

Andrew Scheer, the Media and our Society's "decadent last phase"

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In a scene from the film *Casablanca* that has retained instant recognition since 1942, bar owner Rick asks police captain Renault: "How can you close me up? On what grounds?" Renault responds: "I'm shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!" Since then, when one wants to express the fact that one is actually shocked, you use the word once; if you want to express the fact that you are not in the least bit shocked, you say the word twice. 'Shocked, shocked' means that not only are you not shocked (since you are a beneficiary of the allegedly shocking activity as in Captain Renault's case), you accept the need for hypocrisy. You see it as a strategy for maintaining your status in a world so corrupt and cynical that you have lost the power to feel indignation, or even to feel guilt at your own hypocrisy. You are acknowledging that the times have made you a performer in an ongoing political theatre, where everyone is trying to survive until order and freedom are restored. Our own society is not so far gone in hypocrisy that we cannot sometimes merely say that we are "shocked." I was, for example, shocked – this was the subject of my column last week – when the leader of our country called a private Quebec citizen a racist and told her there was "no place" for her in Canada, because she dared to imply that his government was not handling the illegal entrant situation well, a statement he took to mean that she was against immigration altogether (as though immigration and illegal entry were the same phenomenon). I was arguably more shocked that this incident was not a subject of vociferous and universal condemnation. Our prime minister had publicly charged a stranger with the worst moral crime there is in this era – and not even for her beliefs, but for what he assumed her beliefs must be. Some observers chose to see the incident through the lens of information that surfaced after the event, the fact that the woman is a member of an anti-immigration advocacy group, but as I argued, that is neither here nor there in the light of what went down prior to Trudeau's knowledge of who the woman was. I can only assume, since the incident was a blip on the media radar, that most of my colleagues were merely "shocked, shocked" at what is properly described as an authoritarian's rant, given the many repetitions of the words "no place" and "intolerant." Speaking of the media, and racism I was disappointed, but can't say that I was "shocked" when Andrew Scheer barred Rebel Media from CPC18. Scheer was happy enough to build his brand with exposure through Rebel in the old days, but now that he is "respectable," he has cast off his old companion like Shakespeare's Prince Hal cast off roustabout Falstaff. Bad for his new kingly brand.

I daresay Scheer would have been thrilled to have the *New York Times* cover the CPC convention. After all, that is the "newspaper of record," the mainstream newspaper with high professional standards all reasonable people can allegedly trust. The *New York Times* hired serially overt racist (with a wispy journalism background to boot) Sarah Jeong to its editorial board, even though the gesture was an abrogation of their own normal policy. It would have been bad enough if they gave her a column. But the editorial board actually sets editorial policy for the newspaper. In my opinion, this defiant repudiation of the principles on which the United States of America was founded is a tipping point for journalism in general. Recall that *The Rebel*, which Scheer considered too toxic to allow inside his convention, fired Faith Goldy because she refused to disavow and apologize for cozying up to white racists in Charlottesville last year. (In fact, I, along with other journalists, withdrew from participation as a team video blogger for *The Rebel* over Goldy's actions and words). For principled action, *The Rebel* scores high. For unprincipled action, the *NYT* hits bottom. And yet the *NYT* seems to have weathered the storm. Ordinary people are still buying it and reading it. Maybe a few subscriptions got cancelled. Other mainstream media did not join together to issue a communiqué of condemnation. *NYT* reporters and columnists will still be welcome to cover anything they want, including political conventions of all kinds. Even though – I am still shocked to write this – the *NYT*'s editorial board has a virulent racist sitting on it, no matter what leftist spin is put on it. In an *Atlantic.com* article assessing the Left's paranoia regarding the meteoric rise to celebratory of Canadian academic Jordan Peterson, journalist Caitlan Flanagan observed: "It is because the left, while it currently seems ascendant in our houses of culture and art, has in fact entered its decadent late phase, and it is deeply vulnerable." If true, Flanagan's words should not be a comfort to conservatives. For vulnerable ideological movements in decline can take a long time to die, and they do not go quietly; indeed, their convulsive death throes may be more damaging to their cultures than all that went before. The media must emerge from its "shocked, shocked" stupor of moral relativism and relearn their obligation to be "shocked" by all that is morally repulsive.