## School board is reviewing Holocaust studies following recent letters of complaints

By TIM WHITNELL

Special to The Champion

A handful of letters protesting a Holocaust survivor's address to a grade 8 classroom has prompted the Halton Catholic District School Board to consider reviewing a study unit on the subject.

Frank Junger said he only tries to inform, not preach, about the dark time in world history, in hopes of convincing others that a repeat of the tragedy he lived through must be avoided.

That's why the 71-year-old Auschwitz survivor expressed sorrow and some anger when told that a speech he made to a group of grade 8 students in Burlington late last year was met with at least six letters decrying his words, denouncing the Halton Catholic District School Board and, most horrifying to Mr. Junger, denying the existence of the Holocaust.

"I have lived with this every single day of every moment. Any (suggestion) that it didn't happen is absolutely ludicrous."

Meanwhile, the school board that invited Mr. Junger to speak to stu-

"We object very strongly that in such an emotional way young kids, as in this case, are bombarded with the awful things the "Germans" have done. Without a doubt, such kids will go home and see all

**ERHARD MATTAES** 

Germans as killers."

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dents will review its Holocaust study unit to ensure people of all nationalities are respected.

While the number of letters received may seem relatively small, their content and insinuations bother the school board's Education Director Lou Piovesan, who said he's obliged to respond to the letter writers.

"Our position was not to promote hatred or racism or bigotry - just

the opposite," he stressed. "It supplements the study of the Diary of Anne Frank" by grade 8s," he said.

"If it (war stories) was done on its own I might agree it's too mature (in subject matter), but it was done in context. I think the students had a better understanding of

Still, Mr. Piovesan said an administrative review of how that particular study unit is delivered to students is in order.

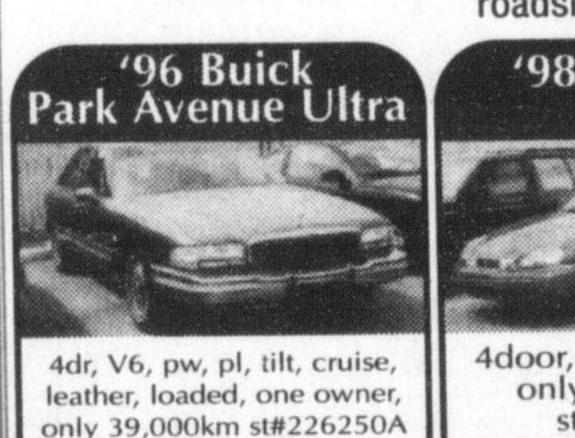
"We will be reviewing it to make sure we are promoting policies of respect for nationalities," he said.

A one-page letter addressed to Mr. Piovesan and signed by Erhard Matthaes, president of the Trans-Canada Alliance of German-Canadians of Ayr, Ont., didn't deny the Holocaust but questioned the method and rationale for the study unit. "We object very strongly that in such an emotional way young kids, as in this case, are bombarded with the awful things the "Germans" have done. You as a prime educator will know which imprint such blood-thirsty stories will do to the 12 and 13-year-old youngsters. Without a doubt, such kids will go home and see all Germans as killers.

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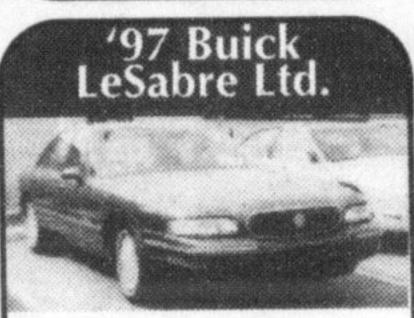


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