

Social Justice—the new totalitarianism?

My position on most issues has not changed dramatically over the last five decades or so. I'm still pro-choice, pro equal rights for all (women, gays, all races and ethnic groups), I still support the protection of the environment, and still believe in keeping public institutions secular. But whereas my views would once have been considered centrist, even a bit to the left, they are now considered right-wing and I'm told someone even referred to me as a "right-wing radical." What happened?

Our society has changed – radically – and I would dare to say this has been driven by radicals. The opinions that have earned me opprobrium include that I believe that the world is overpopulated and that the places where growth is still rapid need to put on the brakes, that Islam is a dangerous totalitarian ideology whose theological objective is to bring the whole world under sharia law, that Canada's annual intake of immigrants is far too high, that the application in real life of "open borders" would lead to chaos in the receiving countries, and that quotas (even when given euphemisms like employment equity or affirmative action) are a bad idea. Based on the literature produced by some of those who oppose my views, one must conclude that I am a racist colonialist who blames poor women of colour for the problems caused by overconsumption by people like myself, an "Islamophobe" who hates immigrants, a narrow-minded bigot who is unaware of my white privilege and the impact of my micro-aggressions on racialized individuals, and a nativist.

But in our democratic society, everyone can have their opinions, right? Perhaps, but as we're increasingly seeing on campuses and in workplaces, it might just be best to keep those opinions

to yourself, if they aren't progressive. Consider how speakers who are labelled "right-wing" for straying from orthodox views are shouted down on campuses and elsewhere with the silent acquiescence of the authorities, or "deplatformed" by their opponents, even if they advocate for human rights and are black and female (such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali). Consider Google employee James Damore, fired for expressing views on sex differences that his employer found "crossed the line by advancing harmful gender stereotypes in our workplace." Of course Google welcomes diversity in its workplace, just not of opinion.

Why is discussing the possibility that biological differences between men and women might lead to different choices in employment so offensive? In the *Ottawa Citizen* of September 29th, there was a full-page article about Deanna (Dee) Brasseur, Canada's first female fighter pilot (*Ottawa trailblazer broke a glass ceiling at Mach 1.5*). It describes the struggles and discrimination that she faced. There was a time when the Canadian forces did not allow women to become fighter pilots, now they encourage it. Referring to her colleague who along with herself was granted the right to fly fighter jets in 1988, Brasseur laments, "Jane [Foster] and I opened the door in 1989, but when we looked behind us, where is everyone?" Holding up her open hand, she says, "Since 1989, that's how many women fighter pilots there have been – five. And that includes me and Jane."

I salute and celebrate the achievements of Dee Brasseur and think it's a good thing that she was able to become a fighter pilot. But I deplore the current efforts of the armed forces to set quotas for women. (Yes, I am deliberately using that word.) Because I think quotas will inevitably cause the

forces to choose some less qualified people based on their biological attributes over others who happen to be able-bodied white males. I would rather be defended by an army that can fight than an army with the target number of women, visible minorities and transgendered vegetarians. And I believe that the reason that an army of women did not follow Dee Brasseur and Jane Foster to train as fighter pilots is largely due to – wait for it – sex differences. I think that the effects of testosterone on the brain, including and perhaps especially the fetal brain, make it more likely for men than for women to want to be fighters. So I suppose you can add “sex-ist” to the above list of my deplorable characteristics. However, I want it to be clear that I formed my opinion not by reading the Old Testament but, among other things, as a result of carrying out three searches of the scientific literature specifically on sex differences during the course of my studies in the biological sciences and following the furour caused by Lawrence Summers in 2006, when he suggested that the reason fewer women go into engineering might be because of sex differences. As you may recall, expressing that opinion is what eventually drove him from his position as president of Harvard.

I am a strong advocate of social justice, which by my definition means that every person is equal before the law, is entitled not to be discriminated against based on sex, race, ethnic group, religion or sexual orientation, and is free to live her life as she chooses, provided that it does not infringe on the rights of others. But that is not what social justice means in our society today. Social justice today does not mean equality of opportunity for

all, but equality of outcome for groups, whether these groups be people of various sexes or sexual identities (I’m not sure how many there are these days), ethnicities, races, religions, or whatever. Any “under-representation” of whatever group in a desirable field of employment is to be attributed to discrimination and the inherent racism, sexism or colonialism of our society. No questions asked, and if you try to ask them, you’ll be vilified, “deplatformed,” and maybe lose your job.

Three articles in the current issue of *Humanist Perspectives* deal with what I consider “social justice totalitarianism” either directly (that of Sophie Dulesh) or with its consequences (those of Lorna Salzman and Robert Barrigar). Barrigar’s article proposes what some might view as harsh solutions to the consequences of a misguided multiculturalism – the recognized equality of all cultures in Western societies, even those that are viciously discriminatory to various groups of people, contrary to Western values.

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to express ideas that do not align with society’s progressive orthodoxy. In the war of ideas, words are the weapons, and you partially disarm your opponent when you force him/her/xer to use only words that *you* approve of (as Professor Jordan Peterson could explain). As an example of the enforcement of verbal orthodoxy, in its 2017 Stylebook, the Associated Press directs its journalists not to use the term “illegal alien,” which is a term with a clear legal definition, but “undocumented immigrants.” (And one AP article even used the term “undocumented citizen,” which would seem

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to be an oxymoron.) And of course, it isn't going to stop with words. We are now seeing demands to tear down statues that reflect our "racist white capitalist" history in the United States and in Canada, where in August the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario passed a resolution urging school boards to consider removing Sir John A. Macdonald's name from elementary schools. This demand to rewrite history actually reminds me of the Islamic concept of *Jahiliyya*, or the obliteration of any evidence of non-Islamic societies, as exemplified by the Taliban's blowing up the Buddhas of Bamiyan, Ansar Dine's rampages in the shrines of Timbuktu, the destruction of Palmyra by ISIS, and the desire of Egyptian Islamists to destroy the pyramids, among many other examples. It is not surprising to me that the totalitarians in the social justice movement should make common cause with the Islamist totalitarians, as the goal of both groups is to destroy Western civilization. This is promoted by destabilizing society, and undermining the family and fostering the identification with particularist groups that distrust one another is a very good start.

In this issue, Sophie Dulesh also reviews Tom Nichol's book, *The Death of Expertise*, subtitled *The campaign against established knowledge and why it matters*. Nichols writes, "Campuses in the US are increasingly surrendering their intellectual authority ... to activists who are directly attacking the traditions of free inquiry that scholarly communities are supposed to defend." And later, "When feelings matter more than rationality or facts, education is a doomed enterprise." He also says, "The relationship between experts and citizens is not 'democratic.' ... Democratic societies, however, are always tempted to this resentful insistence on equality, which becomes oppressive ignorance if given its head."

It is perhaps an ignorant electorate that got Trump elected. But those who are destroying the tradition of free inquiry at universities are not the "populists" who elected Trump, but the "progressives" who demand equality of outcome and blame the oppression of mainstream society when impossible expectations of equality don't materialize. Perhaps those dismissed as "ignorant"

were simply fed up with the nonsense of the "experts" churned out by the universities, many of whose programs have morphed from education to progressivist indoctrination. Perhaps the chickens of social justice totalitarianism have come home to roost.

When I went to university in the seventies and early eighties, the social justice paradigm had not yet established its stranglehold on our institutions of higher learning. How did it happen so quickly? I think you can follow the money. I recently watched a half-hour French-language youtube video, where the youthful Québécois presenter, in an entertaining and sometimes vulgar way, illustrates the fascism of the "Antifa" (anti-fascist action), which has a stronghold at Concordia University in Montreal and whose face is the thuggish Jaggi Singh. Hidden among the items of the tuition fees are a few dollars here and there for student groups, including QPIRG (Quebec Public Interest Research Group), which are in fact Leftist activist groups. Fees amounting to about 10 dollars per student from the approximately 45,000 students yield close to half a million dollars per year, from which Singh, so the video claims, pays himself \$37,000 per year. And so students, often unwittingly, are funding those who would destroy the society that created universities as institutions of free enquiry.

Societal rifts are occurring not only in the United States, but also in Canada, Australia and Europe. Some even say that we are in a civil war, although it is not yet very kinetic (riots and toppled statues notwithstanding). But if we want a society where real knowledge and expertise are valued, where ideas can be expressed freely and subjected to discussion and criticism, we must reclaim our universities from those who think students have a right never to be subjected to an idea that offends them. A good first step would be to discontinue the default funding of all student groups or associations and make all contributions to such entities strictly voluntary. Social justice warriors really do want to destroy our civilization as we know it. At least we shouldn't have to provide them the means to do so.

— Madeline Weld