
**COMMUNICATIONS
GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING – September 25, 2017

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) from Ulli S. Watkiss, City Clerk, City of Toronto to Vickery Bowles, City Librarian, Toronto Public Library dated July 11, 2017 regarding the appointment of Councillor Jim Hart as the Mayor's designate to the Toronto Public Library Board, for information.
2. receives Communication (b) from Maureen O'Reilly, President, Toronto Public Library Workers Union, Local 4948 to Toronto Public Library Board dated September 15, 2017 regarding Room Booking Incident at Richview Library on July 12, 2017.



**Toronto Public Library
Workers Union**
Local 4948

Affiliated with
CUPE and the
Toronto & York Region
Labour Council

Maureen O'Reilly
President

Brendan Haley
Vice-President

Viveca Gretton
Recording Secretary

Carmela Corrado
Secretary-Treasurer

Brian Raymer
Toronto Reference Library

Brandon Haynes
North York Central Library

Jenna Liu
North Region

Karen Smith
South Region

Gobi Sooriyakumar
East Region

Karen DeSimone
West Region

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20 Eglinton Avenue West
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b.

Toronto Public Library Workers Union
Local 4948
20 Eglinton Ave West
Suite 1109, Box 2053
Toronto, ON M4R1K8

Friday, September 15, 2017

[Faxed]

Toronto Public Library Board
c/o Toronto Public Library
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M4W 2G8

Dear Board Member:

Re: Room Booking Incident at Richview Library on July 12, 2017

We ask that the Toronto Public Library Board review its room booking policy with respect to the recent use of a Toronto Public Library meeting room by an "alt-right" group.

Unfortunately there is a long history in Canada and abroad with such groups using public library meeting space to legitimize behaviour that many of us find abhorrent and disrespectful to the communities we serve.

We draw your attention to the 2004 BC incident which has some parallels with the Toronto incident. Make no mistake: this was a calculated move by the "alt-right" group that booked the public library space at Richview Library. The incidents that followed in Charlottesville offer background for this strategy (see attached).

At the July 7 meeting of the TPLWU Local 4948 Executive Board, we adopted the Toronto & York Region Labour Council charter of inclusivity (see attached). The charter challenges us to be leaders in calling out these behaviours. It has no place in our beloved public library in one of the most diverse cities in the world and valued dearly by Torontonians.

This dialogue is a challenging one and goes beyond the simple tenets of freedom of speech. We ask the Board to be a leader for Toronto and begin the discussion this evening.

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Yours Truly,

Maureen O'Reilly

Maureen O'Reilly
President,
Toronto Public Library Workers Union
Local 4948

cc: Toronto Public Library Workers Union Executive Board

3 Attachments:

- "Racism and Libraries in Canada" – blogpost from the Canadian Anti-Racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)
- Toronto Labour Council Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities
- "When Hate Goes Public" *Our Times Magazine*

OUR TIMES

CANADA'S INDEPENDENT LABOUR MAGAZINE

WHEN HATE GOES PUBLIC

Aug 17, 2017

"On the one hand, I am a librarian and, as such, I am professionally committed to freedom of speech and bringing forward a broad range of viewpoints in the library," says Maureen O'Reilly, president of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union (<http://local4948.org>) (Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4948). "However, we are living in a time where the inclusion of that group in the library was, to me, problematic."

She is speaking of the July 12 room-booking at Etobicoke's Richview Branch by a neo-nazi group to hold a memorial for lawyer Barbara Kulaszka. Kulaszka, in her day, enthusiastically defended known white supremacists and self-described white nationalists and holocaust-deniers.

USING PUBLIC SPACE TO SPREAD HATE

"I think it was a deliberate intent on the group's part to basically do their activity in public space, to lend legitimacy, and also to test the waters as to where the public attitudes are," says O'Reilly. "Somebody said the same thing about Charlottesville, that they were using a public space to sort of legitimize their protest."

As the events in Charlottesville showed, an ineffectual response to a very public show of extremist views, under the guise of free speech, will only permit more extremist, neo-nazi and white supremacist rhetoric in public spaces.

Library patrons weren't happy, and there was an outpouring of criticism at the library's decision to allow their space to be used for a neo-nazi event. The ensuing debate revolved around the question of freedom of speech, and how it is regulated in public space.

To be fair to the library's management, the nature of the event only became known on the morning the event was to take place, which left little time for the TPL to consider its response. Still, according to O'Reilly, the safest and best course of action for the library would have been to delay the event and consider the issue further before making a decision.

POOR POLITICAL JUDGEMENT

"The library was being put in a difficult position in that it was the same day," says O'Reilly. "But again, I think that was part of the deliberateness of the action. Basically the library played into the game, if you will. I think it was poor political judgement not to err on the side of caution and look at the implications for the broader community."

As O'Reilly postulates, perhaps the entire situation was orchestrated to force the library to set a precedent that would benefit those who would take advantage of the notion of free speech, to justify hate speech. Again, humouring the question of free speech when the real issue at hand is hate speech will only enable those with hateful agendas.

Referring once more to Charlottesville, O'Reilly says, "Certainly there's freedom of speech, but

this is hate speech and people have to stand up and call it for what it is. The library was unable to show that kind of leadership."

To much criticism, the library chose to make a swift decision and allow the event to go forward that evening. "We do not tolerate hate speech," read the library's official statement (http://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/news_releases/2017/07/room-booking-event-at-richview-library.html). "However, we cannot deny bookings from the community that are in accordance with the law and the library's policy and rules of conduct. To deny access to library spaces on the basis of the views or opinions that individuals or groups have expressed in the past contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the principles of intellectual freedom, both cornerstones of the library's mission and values."

Toronto Mayor John Tory tweeted (<https://twitter.com/JohnTory/status/885249533302759424>) that he requested the library cancel the event, but that TPL "received legal advice that it cannot reject this room-booking request."

"Although it's a service open to everyone in the community, the library really alienated the majority of their traditional users that support them day in and day out," says O'Reilly. "I think they should have — it would have been wise — to err on the side of caution and say, 'We are just going to delay the program and look at it closer.'"

"And in my view," she adds, there were issues in their own policy which they could have used to delay the booking and it going forward." Namely, the fact that the booking was made under a fake moniker (a non-existent bookstore) and that attendees (around 25) were charged an entry fee — neither of which are allowed for bookings at a TPL branch.

Most obviously counter to their policy, the space was conceivably going to be used by those known to espouse hate speech, and definitely rented for the purposes of honouring someone who defended their alleged right to do so.

MEETING COMMUNITY STANDARDS

"One of the reasons I got into public libraries is that you want a broad representation of views reflected in your collections," says O'Reilly, "so that people can have a wide variety of information from which to make their decisions, draw their conclusions. Having said that, the library doesn't just buy everything that's published. There is a process where you examine the materials and there's several criteria on which you measure whether or not the material should be included in the collection. I think if the same principles had been applied to this event it would not have met the standards.

I think the thing that's key here is that most of the folks in that room were . . . there had been convictions on hate speech. So it wasn't really a question as to what their focus was going to be."

The union's position, posted on their website, was clear: the Toronto Public Library "failed their regular patrons. In situations like this we need to look back at how it affects our community of users."

IS THIS A UNION ISSUE?

The union made a statement about this issue — but is it a union issue? According to O'Reilly, yes it is, for two reasons. "One, it's a workers' issue if a program is taking place that may challenge the safety of both the staff and the patrons in the library," she explains. "And the fact that the library brought in a police officer and security guards and that the manager was going to be on site (managers don't usually work in the evening) would suggest to me that there was a potential for a health and safety issue." (Library staff were also in the room to monitor for hate

speech.)

"And secondly, while for sure it's always a fine line regarding what non-workplace-based issues unions champion, I would say the library workers, Local 4948, have had a special relationship with the City of Toronto going back to the Ford days, when we fought back against budget cuts — and that we do have a leadership role to play around that."

OUR PUBLIC LIBRARY

In 2014, immediately following the late Rob Ford's term as mayor of Toronto, Local 4948 was recognized at the Min Sook Lee Labour Arts Awards gala for their campaign "My Public Library."

During his term as mayor, Ford famously suggested there were more public libraries than Tim Horton's locations. Cuts to Toronto's public library service became a frequently discussed aspect of Ford's political agenda, and included public debates over Twitter between Ford, his brother, city councillor Doug Ford; and acclaimed Canadian author, Margaret Atwood.

"We have worked very hard to reach out to the public," says O'Reilly, "to let them know about the issues that are happening in our library," such as underfunding and precarious work. The library workers were asking the public to support them in their issues and O'Reilly says the recent neo-nazi event "was a moment, in some ways, that we were called upon to return that support to our community."

With their award-winning campaigns and advocacy, Local 4948 has demonstrated a commitment to those they represent, the community they serve and the institution they symbolize — the library. Their clear and thoughtful stance on this issue is an example of how unions remain a site of political resistance beyond the specific realm of collective bargaining and organizing — "labour issues" are not always clear-cut.

"On the surface it may be a very simplistic problem, you know, freedom of speech," says O'Reilly. "But I think it goes much deeper than that and that certainly was the union's concern. One, the community, and secondly, the library's political response."

FREEDOM FROM HATE

The union's response demonstrated the way unions can show leadership where other institutions don't. "I would say sometimes it's hard to have these discussions," says O'Reilly, "but the labour movement has always had these discussions. I think we're comfortable with saying, you know — who would honour freedom of speech more than a trade union? The collective right to protest and all of that. But trade unions also do have a long history of being involved in human rights issues.

"The
Toronto
Labour
Day
parade
theme
this year
is 'Stand
Up and
Speak
Out,'"
says

O'Reilly.
"Those
words
obviously
can relate
to many
things,
whether it
be a
push-
back on
two-tier



Maureen O'Reilly at the 2016 Labour Day parade. PHOTOGRAPH: LORRAINE ENDICOTT

bargaining; it could labour law reform; but also the issues of Islamophobia," a recent priority for labour leadership in Toronto. On July 10, the library union's executive board passed the [Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities \(http://ourtimes.ca/Newsletter/charter-june2017.pdf\)](http://ourtimes.ca/Newsletter/charter-june2017.pdf), adopted by the [Toronto & York Region Labour Council \(http://lahourcouncil.ca\)](http://lahourcouncil.ca) just the week before.

"A couple of our tweets have highlighted disturbing events that are happening in our community at the moment, in respect to Islamophobia, specifically, and racism in general," O'Reilly says of Local 4948's public stance. "I think the library needed to take that as part of their decision as well. Again, I would never support blanket censorship or anything like that at all. Everybody is so afraid of being accused of these things that we really fall into their hands" — the hands of the extreme far-right, holocaust-deniers, and white supremacists.

"I think they were trying to use the library as a political tool and they were successful in doing that. The library played into their hands. It's a hard discussion but we need to have it, and not just give into groups immediately."

Haseena Manek is a freelance journalist based in Ireland.

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Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities

Discrimination in all its forms threatens our country's rich social fabric, including the workplaces of union members and the communities in which we live. Dividing people because of race, religion, ancestry or any other difference that undermines human rights serves only to weaken our unions and our society.

We commit to standing up for the rights and dignity of everyone in order to promote inclusive, just and respectful workplaces and communities.

That is why we affirm that:

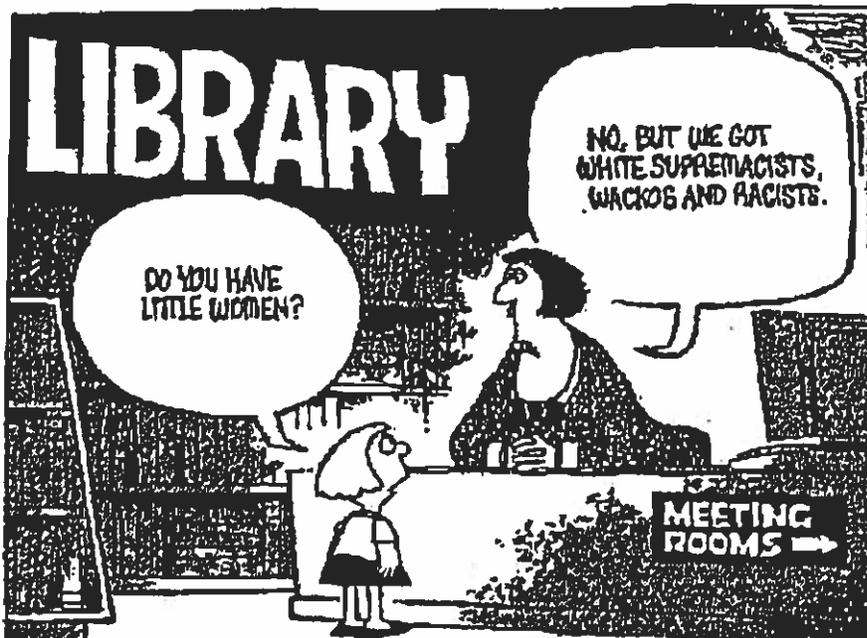
- * Islamophobia, anti-Black racism and all other forms of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and bigotry have no place in our workplaces or communities.
- * Discrimination and acts of hate against union members and others in our communities marginalizes individuals and groups and excludes them from participating fully in our union, workplaces and their communities.
- * The dignity of every member is essential to a healthy and vibrant union and workplace.
- * As a labour movement, we will work with all levels of government, civil society, and communities to develop policies, programs and initiatives to reduce and eliminate racism, hate and bigotry in all its forms.
- * By working together, we can nurture inclusive workplaces and strengthen our shared commitment to our union's shared values of equality, respect, justice, and dignity for all.

Stop Racism and Hate Canada

Racism and Libraries in Canada

Taxonomy Categories:

Libraries and Hate



N.B. This page is being revised

This newspaper cartoon highlights the contradiction between public safety and allowing hate groups to meet in public libraries. While some libraries in the province of British Columbia allowed, if not welcomed hate group meetings under the pretense of freedom of expression, at the very same time they not only stopped patron access to magazines like Playboy, but sanctioned patrons who did access such magazines privately online. The B.C. Library Association did not see the hypocrisy of the library position on nudity versus hate and congratulated the Victoria Public Library for flouting human rights and Canada's international obligations to ensure that hate and racism are not endorsed or encouraged by giving the library a so-called "intellectual freedom award", to the dismay of anti-racist groups.

The story of how anti-racist were able to change library meeting room policy to stop racist meetings has not been fully told. What exists are a handful of now hard to find newspaper reports, an Ombudsman's Report and a BC Human Rights Commission complaint that was dismissed on a

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)

technicality. The following brief history is an attempt to shed some light on the dynamics of the struggle to change one small part of public policy with respect to hate groups.

What can be learned from this history of demonstrations against hate and for equality is that it takes hard work over a period of time before politicians, the media and public officials will take a stand for justice. We forget this lesson at our peril.

This website is devoted to telling other stories and helping mobilize against all forms of nationalism, fascism and racism. Your help in this work is appreciated and we look forward to your help in expanding this document through your suggestions and additions.

The Struggle to Stop Hate

The following picture shows a rally at the Juan De Fuca Library in 1998 to protest hate group meetings in that and other libraries in the province of British Columbia, Canada. The Province, a daily newspaper, reported that the rally was attended by approximately 400 people. Unions were always a large contingent at anti-racism rallies and the protests against hate groups in the library meeting was no exception.



(Photo credit: Harry Abrams.)

The rally at the library was one of many that attempted to influence the provincial and municipal governments and library boards to ensure that hate groups are barred from using public facilities. The outcome of these rallies and mass demonstrations as well as the behind the scenes lobbying and complaints was that library boards, which had previously rejected out of hand all demands to stop racist groups and hate mongers from using public facilities, were forced to change meeting room rental policy. But the Library Boards and Libraries had to be dragged to that decision. In fact, in the midst of the popular struggle, the BC Library Association flouted human rights and public opinion by awarding the Library a so-called intellectual freedom award for continuing to allow hate groups meetings.

Context

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)

Hate groups have historically used libraries and other public facilities in Canada to promote intolerance and recruit members. The main reason why public facilities have been so attractive to hate groups is that they tend to lend the groups credibility which allows them to broaden their membership and to gain credibility for their messages of hate.

The following picture is from a public meeting held in a Vancouver public library circa 1933 by a local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. Joining many other hate groups, the American based KKK was very active in Canada throughout the 1930s and had chapters across the country. Of course, the KKK, then as now, claimed it was not a "hate" group, but merely a group seeking to preserve "white" or specifically European/Protestant values against encroachment by Catholics, Jews and many ethnic nationalities – Italians, Poles, African, and French-Canadians.



(Ku Klux Klan in Vancouver Library circa 1933. Photo credit: BC Archives)

Libraries, for their part, have historically claimed exclusive jurisdiction over the use of library space, claiming "freedom of expression" and that those who want to prevent meetings of hate groups are "censors" and worse than the groups they wish to bar. There are very good reasons why libraries and, in fact, all public facilities should bar hate mongers and the following pages will present some of these reasons.

As David Matas has argued, one very basic reason to bar hate groups from public facilities is that Canada is bound by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that: "All are entitled to equal protection against discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (Article 7). Canada is also a signatory to a number of other international covenants and binding agreements and must provide progress reports to the United Nations on the implementation and adherence to the principles enshrined in these documents. For example, Canada is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states that: "Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law" (Article 20). Canada is also a signatory to the the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)

Forms of Discrimination which provides that states parties: "Shall not permit public authorities or public institutions, national or local, to promote or incite racial discrimination" (Article 4).

These international conventions and agreements bind not only the federal government but all provincial, territorial and municipal governments and agencies. This means that all libraries and library boards in Canada have a duty to protect their patrons against incitement and discrimination by not renting or providing library space to groups that are likely to incite hatred and discrimination.

A second reason to bar hate mongers from using public facilities is that freedom of expression is not an absolute right in any democracy. As Emilio Benavente has argued: the right to freedom of expression is an empty right if there is no protection for human rights since only those in the majority or in power can exercise the right to expression. Preventing racism and discrimination is obviously necessary to allow other rights like assembly and expression and has been found to not necessarily violate the Charter of Canadian Rights and Freedoms by the Supreme Court of Canada. There are, in fact, a number of laws which limit freedom of expression including copyright infringement and defamatory libel.

While many libraries and public institutions across Canada abide by Canada's international and domestic responsibilities to prevent incitement and hatred by refusing to rent or provide space to organizations likely to expose patrons to hate, the Vancouver Public Library, the Juan de Fuca Library, the Colwood Library and the Saanich Public Library sided with racists and allowed hate groups to use library space for meetings. The Ottawa library, for example, in 1998 refused to allow Paul Fromm, a school teacher fired for his involvement with hate groups, to rent space for meetings. Yet, the Victoria Library rented a meeting room for use by Paul Fromm, Doug Christie and Ernst Zundel. Paul Fromm, a former school teacher, was later fired for his

involvement with hate groups in 1996. Doug Christie was described by the Law Society of B.C. in 1993 as a person who "has made common cause with a small lunatic antisemitic fringe element of our society" (in Matas). Ernst Zundel is an Holocaust denier, deported from Canada as a security threat and sent to Germany to serve time for incitement.

On June 5 1999, the Victoria Public Library Branch in Saanich provided space for a meeting of the Canadian Free Speech League to sponsor a fund raiser for Doug Collins. Collins was found to have promoted hatred by the BC Human Rights Commission in a newspaper column written for the North Shore News.

On September 30, 1999 the Vancouver Public Library rented a meeting room to Doug Christie of the Canadian Free Speech League. At the meeting were Paul Fromm, Marc Lemire of the racist heritage Front and Doug Collins of the North Shore News and Jud Cylorn who wrote the racist book "Stop Apologizing".

However, while some of these same libraries that justified providing space for racist meetings under the notion of intellectual freedom, they warned patrons about viewing magazines like Playboy online in the library and subscribed to newsletters that front for hate groups and allowed hate groups to meet in libraries.

To flout human rights even more, the BC Library Association awarded the library an "intellectual award" for allowing hate groups to use library space. In the midst of the and provided "intellectual freedom" awards for allowing hate groups to use public facilities tax payers expense, or at subsidized rates.

Libraries and Hate Groups – a marriage that would not last

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)

In 1995, in response to the attack on democracy and equality posed by hate groups, a handful of community groups began to organize protests and mass demonstrations to stop hate groups from using any public facility for meetings or assemblies. While some of these protests turned ugly, the vast majority were peaceful and brought a diverse group of people together for a compelling social justice issue.

As time went by and as the demonstrations drew more and more demonstrators, the mainstream media was forced to begin to cover the rallies in a more positive light.



(Moe Sihota, MLA and former Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, center, Harry Abrams left, at the rally against hate at the Juan De Fuca Library. The rally was the focus of an article in the which reported attendance at more than 400, a large gathering for the suburb of Victoria.)

In 1998 the Jewish Federation of Victoria and Vancouver Island made a complaint to the Ombudsman of B.C. about "the refusal of the Greater Victoria Public Library to amend the policy that regulates the use of library facilities." The Federation simply wanted the library's meeting policy to be amended to include a clause that would allow libraries to prevent access to groups, "if these groups were considered likely to promote discrimination, contempt or hatred". The Ombudsman noted that the Library refused on the grounds that the clause would be contrary to "the right to freedom of expression."

The Ombudsman's findings were based not on the matter of allowing discrimination and racism, but on procedural fairness. In 2003 the Ombudsman finally ruled after four years that the Library's policy for renting space was deficient in that it did not spell out exactly what were the expectations for those renting rooms. The Ombudsman in a lengthy decision stated that he was "disappointed by the Library's response to" the Ombudsman's recommendation regarding spelling out the exact expectation of the Library to those renting rooms. But the Library ignored the Ombudsman's report.

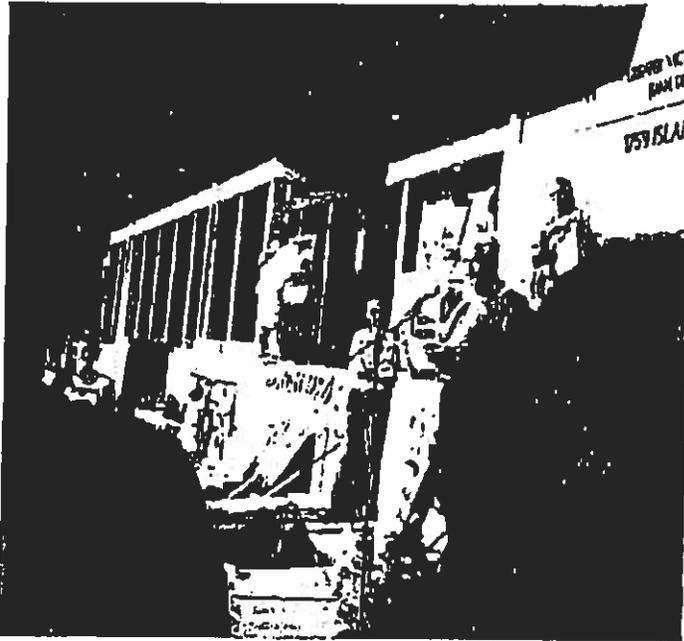
Libraries and Hate Groups - a marriage that would not last

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)

The ultimate outcome of many rallies and demonstrations for social justice in several cities across the province of British Columbia was that library boards, which had previously rejected out of hand all demands to stop racist groups and hate mongers from using public facilities, were forced to change their policy.

Most of the early protests against allowing hate groups to use public facilities were attacked by the mainstream media and by most of the mainstream multicultural and human rights organizations. Some of these groups went so far as to organize their own much smaller demonstrations, hoping to capture media attention for their groups. Mainstream groups, then as now, believed that demonstrations and public protests were counter-productive and would only draw attention to racism and increase intolerance. This short-sighted and negative attitude was wrong as history has taught us. These same mainstream groups continue to argue for the rejection of words like "anti-racism" for words that speak of harmony and cooperation. In contrast, anti-racism groups reject attempts to co-operate or appease racists and organizations that knowingly or unknowingly cater to racists. It is this policy of appeasement that has been fostered by government agencies and that has become the requirement for continued government funding provincially and federally.

Add ---- policy/ news items



(Alan Dutton at the rally against hate at the Juan De Fuca Library.)

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society (CAERS)

(Published in Op/Ed of Victoria Times Colonist, April 5/03)

Dear Editor,

Re: Library repped for Rental Stance, March 28, 2003

The Greater Victoria Public Library management received a failing grade from the Provincial Ombudsman this past week, for failing to word a policy that would have clarified their room rental situation. In years past, the library defended its practice of making rooms available to the notoriously mis-named Canadian Free Speech League, a group described in the Canadian Press as an organization that "harbours Holocaust deniers and white supremacists."

Suffice to say, that it is completely reprehensible and inappropriate for taxpayer-funded facilities to be made available for such purposes, and that the management again must be strongly reminded that there is no excuse for abetting, enabling or collaborating with racial activity in any form.

Libraries should be accessible to all in the community, yes, but no one should fear racial intimidation to use them.

Ironically, and concurrently, the same library administration, prescribes pornography being viewed on their public computer terminals. In fact, they have a clear policy that no category more contentious than would merit a "General Audience" rating is acceptable in our libraries. Abrogation of this rule can lead to denial of service.

What is wrong with these people? Why not make the room rental policy consistent with the public internet policy? I must suggest that this Library system deserves to have some public funds withheld until this situation is rectified.

Harry Abrams

Opposition

Most of the early protests against allowing hate groups to use public facilities were attacked by the mainstream media and by most of the mainstream multicultural and human rights organizations. Some of these groups went so far as to organize their own demonstrations apart from the main rallies, hoping to capture some attention for their groups without incurring any of the risks. Mainstream groups, then as now, believed that demonstrations and public protests were counter-productive and would only draw attention to racists and increase intolerance. This short-sighted and negative attitude was wrong as history has taught us. These same mainstream groups continue to argue for the rejection of words like "anti-racism" for words that speak of harmony and cooperation in the face of hate. In contrast, anti-racism groups reject attempts to co-operate or appease racists and organizations that knowingly or unknowingly cater to racists. It is this policy of appeasement that has been fostered by government agencies and that has become the requirement for continued government funding provincially and federally. The affects of government funding on immigrant settlement agencies in Canada has been documented by Roxanna Ng in her ground-breaking, *The Politics of Community Services*. It is because of this change in funding priorities that has led to the almost complete failure of mainstream groups to affect any positive change in Canadian society.

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Harry Abrams for chronicling and helping organize some of these documents and demonstrations themselves. It should be recognized that the first demonstrations were very small and involved only a few people. Some of these people later were responsible for organizing the mass demonstrations of later years. But it was these early efforts that later demonstrations were built on and it was these mass demonstrations that resulted in the crafting of library and municipal policies that have largely stopped racist groups from using public facilities in Canada.

Faceted Search Categories: