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OPINION COLUMN

Suzuki ducks Sun queries, spurns freedom of speech



By Lorrie Goldstein, Toronto Sun
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David Suzuki (QMI Agency)

I have some free advice for the Green Party of Canada.

If they want to make Elizabeth May look like the voice of reason and gentility, just put her beside David Suzuki and his sycophants.

Then let nature take its course.

That's what happened Tuesday night in Ottawa when Sun News reporter Jessica Hume tried to ask a question or two of The Great Man, who was speaking at a local church event.

Despite media being invited by the Green Party of Canada, Suzuki refused to be interviewed by Hume, and Sun News was the only media asked to leave the event.

Things completely jumped the shark when a couple of Suzuki acolytes — who told Hume they were acting on The Great Man's behalf — tried to throw her out.

One was a condescending church minister, the other a raw nerve end of a woman who covered Sun News' camera with her hand, while melodramatically yelling out to the audience to call 911, presumably in order to get the Ottawa cops to remove Sun News for the dangerous crime of reporting.

That's when May, who was moderating the event, wisely intervened, joking that only Toronto Mayor Rob Ford calls 911 to remove reporters and giving Hume a sisterly hug of solidarity.

While Hume never got to ask a question of The Great Man, good for May, even if she was factually wrong in her quip at Ford's expense.

In reality, the CBC sent out not a reporter, but a has-been comedian, not to an event to which media had been invited, but unannounced to Ford's home early in the morning, with the clear intent of ambushing and humiliating him.

That's a far cry from a Sun News reporter showing up to an event to which media had been invited, and which other reporters also attended.

Still, criticizing May too much for taking an unfair shot at Ford would be quibbling in this context.

The bottom line is that May behaved like a rational human being — rare for many environmentalists — and demonstrated a good-natured commitment to a free press.

Which, alas, brings us to Suzuki, who comes across as just a mean, old crank.

Whether it's refusing to speak to Sun News, or leaving in a huff from a radio interview with Toronto AM 640's John Oakley because he didn't like the questions, or telling a university audience Stephen Harper should be jailed for climate crimes, Suzuki sounds goofier and goofier these days.

My favourite Suzuki story (showing he's been like this for a long time) goes back to 1989, when he yanked two \$1,500 journalism scholarships he had been sponsoring at Carleton University, in retaliation for a Carleton prof critically reviewing two of his books for the *Montreal Gazette*.

"That money comes straight out of my pocket and I can make the choice to stop that whenever I want," Suzuki said at the time. "If the faculty regards me so poorly, why should I continue to support it?" That prompted Anthony Westell, then director of Carleton's journalism school, to dryly observe he was surprised Suzuki was taking his anger at the professor out on innocent students.

It was yet another indication, of course, that the only free speech David Suzuki appears to respect, is his own.

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Lori Sandison · 3 days ago

Hmm. This article seems biased. No mention of what the actual questions asked were. That does make a difference to outcome of this story, believe it or not. Let the audience decide if the reporter was in

