

Public Declaration and Call for Solidarity

Barbara Legault and *À Babord!* magazine are being sued for libel by Andy Srougi, coordinator of Fathers4Justice - Québec

Montréal, January 28, 2007 – Activist Barbara Legault and *À bâbord!* magazine are being sued for libel by Andy Srougi, a member of the group Fathers4Justice. “Mr. Srougi [...] attracted public attention last year when he climbed the Jacques-Cartier bridge.” (*La Presse*, December 7, 2006). Mr. Srougi is accusing Barbara Legault of having “uttered hateful comments” about him in her article “Des hommes contre le féminisme” (men against feminism), published in the October/November 2006 issue of *À bâbord!* magazine (see the attached article).

In his motion, Mr. Srougi claims that Ms. Legault wrote “libellous, false and hateful comments [...] that damaged [his] reputation and caused him emotional distress that has led to painful physical consequences, prevented him from sleeping, and caused headaches and enormous stress.” The libel suit can be consulted in French on the Internet site www.papataime.com, coordinated by Mr. Srougi.

Mr. Srougi, who calls himself a “men’s rights activist,” is demanding \$20,000 for mental suffering as a result of libel and \$4,000 in exemplary damages. In fact, in the article in question, Ms. Legault pointed out that masculinists are increasingly turning to the courts to challenge feminist organizations and activists.

This is not the first time Mr. Srougi has used the courts against feminists and their allies, as well as against various government agencies and politicians. *La Presse* reported on November 9, 2006 that “exasperated by Fathers4Justice’s ‘abusive’ tactics, the Barreau du Québec went to Superior Court to have the organization and its main spokesperson, Andy Srougi, declared vexatious litigants. The *Webster’s Dictionary* defines vexatious in a legal context as “legal actions instituted without sufficient grounds and serving only to cause annoyance to the defendant.”

Mr. Srougi recently told *La Presse*, “The board of directors of F4J has decided to launch lawsuits against any organization or individual who attempts to libel F4J. [...] We now have a paid lawyer on board. Other persons cited in *À bâbord !* are going to sue the publication. Expect many, many more lawsuits in 2007, especially against radical feminist groups.” (André Noël, *La Presse*, December 7, 2006).

Legal Defence: A Call for Solidarity

Barbara Legault and all those working for *À bâbord !*, an independent, bimonthly magazine that receives no subsidies and is produced entirely by volunteers, are calling for solidarity from groups and individuals concerned about this lawsuit.

We believe that Andy Srougi’s actions go far beyond the scope of the present lawsuit, since he has also filed complaints against other feminist and pro-feminist groups and individuals with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, among others. We do not believe that *À bâbord !* and its writer are the true targets of the libel allegations; the real target is the feminist analyses contained in the article, ideas that are supported and promoted by the women’s movement and its allies in Québec.

This legal action is, above all, political, because the lawsuit targets freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Masculinism is the focus of a lot of attention, debate and serious concern within the women’s movement. The publication of the article “Des hommes contre le féminisme” is simply one contribution to an ongoing debate. If Mr. Srougi is successful in his lawsuit against Barbara Legault and *À bâbord !*, there could be serious repercussions for the capacity of feminists and independent publications to publish analyses and opinion and to contribute to a legitimate and crucial public debate on masculinism. Moreover, a victory by Mr. Srougi would seriously threaten the very existence of *À bâbord !* magazine.

Creation of a Legal Defence Fund

We are calling on your solidarity to create a legal defence fund that will enable us to defend ourselves against Andy Srougi’s legal offensive. Lawyers Pierre-Louis Fortin-

Legris and François Cyr of the firm Ouellet, Nadon & associés, will try to keep the fees and costs associated with the defence as low as possible, however a minimum of \$4,000 will be incurred by the suit.

All contributions are welcome, from small donations to more substantial sums from union and community organizations. Please make your cheques payable to “A Babord!”, indicate “legal defence” on your donation and send it to:

À bâbord !
To the attention of: Claude Rioux / Legal Defence
P.O. Box 67, Station C
Montréal, Québec H2L 4S7

If Andy Srougi loses this case and is required to pay the legal fees, any donations received will be returned to the groups and individuals concerned. We also appreciate any other form of support and solidarity—do not hesitate to write to us. The first court hearing of the legal proceedings will take place on February 15, 2007 in Montreal. We will keep you informed of any developments in this case. We are grateful for your contributions and support.

In solidarity and in struggle,

BARBARA LEGAULT AND THE *À BÂBORD* COLLECTIVE!

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