

Appendix 18: email from the dean to an anonymized complainant regarding the meaning of "sponsorship," April 24, 2009



Law Dean/osgoode  
04/24/2009 09:08 PM

To [ S. 21(C) ]  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Conference

[ S. 21(C) ]

I wasn't aware that [ S. 21(C) ] had copied you on his email to me. I told [ S. 21(C) ] that I was working on this issue and told him I would respond in due course at an appropriate time. Please keep this email confidential and do not share it with anyone else.

There are certainly major problems with this conference. I have become involved in a significant way in the last 2 weeks, in an attempt to ensure that there is balance in the discussion at the conference. I think I will be able to achieve that, although I have to tell you that it is extremely challenging because I have to work to persuade the organizers to move in certain directions and that is not easy to do. There are issues of academic freedom that are at play here and that have to be approached very carefully.

First you should look at the conference website. Here is the link

<http://www.yorku.ca/ipconf/>

As you will see from the "Vision statement" this is not intended to be an anti-Israel conference. The problem that has arisen is that the organizers issued a general call for papers and they have accepted some speakers who are anti-Israel. What I have been trying to do is to add a keynote speaker who will be a strong defender of Israel, and also to create a hierarchy amongst the various speakers with certain prominent and more responsible speakers on the plenary sessions and those who are problematic in workshop sessions (ie sessions that will run concurrently with each other at certain points in the day.)

This is not a perfect solution. But my goal is to ensure balance. That is what I can do. To imagine that I can just shut this thing down is fantasy.

As for the issue that it is "sponsored" by Osgoode, the organizers applied to a York committee to be designated as a York 50th event, which meant that they got some money from a fund created to celebrate the 50th anniversary of York. I supported their application, based on the vision statement. And really I had no other realistic choice but to support them. I supported every application that was put forward by my faculty members. (There were 7 applications and all of them got money from the York 50th fund.) So that is what the "sponsorship" consists of. (They also got a grant from the SSHRC, but I wasn't involved in that.)

I wanted to give you guys a sense of the challenges I am facing here, and the attempts I am making to address them. I do not expect you will be happy. I am not happy about it.

I want to speak to both of you but wanted to give you some background in advance of any discussion.

Patrick

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