

# Free Speech and Roseanne Skoke

by Marko Peric

A few weeks ago, Nova Scotia MP Roseanne Skoke spoke at a conference in Charlottetown. Normally, this would not be a big event, but a lot of people have taken offense at some things she said. A rather nasty reaction ensued in the local media. Among other things, Skoke was labelled an intolerant moral extremist. However, this editorial is not about what Skoke said or what she believes.

Certainly this is not the first attack aimed at Roseanne Skoke and other people who have taken a stand on the issue of family values. Anyone who pays attention to the media has probably witnessed this no-so-new trend of slamming anyone who shows any conservative tendencies. This is almost always done in the name of free speech or resistance to hate groups.

Some of the self-appointed defenders of free-speech seem to have lost sight of the real issue. This summer, offices in Toronto belonging to an avowed racist were bombed. This writer does not advocate this or any other racist person or group, but it should be pointed out that blowing up the offices of a hateful person is an act of hate. No matter how noble the cause, the end does not justify the means.

In June, an organization called Human Life International (HLI) held a conference in Montreal. HLI is a pro-life group which was also alleged to be a racist cabal. The group did nothing in Montreal except hold quiet meetings; they did not display any offensive tendencies. However, some people who did not approve of HLI held noisy demonstrations in protest. They yelled offensive slogans and threw eggs at

the delegates, who had just attended a Mass. Who was acting like the hate group?

Certainly there are some odious groups that hide under the guise of being religious organizations. This has drawn criticism to anyone associating themselves with religion, morality, or conservatism. People who are religious are called small-minded, hypocritical, bigoted, and hateful. Organizations who call for support of family values are labelled homophobic, anti-women, and even neo-Nazi. Politicians come under attack if they acknowledge this large portion of the population, and are accused of "pandering to the religious right." Funny, no one is ever accused of pandering to the religious left.

Those pointing fingers and calling names are ignoring an important point. Simply disapproving of another's actions or ideas is a far cry from hatred. If you dislike the seal hunt and speak out against it, are you a hateful and evil person? If so, Greenpeace is a hate group.

The defenders of free speech are also forgetting that most people who are accused of being part of the "religious right" are good, moral people. Most of them do not kill their neighbours, use mind-altering drugs, or hide in their basements polishing assault rifles and planning to take over the planet. Usually they look just like the non-religious liberal who might live beside them. Yet, it is perfectly acceptable to attack them because of their beliefs.

The very proponents of free speech are denying it to those who refuse to agree with them. Sadly, they can't see that this is the ultimate hypocrisy.

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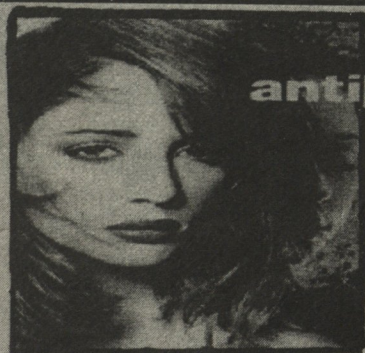
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