

He's back! Svend Robinson will be the NDP candidate for Burnaby North-Seymour in this fall's federal election. He looks good at 66, brimming with comeback vigour. His ostensible motivation for returning to politics is concern over climate change and the affordable housing crisis. But he has not denied that his real ambition — a realistic one considering Jagmeet Singh's failure to advance his party's fortunes — is the NDP leadership. From 1979 until 2004, Robinson went from strength to strength within the NDP. Suddenly, his career imploded over his theft of a valuable ring, an action he attributed to mental illness. That's water under the bridge for me. What isn't is Robinson's extreme, career-long animus against Israel, which continues to this day. As the NDP's foreign affairs critic, his lack of balance and seeming indifference to Palestinian terrorism during two intifadas was noted with scorn by such notables as Bob Rae, who asked in 2002, "Where is his (Robinson's) solidarity with the families of the victims of the massacre on Passover? Where is his humanitarian outrage over the children killed while dancing in a discotheque or eating in a pizzeria?" Rae concluded that the NDP's policy on Israel was "not a vision of social democracy worthy of support." As the NDP's foreign affairs critic, his lack of balance and seeming indifference to Palestinian terrorism during two intifadas was noted with scorn by such notables as Bob Rae (—image—)

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And yet today Robinson's leadership prospects strike me as excellent. Since Rae uttered that confident assertion, with which most liberal Canadians at the time agreed, the BDS movement, poisonous fruit of the viciously anti-Semitic Durban-Conference tree, has achieved its hate-laundering objective: Israel loathing has become banalized and normalized among progressives; and progressivism increasingly dominates the left in the West. U.K. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's associations and actions — for example, participating in a ceremony in Tunisia in 2014 honouring the perpetrators of the 1972 Munich massacre of 11 Israeli Olympians — would have rendered him unfit for political life not that long ago, yet today he is regarded as a credible challenger for the glittering prize of 10 Downing Street. In the U.S., the Women's March, considered the face of the "#resistance" to Donald Trump, is led by BDS activists and supporters of Nation of Islam founder Louis Farrakhan, whose vile anti-Semitic rhetoric would have pleased Hitler. The Democratic National Committee distanced themselves from the March, but the ACLU and the American Federation of Teachers maintained their sponsorship. The Democratic Party has welcomed several new members into Congress who hold passionately anti-Israel and anti-Semitic views, some linked to quite problematic political backers. (—image—)

Svend Robinson, NDP candidate for Burnaby North-Seymour, speaks during a news conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Thursday January 24, 2019.

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I am not saying Robinson is anti-Semitic. I do say that anti-Semites tend to share his preoccupation with the Jewish state's alleged sins to the exclusion of objectively monstrous iniquities elsewhere, as well as his assumption of a moral equivalence between Israeli military actions against aggressors and Palestinian terrorism against civilians. If nothing else, any political leader who reflexively slams Israel as villainous, and reflexively romanticizes the Palestinians as victims — a grotesquely simplistic misreading of a complex situation — will attract many anti-Semitic followers. Robinson never made a good-faith effort to understand Israel's position, and he disingenuously uses bad-faith Jews to bolster his bias. In an open letter to his constituency in June, 2002, for example, Robinson thanked followers for their support of his activism on behalf of Palestinians. In it he quoted from anti-Zionist Israeli journalist Gideon Levy, who wrote in Ha'aretz: "What is the infrastructure of terrorism if not the occupation ... The nation wanted war, and it got what he wanted." There follows a paragraph of Levy's near-hysterical indictment of Israel for its role "in sowing hate in the heart of every Palestinian." Barbara Kay: On World Hijab Day, remember those who refuse to wear it, too Barbara Kay: Don't ever question mass immigration or you'll be instantly racist Barbara Kay: Here's what happens when the gender-gap index is adjusted for bias What Robinson did not say, but surely knows, is that Gideon Levy is an infamously extremist anti-Israel Israeli. The epitome of pathological altruism, a sadly common syndrome among progressive Jews, Levy claims to

represent Palestinian views, but does not speak Arabic, and has admitted that “I don’t have one Palestinian friend.” He has compared Israel to “the Nazis in the thirties.” When asked if he ever wrote about Palestinian human rights violations, he responded that what the Palestinians did was “none of my business.” This from a “journalist.” At a symposium on Jews and politics in May, 2016, former National Post Comment editor Jonathan Kay said, “(W)hen I got into journalism, I guess it was 15 years ago, there was a guy named Svend Robinson, who was the foreign policy critic for the NDP. This is a guy who would go to Ramallah, and kiss Arafat’s ring. He was just an absolute cartoon caricature of a naïve, left wing BDS-type, anti-Israel figure, and this guy was fairly senior within the NDP ranks. The idea of Svend Robinson, a guy like him having a voice in any major political party in Canada now is completely laughable.” I’m not laughing. National Postkaybarb@gmail.com