

MAXIMUM DISRUPTION:

STOPPING NEO-NAZIS
BY (ALMOST) ANY MEANS NECESSARY

By Richard Warman ©

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Some of my policing friends would be horrified by the fact that I've come to speak to an Anti-Racist Action conference this morning. Some of you are probably horrified by the fact that I just used the words 'police' and 'friends' in the same sentence. Most of the neo-Nazis in Canada are probably just annoyed about the fact that I'm still breathing let alone speaking...

There's that old expression that says if you're making everyone mad you must be doing something right.

I was invited to speak to you about the human rights work that I'm involved in attempting to stop neo-Nazi activity here in Canada, and how I feel that fits in to what's known as a 'broad front' approach to addressing this. One of the first things I learned about co-operating with other individuals and groups in a 'broad front' response was that not everyone was always going to appreciate that if there was a disagreement about tactics or how best to deal with an issue that I was probably right. I try to be a little more humble now.

I've been active in monitoring and attempting to fight back against hate group organizing in my communities here in Canada for approximately the last fifteen years. At least for now, I've come to the conclusion that I can be most effective by using what I like to describe as a 'maximum disruption' approach. That is, where I believe that neo-Nazis have committed crimes, I will co-operate with the police to try to ensure that criminal charges are laid. If I think that they've violated the Canadian Human Rights Act, then I'll look at all of the potential targets and file complaints against them starting on a 'worst offender' basis, although sometimes if I just find people to be particularly annoying this may move them up the list a bit. Perhaps most importantly though, I've tried to work together with individuals and representatives from many different groups to develop common fronts to deal with neo-Nazi activity and a sense of solidarity among all those that are under attack. I'm under no illusion about the reality that front-line community organizing is the only sustainable way to address the problem on a long-term basis.

The 'maximum disruption' part comes in because wherever I think it will be most helpful, or even if I just feel it will be the most fun, I strongly believe in hitting the neo-Nazis on as many of these fronts as possible either at the same time or one after the other. I say this because it keeps them off-balance and forces them to respond to things that

focus their energies on defending themselves rather than attacking other members of our community.

For the next little bit, I'll try to describe how I think the 'broad front' approach has played out in three different cases, the first one being Tomasz Winnicki from London, Ontario, the second being Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel, and the last one being the neo-Nazi group 'Western Canada For Us' that appeared and ultimately went super-nova in 2004. After that, I'd welcome any of your questions or comments. La derniere chose que je veux dire, c'est que, meme si mon discours va etre en anglais, ca me fait plaisir de repondre a vos questions en francais s'il y en a...

Before I start, I'd like to talk briefly about the Canadian Human Rights Act, a law that I've found to be very effective in the long-term for stopping Internet hatemongers here in Canada. I've now filed about a dozen complaints against individuals and groups using this law, and although the process is painfully slow and can take two to three years, if you're successful one of the things that you can obtain is a permanent court order that people and groups stop spreading hate propoganda through the Internet. For now I'll give you the Coles notes version of the law...

The Canadian Human Rights Act and Other Human Rights Legislation

The jurisdiction of the Canadian Human Rights Commission with regard to hate issues is established in section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Section 13 of the *Act* makes it a discriminatory practice to use the telephone or the Internet to distribute hate propoganda that targets people on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, etc.

Filing a Complaint

Similar to the criminal complaint process, any individual or group having reasonable grounds for believing that an Internet website is engaging in discriminatory conduct may write up a complaint and file it with the Commission.

Although the Commission has the ability to initiate complaints on their own, this power has never been used to date to deal with Internet hate, and given the attitude of the current senior management I'm not optimistic it will be used any time soon unfortunately.

What Happens Then?

After a complaint is accepted, the Human Rights Officer responsible for the file would then forward a copy of the complaint to the respondent and ask for their response. If a defense is filed, this would be disclosed to the complainant who may make comments if necessary.

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