several dozen letters were lodged in protest against the USC ratification refusal. Complaints were filed by Dr. Alfred Lilienthal, Canadian Jews Supporting the Palestinians, the Vancouver-based Jews Against Zionism, the Toronto University Middle East Group, the Canadian Arab Federation, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the Canadian Arab Society of London, Rabbi Reuben Slonim, Professor Noam Chomsky, the University of Toronto Alliance of Non-Zionist Jews, the Arab Palestine Association, and a number of other organizations and private individuals.

This resulted in some interesting exchanges of correspondence, including the following from Professor Lorne M. Kenny of the University of Toronto Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies. In a reply to the USC president’s defense of the refusal to ratify, Kenny wrote:

I also find unacceptable your statement that though “there was one student who voiced a concern that the club might have anti-Semitic overtones, it is my impression that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was quite extraneous to the decision reached.” You seem here to confuse the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with anti-Semitism, a false assumption since the dispute is essentially political in nature over the right of the Palestinians to a homeland.

Several members of the Canadian Parliament also wrote letters criticizing the Students’ Council action. Ian Watson, a Liberal M.P., even threatened to raise in the House of Commons the question of withdrawing federal government support from a university that allowed racism to be practiced against Palestinians and Arabs by two of its major institutions. A half-dozen UWO professors also joined the fray, defending the club and academic freedom.

The UWO Arab Students’ Association, the London Palestinian Association, the London Canadian Arab Society and CPME all filed complaints with the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC). CPME also filed a complaint with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

In March 1983, CPME also came under attack from Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East (CPPME), a wealthy Zionist organization (affiliated with American Professors for Peace in the Middle East) which “objected” to similarities between CPME’s name and their name, and the resulting “confusion” in the minds of members of the professors’ organization. Legal proceedings were initiated by CPPME to stop CPME from using its name.

The student club viewed this new attack as yet another attempt at intimidation and harassment and an attempt to divert energy and resources away from the human rights complaint and the campaign to reverse the USC action. There also was fear that if CPME changed its name, the USC could

Toronto University Middle East group, to Janet Belch, president of USC. March 28, 1983.
Letter from Ian Watson, member of Parliament, to Dr. George Connell, president of UWO, Nov. 7, 1983.
“Statement by Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East,” Gazette, March 11, 1983.
argue that it was now dealing with a new organization.

After receiving assurances from the OHRC that a change in the club name would not affect CPME's complaint, the club decided to change its name to Canadians for Peace Now (CPN). However, CPN also received a complaint from an organization it did not even know existed, called Canadian Friends of Peace Now, requesting yet another name change.

The author of the second name complaint, Professor Fredrick Zemans, is listed as a contributing editor of Middle East Focus, a publication of Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East and the organization which launched the first name complaint. For people who are familiar with the plethora of organizations that deal with the Middle East (many of whom have strikingly similar names), this may seem somewhat comical. A new name was adopted, Canadians Concerned for the Middle East (CCME). To date no one has sued over this name.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission did not jump at the chance to investigate a complaint of racism against Palestinians and Arabs but had to be effectively prodded into action.

The war of words continued in the pages of various campus and local publications. An April 22, 1983, article in the Reporter, the UWO journalism school paper, was captioned "UWO Club Refuses to Play Dead," and it seemed to catch the spirit of what had transpired at UWO.

Over the summer of 1983, the issue quietly simmered. The Canadian Jewish Congress created a national task force "to fight serious manifestations of anti-Semitic nature" on university campuses across Canada. The London Free Press reported that more tension was expected at UWO between Jewish and Arab groups. A representative of the new student Mideast group indicated that they had "no objection to Hillel and any other groups bringing in pro-Israeli speakers" and added:

... to have a proper political understanding of any issue... divergent opinions and information must be freely available. If that is not allowed, you do not have a democratic society.

CCME (then CPME, but for consistency CCME will be used) and the UWO Arab Students' Association continued to work at getting the OHRC to examine their cases. The UWO Arab club had filed its complaint with the Human Rights Commission in February 1983, complete with documentation. This complaint was, however, simply ignored. CCME filed its complaint in early May 1983, complete with extensive documentation.

Only after several lively exchanges with the commission and a number of inquiries from local members of the Provincial Parliament did the OHRC begin to address itself to the issue. Fortunately, several members of CCME were very active on the local political scene and had excellent connections to local elected officials.

The OHRC did not jump at the chance to investigate a complaint of racism against Palestinians and Arabs but had to be effectively prodded into action. The commission also was made fully aware that the complainants were very serious about following through with their action. Unofficially,

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CCME and the Arab club were informed that there was resistance to pursuing the complaints at the higher echelons.

With the retirement of Rabbi Gunther Plaut, vice-chairman of the commission and a prominent Zionist leader, things seemed to move forward, although still at a slow bureaucratic pace. However, the problems the Ontario Human Rights Commission had in coming to grips with racism against Arabs and Palestinians may have had much deeper roots.

In February 1984, the chairman of the OHRC, Canon Borden Purcell, told a meeting at a Toronto synagogue that "... public expressions of anti-Zionism have now replaced public expressions of anti-Semitism. But for the most part, anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism." Chairman Purcell, however, had to make a later "clarification" to a delegation that included representatives of the Canadian Arab Federation and the Toronto University Middle East Group and which included several Palestinians.

Professor Michael Mandel of Osgoode Hall Law School, a Jewish anti-Zionist, told Canon Purcell that "many Jews think that political Zionism is antithetical to traditional Jewish thought" and that "most anti-Zionism grew from opposition to racism of all sorts." Chairman Purcell said, "The next time, I will certainly be very careful... if I ever touch that topic again..." to point out that he does not think "being anti-Zionist is necessarily anti-Semitic." 39

CCME continued its political activities and maintained its profile by sponsoring Robert Corbett, a Progressive Conservative M.P. and chairman of the Canada-Arab World Parliamentary Association, 30 and Jim Kafieh, who spoke at a commemoration of the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

Immediately after the Sabra and Shatila event, the political tension at UWO was heightened greatly by publication of the fact that a bomb threat had been made to a Hillel social gathering. 31 This was followed by another threat made against Jewish students, phoned in to the campus information desk. 32

Someone, or some group, was attempting to increase tension on campus by means of deliberate provocations directed against Jewish students. The culprits were never identified or apprehended. The effect of the threats was to put pressure on Jewish students to defend their "interests" and to put pressure on CCME not to sponsor speakers that criticized Israel, as this apparently resulted in anti-Semitic attacks being made against Jews.

CCME published a letter stating its unequivocal condemnation of these actions [bomb threats against Hillel and threats against Jewish students] and also encouraged Hillel to continue their active social and political program.

If CCME was not directly to blame, it helped create the atmosphere which promoted such actions, or so the reasoning went. However, CCME rejected this analysis and wondered just who was the real target, if this was the inference meant to be

drawn from these actions. (This does not necessarily mean that the motive behind the attack could not have been anti-Semitic or anti-Israel. In all cases this type of behavior, whatever the motive, must be condemned.)

CCME published a letter stating its unequivocal condemnation of these actions and also encouraged Hillel to continue their active social and political program. CCME also stated that "If these acts are directed against Jews, it is our concern because we have sponsored Jewish speakers on campus . . . and it is our wish that those responsible be apprehended by the proper authorities."33

A subsequent prank bomb threat to an engineering pub diffused the situation somewhat. Fortunately no real violence occurred, and this issue, and with it this tactic, disappeared.

The club continued with its active speakers' program and hosted Don Betz from the United Nations Division of Palestinian Rights; Rabbi Slonim for a repeat visit;34 Tahseen Bashir, Egypt's ambassador to Canada; Tamara Kohens, an American journalist and Middle East peace activist;35 Abdullah Abdullah, the PLO representative to Canada;36 and Ilan Halevi, an Israeli Palestinian peace activist living in exile and an official PLO representative to the Socialist International.37 The campaign against the USC refusal also began to pay real dividends.

On February 24, 1984, A. Alan Borovoy, general counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), sent his report to the USC, to the Gazette and to CCME. However, there was no public acknowledgement of its findings or even of the existence of the report.

Realizing that there seemed to be a deliberate attempt to suppress the CCLA report, CCME prepared to take out a full-page ad in the Western News to publicize the CCLA's highly critical findings on the USC actions. A journalism professor hearing of this situation also contacted the Globe and Mail (Canada's national newspaper).

On April 4, 1984, the Globe and Mail carried the story and reported that the Gazette "six weeks after its arrival on campus still had not carried" a story on the CCLA findings. The report had concluded "there were certain regrettable improprieties in the way [the USC] handled the ratification application" of CCME. The CCLA also stated that "One of the underlying premises of [many of the arguments raised by the USC] is that there is something impugnable about the pro-Palestinian orientation of the group" and that this was not a legitimate argument for denial of the club.38

The CCLA indicated that on the USC refusal to ratify CCME:

... our concern is addressed entirely to the issue of student attitudes. Campus life has often provided leadership to the community at large. If heresy and dissent do not find a hospitable climate at the university, they may well be undermined elsewhere. The viability of our democracy requires the keenest respect for diversity and difference.39

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CCME's own advertisement, "Student Bureaucrats and Freedom of Association: The Report on Civil Liberties at UWO by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association," was carried in the Western News on April 5, 1984. The Gazette's article finally appeared on April 6, 1984. The London Free Press carried the story on April 11, 1984. The story also went over the wire services to the rest of the country.

Realizing that there seemed to be a deliberate attempt to suppress the Canadian Civil Liberties Association report, CCME prepared to take out a full-page ad . . . to publicize the CCLA's highly critical findings. . . .

The Globe and Mail also ran a follow-up story on the issue on April 17, 1984 and on April 18, 1984, in its lead editorial condemned the actions of the USC for their:

...easy assumption of dictatorial power—doubtless in the name of order, though they harbour strange fears of controversy and of "traumatic and emotional" issues on campus—young people who were presumably raised to respect democratic principles.

The Globe and Mail urged the UWO student body to take action to remedy the situation.

Progress was also being made with respect to the OHRC complaint, no doubt related to the mounting support CCME had gained for their cause. A September article in the Gazette heralded the speedy resolution of the dispute, as the USC evidently wanted to get off the hook byratifying CCME.

But CCME did not just want ratification; they wanted an apology for the past discrimination against Palestinians and Arabs and wanted the USC clubs policy changed so that a similar episode could not recur. The USC balked at these requests, and groups opposed to CCME's activities on campus intensified their campaign against it. To get a better idea of the nature of this campaign and its impact, it is useful to examine a small segment of it in closer detail.

On September 11, 1984, the Gazette announced, "Wheels in Motion for Group's Sanction." On September 14, 1984, the Gazette reported the creation of the Jewish Anti-Defamation Association (JADA) with a stated purpose to "respond resolutely to anti-Jewish activities" on campus. A full-page ad titled "Who Owes Whom an Apology?" which attacked CCME and any USC attempt to ratify the club, appeared in the Gazette on October 2. The very next day the USC president appeared to backtrack on the issue and denied that CCME would get an apology. He indicated that it was solely up to CCME to resubmit its constitution for a ratification bid.

As the letter war on the Middle East continued to rage, JADA stepped up its

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42 "Reaction in College to Pro-Arab Group Called Worrisome," Globe and Mail, Apr. 17, 1984.
campaign against “anti-Jewish activities.” CCME was one of their targets, but JADA increasingly focused their attacks on Dr. Michael P. Carroll, a full professor with tenure in the Department of Sociology, who was a prolific letter writer, a defender of CCME and an ardent critic of Israeli policies and Zionism.

JADA set up a display booth complete with a mock-up of Professor Carroll’s office door, which had some of his published letters posted on it and in particular was a target for their ire. They argued that the anti-Zionist letters posted there were intimidating and insulting to Jewish students and demanded their removal. This door was made into a potent symbol and focal point for JADA’s media and political campaign.\(^{48}\)

The CCLA also stated that “one of the underlying premises of [many of the arguments raised by the USC] is that there is something impugnable about the pro-Palestinian orientation of the group” and that this was not a legitimate argument for denial of the club.

However, this campaign to a large degree overreached itself and backfired. JADA was somewhat surprised at the hostile reaction to their attack on Professor Carroll’s letter writing and his door. A petition garnered only 100 signatures, and the JADA booth itself became an object of controversy.\(^{49}\) Eventually the booth was abandoned.

This campaign, however, was at least partly successful because it focused attention on alleged “anti-Jewish activities” and increased the tension surrounding the Middle East debate on campus. Professor Carroll continued to write his letters.

CCME responded by writing articles and letters addressing the anti-CCME ad and refuting its claims. CCME’s executive also offered to cosponsor a forum on race relations with Hillel,\(^{50}\) but this offer was ignored.

The UWO Arab club also joined the fray by hosting Abdeen Jabara, from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, who refocused media attention on the discriminatory nature of the USC refusal to ratify CCME. Jabara spoke on discrimination against Arabs and on the USC refusal to ratify a “pro-Palestinian” club:

> This was a blatant, unadulterated form of discrimination, on both a political and ethnic basis... made more shocking because it occurred within the confines of a university atmosphere. I found this the most reprehensible form of censorship and discrimination that I have seen on a campus in the 20 years I’ve been practicing law.\(^{51}\)

The executive of CCME, particularly its new president, Stewart Shackleton, and members of the UWO Arab club diligently pursued a campaign to compel the OHRC to deal with the issue of racism against Palestinians, despite efforts by some members of the OHRC to dissuade them from pursuing its complaint against the USC.

CCME, among other things, reminded the Commission of a study conducted by

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Toronto lawyer Shireen Hooshagi, which found that very few OHRC complaints were followed through when the respondents turned out to be powerful establishments.\textsuperscript{52} CCME also gained the support of Charles Roach, a noted Toronto Human Rights lawyer who had a great deal of experience with OHRC complaints.

The OHRC was well aware of the media attention and support CCME had received and no doubt did not relish the prospect of becoming an object of controversy itself with respect to this issue. It is important, however, to point out that the OHRC investigating officer, Mervin Witter, was exemplary and handled the case in a fair and judicious manner.

As the OHRC pursued mediation of CCME's complaint, the USC board of directors capitulated.\textsuperscript{53} On February 5, 1985, the USC published a statement of regret in the \textit{Gazette} and on the following day in the \textit{London Free Press}. The statement read, in part:

Should any member of the University and London community, including the local Palestinian community, believe he or she has been subject to discriminatory USC action in the past, the Board of Directors offers the assurance that this was not the intention of the Corporation and expresses its sincere regret that any such person was offended by such actions.

The same issue of the \textit{Gazette} carried an unsigned ad attacking the USC decision which was captioned "A Change for the Better?" A sentence of the ad read: "When important policy is subject to special-interest pressure of this kind it bodes no good."

This is a sentiment that in fact should have been carried out, except that, of course, it is correctly applied to the "special-interest pressure" that brought about the controversy in the first place, and not to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the \textit{Globe and Mail}, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the many others which responded to an act they saw as one of discrimination.

In March 1985, CCME was ratified as a legitimate UWO student club.\textsuperscript{54} That did not end the debate on the Middle East at the University of Western Ontario but marked a major step to prove that the debate itself is legitimate in a university setting. An important precedent had also been established with respect to racism against Palestinians.

But those who are interested in ensuring that both the Palestinian and Israeli points of view are heard must realize that this right sometimes must be defended vigorously. With a properly conducted campaign, important institutions and many individuals will assist in such a fight. Presenting the Arab and Palestinian perspective at a North American university is, nevertheless, a right. And it is one that needs to be exercised with more vigor by all those concerned with the plight of the Palestinians.

In May 1985, a new organization called the Palestine-Israel Committee was formed at UWO by a group of professors chaired by A. K. Dewdney. The new body dedicated itself to promoting "equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians."\textsuperscript{55} Although small in size, it is yet another indication that more and more people are taking an interest in the question of rights for the Palestinians.


\textsuperscript{54}"Middle East Club Ratified after Two Years of Delay," \textit{Gazette}, March 5, 1985.

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