

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: LIBERTY, EQUALITY, CENSORSHIP

This is the text of a speech I gave on March 2, 1994 to Law students and the general public at Queen's University Law School in Kingston, Ontario, precedent to a debate with feminist law Professor Sheila McIntyre. During a long career as a public speaker, this university was the only place I have ever been picketed - by the Socialist International - an organization that was attempting to ban the debate.

The question of the day seems to be whether or not equality can be legislated?

The short answer is "yes". Anything can be legislated.

However, the larger question, of which the first is only a hint - is whether or not such legislation will eventually transform liberal democracy into a form of genteel fascism which, under conditions of sufficient economic and social distress, could very well transform n turn into the real thing.

My remarks today are especially addressed to the young, who must eventually go forth and shoulder the burden of what the modern law, in the name of equality, has so unfortunately thrust upon them. For it is the law that has been the handservant of many radical changes in Canada that, in my opinion, are injurious to the concept of law itself.

At bottom, these radical changes have been achieved through a debasing of the great historical liberal dream, however imperfect, of free individual human beings standing as authors of their own behaviour, and therefore of their own destinies, before an impartial law, equal for all. In the place of that dream we now have the modern nightmare: no longer free individual human beings, but rather whole classes of sheepish individuals standing before the state as "systemically-oppressed" pawns, in expectation of some merely materialistic equality to be gained, not through any personal effort, but by qualifying as one or another class of victim.

You will have gathered by now that I do not accept the stifling modern terminology that falsely opposes "formal" to "substantive" equality. That is because there is no such thing as "formal equality". There is only formal prohibitive law that leaves us alone, each with an equal right to express our freedom as differently as we choose (with the exception only of those things we are forbidden to do) or formal, imperative law, that forces us to behave in certain ways according to the vision of some ruling elite.

Neither is there anything "equal" to be found in the programs labeled "substantive equality" and imposed on us as so-called "affirmative action". Such programs specialize in draconian legal inequalities of a kind rarely to be found even in the most openly totalitarian states, for they self-righteously discriminate in favour of one group which has earned no reward, against another which has deserved no punishment.

We can only conclude that the object of all this socially- and especially legally-engineered confusion, is to create a mass of bewildered citizens who are asked to forget about the world of rules, and instead unquestioningly accept a world of centralized power that promises to relieve them of the burden of human freedom. From this point forward, it matters not how you play the game, but whom you can influence.

For make no mistake, the byzantine deconstructionist analyses of the rule of law in the west that are choking our journals and libraries with turgid prose do not have as their aim any disinterested destruction of power, but rather its redeployment by the managers of the egalitarian state. They do not seek to end all privilege, earned or otherwise, but to transfer it to another class of people – themselves. They seek to manage society in its entirety through the most privileged statist instruments of social, legal, and economic power ever invented.

From the failures of ancient Greece and Rome to every modern collectivist nation where this paternalistic ruse has succeeded, it has first been introduced by a power-hungry intellectual clerisy bent on installing, by force if necessary, its own version of social justice, despite any resistance from the people.

I use the word "clerisy" in the sense meant by the late U.S. historian Robert Nisbet, when he wrote that "vital to the contemporary bureaucratic, centralized, omniscient democratic state is its clerisy, by which I mean the aggregate of intellectuals and scholars dedicated to the state precisely as their medieval forbears were to the church." The trenchant British political scientist John Gray espied the very same thing when he described North American liberalism (more fanatical here, than in Europe), as "a civil religion."

My own view is that political liberalism in its modern collectivist form is easily traceable to its natural roots both in the secular work of Plato and, more importantly, in the religious Gnosticism of the second century of the Christian era. From there, you can go straight up to Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the eighteenth century, then to Marx and Engels in the nineteenth, and on to their many modern acolytes today.

The Gnostics, in competition with the rising Christian sects, were groups of religious fanatics who believed that it was impossible to have a bad world made by a good god. Therefore, logically speaking, the bad world must have been made by someone else - a demi-god. This world is a mistake. A trick. The true god was asleep when it happened.

And so the Gnostics (the word means "knowers") believed that certain among them - a kind of elect, a clerisy (an academic bourgeoisie) - alone had a privileged understanding of this bad world that had been unfairly thrust upon them, and that it was their secret mission and duty to repair it, to make it good - as god surely would have done if he had not been tricked.

But the key element at the heart of their thinking, and at the heart of all forms of collectivism ever since - in flagrant distinction to the Judeo-Christian worldview - is that the badness of this world has little to do with the behaviour or morality of individuals, who are basically and naturally good. Badness, they argue - personal and social evil, that is - springs from the world itself, from its social institutions and unenlightened governments. You can see the contrast with the dominant Christian view, which is that evil begins in the hearts and minds of men and women - of which evil governments are but a reflection.

but once this comforting view about outer, as opposed to inner evil is accepted, the obvious course of action is actively to change the outer world. If we can make the world perfect, they believe, then people can at last express their naturally good true selves. So all Gnostics, whether ancient or modern, see it as their religious mission to bring light to this world - literally to create heaven on earth by actively changing society. And ironically, the more atheistic they are, the more religious their fervour. For all social goodness may now be defined by human beings alone, without the inconvenience of any transcendent moral beliefs. Their new godhead is not grace, or personal redemption, but visible and substantive equality, to be provided through redistribution, dictated by the new priests and priestesses of the caring state. For such committed minds, the end soon justifies the means.

It was Jean- Jacques Rousseau, the modern interpreter of this ancient trend who so revered state action he declared that all citizens who failed to follow the General Will of the state must be "forced to be free"; it was his disciple, Maximilien Robespierre, who ordered the deaths of a quarter million French citizens in the name of the public good; it was their inheritors by the names of Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler who murdered millions upon millions of their own citizens in the name of the same public good.

This terrible truth led the dissenting Frenchman Anatole France to observe that when one starts with the supposition that all men are naturally good and virtuous, one inevitably ends by wishing to kill them all! That is because, by definition, as absolutism increases, no one can ever be quite good enough. So the bad, (who become increasingly narrowly-defined), soon get labeled as enemies of the state. First you target the rich aristocrat; then the baker who dared to sell him cake. All these are soon either suppressed, silenced, fined, sent off to a camp, or otherwise liquidated. Killing them is the most logical and cheap way to achieve perfection. You simply eliminate every blemish on the body politic until it is perfect. All egalitarian revolutions consume even their own theorists through the application of such arbitrary law. And that's why Robespierre himself lost his head.

I do not wish to suggest for a moment that Canada, or the USA will ever reach such a point. But no one thought Germany would, either. And it is surely sobering to recall that the largest single professional membership class of the Nazi party in its heyday - was educated professors and schoolteachers! However, I do want to signal that we are today gathered in a monastic type of institution which is increasingly resorting to the specific habits of mind that produce such evils, and that it would be a gross self-deception to believe that we are exempt from the natural consequences of such thinking. As U.S. Senator Huey Long pointed out in the 1930's: "when fascism comes to America, it will come in the name of democracy."

Part of my argument today is that the notion of "substantive equality" - a modern secular and materialistic substitute for the leaven of divine grace - is a kind of "earthly bread," as D.H. Lawrence called it, meant to be gathered up by our secular clerisy, blessed by their handling it, and redistributed as "heavenly bread" to the thankful and docile masses who have long since given up any concern for the idea of individual salvation.

So much for the background.

Permit me now to give a brief overview of how modern Canada has been drastically and undemocratically altered by such dreamlanders, in order to provide the heavenly bread, and of the five forms of radicalism used to achieve this sad result.

While no political system, nor any analysis of it can be pure, it seems clear that Canada has been changed from what I call a bottom-up society (the original, classical liberal ideal) to a top-down state in the mere space of a few decades. The first kind of country rests upon the imperfect, but nonetheless inspiring belief that in a free society, the people's representatives, the government, should set the rules, and referee the game, but never play the game. Individuals are expected to behave as moral agents under a set of universal rules, equal for all, and lead themselves to the good life by their own efforts. This is a pragmatic and inexpensive way to run a country.

The top-down state, in contrast, rejects this notion entirely. Here we find the belief that individuals and their families who express their different freedoms will never lead themselves to the good life, but only to social and economic chaos. So a class of political, academic, and media elites, experts, bureaucrats, and specialists, that has decided the good life must be based on substantive equality, is required to lead the people to this good life, whether they wish to follow or not. If they do not, they shall be pushed, or "forced to be free," as Rousseau put it. This is a very impractical and expensive way to run a country.

Listen to the proof. First there was moral capitulation, and now the fiscal cost, that was to follow as the night the day, and that is at this very moment restructuring Canada, like tectonic plates moving silently beneath us.

In 1967, after a hundred years of nationhood, Canada had a mere \$16 billion dollars of total federal debt, and no provincial debt. But as the Pearson-Trudeau socialist axis swung into high gear deliberately to produce the top-down state, everything changed. Money was no obstacle to utopia. In Trudeau's last year, his government borrowed to spend a full 54% more than it took in. The total federal debt by Trudeau's last year in office was some \$200 billion. The average rate of interest applied to that amount in the intervening years brings his fiscal legacy close to \$500 billion.

In fact, today's total federal debt is about \$500 billion. And if you add to that all provincial debts of some \$200 billion, plus the \$50 billion debt of Crown corporations (of which there were only 50 in 1960 - now we have over 1,000 of them!), you come to a total cash debt of some \$750 billion (twice the U.S. per capita debt). Then if you add to that all the unfunded pension liabilities of Canada's various governments, you get about \$1.1 trillion in total debt. That works out to about \$125,000 for every taxpayer in the nation. It is you, the working young, who will be forced to pay this off all your working lives. This has been the price of so-called substantive equality in Canada. And the wretched truth is that there has been nothing equal about it.

The switch from a bottom-up society to a top-down state has amounted to a blatant rip-off of future generations in the name of present equality. We are spending money in the name of unborn citizens who are not here to defend themselves against our appetites. Despite all this, citizens have not become more "equal." Indeed, nothing has changed except the size of the intervening, regulatory state. Statscan tells us that the per-quintile shares of income in Canada have not altered one percent in this entire thirty-year period. And some 70% of all Canada's so-called "social spending" is in fact being redistributed to middle and upper income Canadians. In this same period, although Canada's Consumer Price Index for the housing, clothing and food of the average family climbed only 450%, the Consumer Tax Index for this same family climbed 1,500%.

What has changed beyond any doubt, however, is the size of the clerisy who run this new, top-down state in whose self-interest it is to argue always for more redistribution, more grants, more subsidies, more regulation, and more dependency. In 1920, Canada had 20,000 federal civil servants. But by 1985 (only three times larger), we had 250,000 federal civil servants (and a further 250,000 staffing those 1,000 Crown corporations). I have found many decent and civil societies that get by with one full-time government employee for every 20, or every 15, or even every 30 citizens. But according to Statistics Canada, we now have one government employee for every 5.5 citizens!

In a fine editorial in January, the Globe and Mail newspaper asked the nation why it is that a country such as Switzerland is able to provide a standard of living equal to Canada's, or higher, on half the per-capita tax revenues? It's because in Canada the state and its various dependents and institutions are consuming the difference.

Very soon we will be a tripartite society like Sweden, in which almost one third of the people are employed by the state, one third are heavily subsidized by the state, and only one third work to create the wealth. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the first two-thirds, who rely on the state for the majority of their incomes, will always tend to favour more government at election time, thus ending any chance to reverse this top-heavy trend.

In common parlance, countries that change from bottom-up to top-down, have in reality accepted a substitution of one set of values for another. They have abandoned what I call the four F's, and accepted the four G's.

The four F's are: *freedom, family, free enterprise, and faith*, and these are the essential cornerstones of a free society. But you know the country is based on the four G's when, instead of more freedom, you get more *government*; instead of a focus on the natural family, you get a focus on politically-defined *groups*; instead of the promotion of free enterprise, you get a focus on *grants* and tax *grabs*; instead of the moral direction provided by religious moral law, you get the official promotion of *godlessness* in schools and the public square.

It so happens that the five forms of radicalism that operate to bring about this switch from the four F's to the four G's, generate much of their intellectual ammunition in our universities. They are firing it, as their intellectual master, Rousseau, told them to do, at all forms of order and authority in conventional society, a society they measure against their dreamland, and that can never, by definition, be good enough.

The first, and perhaps most virulent of these is radical feminism, which seeks to overthrow the entire human biological order by promoting the fantastical idea that the sexes are exactly the same, and that any social differences in the way they choose to live must have resulted from brainwashing. But as Harvard professor Michael Levin dryly suggests, "any parent who has raised both boys and girls, and still thinks they are born the same, has already withstood more evidence to the contrary than any laboratory could possibly provide." On this score, and the sparkling British critic Kenneth Minogue pointed out in a delicious review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, that the first mistake we can make is to identify feminism with women, most of whom have never remotely supported it. "Feminist theory," as he puts it, is the dominant element of women's studies, and while polemically colourful, it does not really belong in the cool groves of academe. It is passionate and salvationist in a way similar to Marxism, to new religious movements, and occult enthusiasms: all of these know in advance not only the conclusions they will arrive

at, but the appropriate attitude towards those conclusions. Academically, it is mostly unsophisticated. A little light generalizing work is followed by polysyllabic decoration and some spray-on indignation."

(But the people don't support radical feminism, so the law is its instrument).

The second radicalism (these are all linked) is the radical abortion/euthanasia movement, which attempts to substitute "the dignity of death" for "the sanctity of life," and thus to overthrow the order of love in society. Those who want a real shock should read my chapter on abortion in *The War Against the Family*. Euthanasia is just an extension of the abortion argument (which is pediatric euthanasia). The choice to kill someone inside you easily develops into the choice to kill someone outside you, to kill yourself, or to kill someone who wants you to kill them. Canada is now rushing into a period where formal euthanasia will surely be practiced by state physicians licenced to kill. Only too late will we discover that the ultimate form of substantive equality in the socialist state, is expressed by the right of the state itself to eliminate undesirables in the name of that same equality - for the good of the state. The state will have to let your sixty-year-old mother with a fixable heart problem die, because to save her will consume dollars that are better spent on someone younger, goes the argument.

(Once they understand the evil consequences of legalized killing, the people never support it - so the law is its instrument).

The third radicalism is the radical pansexual movement, of which the homosexual, pornography, and incest movements, are parts. This radicalism seeks to overthrow the sexual order of western society, which is based on restrictions as to the number, gender, and age, of legal sexual partners. It does this in the name of "love", and on the grounds that because we are all naturally good, then all consenting sex, with whomsoever, and however, must also be good. It completely dispenses with our two-thousand-year-long tradition of attempting to teach the young the difference between good love, and bad love (such as self-love, incest love, love of little boys, polygamy, love of adultery, and so on). For history clearly shows how in the name of a generalized ideal of love rooted in uncontrolled human appetites, any behaviour can be justified. [Since these remarks were first written, Canada has proceeded to legalize homosexual marriage.]

(The people don't like pansexualism, or homosexuality - so the law is its instrument).

The fourth radicalism is educational radicalism, and here we have a continuous attempt, as the Swedes put it, "to divest the parents of their authority over their own children." These radicals seek to overthrow the private family order of civil society. The connection here is from Plato, to Rousseau, to John Dewey - to teacher-training institutions such as OISE, in Toronto. The strategy is to persuade the public that the teachers are trustees of the nation's children, not for the family, but for the state. It was Canada's Laurier Lapierre who, in 1978, intoxicated with the vision of the top-down, redistributive state, declared that "the child of Ontario is not a family child. He is an institutional child. It is not the school that is the extension of the home, but the home that is the extension of the school."

And former Calgary Board of Education Chairman (and law professor) Alex Proudfoot, was more blunt. He told a meeting of astonished parents: "The child is not your child. Canadian children are the property of the state, like our oil, our gas, and our pipelines...it's the law."

(But the people don't like educational radicalism - so the law is its instrument).

And finally, we have legal radicalism, the most powerful of all, emanating from law schools, law reform commissions, and tribunals and charters of every description, all of which gleefully circumvent the democratic process.

It is the legal fraternity, as Nisbet points out "that is rapidly becoming the most powerful wing of the political clerisy," and the reason is that they have figured out how to change the nation by saying: "to hell with the majority," as they seek to overthrow what they believe is the dim-witted democratic order of a free society.

The chief culprit in this exercise is Canada's 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to which our formerly sovereign and free legislators are now subordinate. For the Charter specifically promotes and entrenches the notion of substantive equality and other blatantly socialist programs, to be decreed by unelected judges whom no power in the land can remove. In doing so, it smothers our formerly free parliamentary sovereignty under a new judicial sovereignty. Canada's may be the only Charter in the world that intentionally subsidizes hundreds of thousands of citizens to stay in parts of the country where we all know there are no jobs, and never will be any jobs. It also identifies whole classes of citizens who shall be favoured over other classes according to linguistic, gender, religious, ethnic, or other such differences, in the most blatant form of legal discrimination imaginable. This is arbitrary law at its worst, ensconced as high principle in the nation's highest legal document. In other words, it's not really law at all. It's plain old power politics.

This new egalitarian form of power, a power that suppresses the human distinctions due to natural merit, talent, and "degree," as Shakespeare once again so memorably put it, soon becomes "an universal wolf, that soon eats up itself."

But even this, it seems, is not sufficient:

Professor Sue Sherwin of Dalhousie law school informed us in October of 1993 that the reform of legal and political systems alone is inadequate. What we really need to change, she says, is "the private realm, the way people think."

And that is the rallying call for the modern Gnostic project, for the legal clerisy, and especially for the academic bourgeoisie, comfortably entrenched in the universities of North America, who promote the state as the defender, not of individual freedom under the law, but as a draconian dispenser of an arbitrary, coercive, and material substantive equality.

And so I want to end with the simplest and most chilling truth about such forced equality, a truth understood most fully - perhaps only - by the millions who have endured frigid seas and alien mountains as they desperately fleeing the miseries of arbitrary law:

If you want more of this kind of equality, you need more government, and if you want total equality, you need total government.