



# OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

## Foxfire censorship narrow minded

The following letter was sent to local MPP Ted Chudleigh, and a copy filed with The Champion for publication:

Dear Editor:

I fully support MPP Ted Chudleigh's decision not to get involved in the Foxfire controversy contrived by Mr. Jack Huisman of Campbellville.

Either you believe in democracy or you don't. Censorship of literature has no place in a democracy.

Mr. Huisman recently circulated a document in which he quotes liberally from the text. I understand your office has received this document. In that document Mr. Huisman quotes sentences and phrases from the book entirely out of context.

When I was studying English we were taught to never quote an author out of context. Such action leads to a distortion of the author's intent. Mr. Huisman apparently feels he can break that basic rule of scholarship to suit his own ends.

Let me add that I support Mr. Huisman in his push to prevent this book being forced upon his son.

But it has come to my attention that Foxfire (by Joyce Carol Oates) is not a required text at the school. Mr. Huisman's son was free to choose another novel. How, therefore, are Mr. Huisman's rights being violated?

Joyce Carol Oates is one of the most respected writers in contemporary American literature. She ranks right up there with Canada's Margaret Atwood (who also, upon occasion, in her work makes reference to sex and "coarse language").

The critic Eleanor Wachtel interviewed Ms Oates this past summer during her weekly literary program "Writer's and Company" on CBC radio. Ms Oates described her deep dismay and fear of the connection made by advertisers and the media between sex, violence and power in her country. She added that in Foxfire she was attempting to hold up a mirror to American society and compel people to look at themselves.

Surely this is the courageous role of a writer in any country — to make us look at ourselves, no matter how painful that may be. If Mr. Huisman doesn't like what he sees — and as the father of a daughter, neither do I — then perhaps he should tackle the problem head-on and write to the advertisers and media moguls who exploit the power of sexuality in advertising and in the public imagination.

But to shoot the messenger, as Mr. Huisman is trying to do by having the book banned, is to miss the point entirely and in so doing trample on one of our most sacred democratic rights.

In closing, let me again commend you for leaving this decision to the qualified professionals at the Halton Board of Education. When it comes to taste in literature for high school students, I think the overwhelming majority of Halton taxpayers would prefer to leave these decisions to those who have the training and ability to make them. Such decisions should not be made by special interests groups with narrow moral and political agendas.

Bill Templeman  
Milton

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