

# *The Brunswickan*

Canada's oldest official student publication

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# EDITORIAL

By Kwame Dawes

The nature and style of civil protest requires astute political wisdom which amounts to basic common sense. Instance: A controversial ultra right-wing fascist writer comes into town to promote a new book of his which is seen as offensive to a significant proportion of the populace. Do you go marching to the airport to scream down his arrival in town; attend the talk and refute all his arguments; buy his books, (as many as possible) and set them ablaze in a highly publicized "ritual burning"; phone the radio stations and really rant about the presence of the creep; write to the newspapers and protest his arrival; or do you sit quietly at home and protest his presence by not noticing it.

Perhaps one of the most common arguments against individuals who seek to protest people like the individual described earlier (The Facist) is that they have as much right to express their view as anyone else and should be allowed to do so freely. Protestors argue, however that society is full of people who will accept anything they read or see on television regardless of the general credibility of the speaker or writer. Thus protest is an attempt to halt the crafty from sucking in the ignorant. The only way to do so is to silence the speakers. Others argue that a speaker or a writer is ineffectual if no one listens or reads their views. Thus protest should entail the boycotting of events, and the barring of such people from access to any media that reaches the public.

While such protest may meet effective pragmatic ends, there is a dimension of public protest that the quiet process of pulling strings, would not effect. In today's society it is apparent that while a vast majority may be against someone like David Irving British "maverick" historian's view that the Holocaust did not happen, there still exists an uncomfortably large number of people who applaud his opinion and would gladly entertain him. Such people can stand in the way of public pressure which seeks to silence such an individual and they do so exercising their civil right to political choice. If such a controversial individual is shown to have an audience in a given community without even the slightest public protest, the community is often implicated for allowing such views to stand unchallenged. Thus it is with some relief that we discover that David Irving's visit to Fredericton has come against some significant protest which has been both civil and carefully calculated. Several proposed events involving the centre have been cancelled including a forum at the Monsignor Boyd Family Centre and a Book Signing event at the UNB Bookstore. This action indicates that once information about a certain speaker is given to a certain organization they often make wise decisions that are politically tasteful. It is unfortunate that this does not happen often enough. It was disturbing to see the absence of significant public protest to the visit of the South African Government's envoy into Fredericton which was funded by an upstanding community organization in this city early last summer. One would hate to think that protest against right wing politics is itself racist. But all that has been said before so why say more. Hopefully, this article has not given undue publicity to Irving.

Some good books on the truth of the Holocaust: Marrus, Michael, The Holocaust in History; Hilbert, Raul, The Destruction of European Jews; Dawidowicz, Lucy, The War Against The Jews.