

The War on Free Speech is Just Beginning

Will the war on freedom just peter out? No. Let's look at four reasons why not.

People are fed up with political correctness. No guff. [Bill Maher](#) is. [Clint Eastwood](#) is. We are told that [Canadians](#) are fed up too.

But so?

Two Canadian literary magazine editors were forced to resign from their national publications this month because they do not believe that writing about persons other than those of one's own gender or ethnic group constitutes [cultural appropriation](#). In other words, those editors believe in a fundamental standard of literature, the ability to imagine another person's life as opposed to writing endlessly about oneself.

It's not just a local story. The war on freedom has left the campus behind and is now taking dead aim at the life of the mind generally.

In the cause of remaking society according to a far left utopian vision, universities have become, [after decades of propaganda](#), [key enemies](#) of intellectual freedom. The spreading miasma [is rotting](#) our intellectual life. That "bored and amused" pose we so often adopt is, in the face of the increasing [resort to violence](#), cowardice.

Here are four reasons why the war against freedom will not just somehow lose itself, without our taking any action:

1. *The war is irrational but the universe remains rational.* Therefore, the warriors cannot win; they must go on

taking more prisoners and trampling more freedoms in the pursuit of an unattainable goal. Historian Michael Ledeen puts it [like this](#):

It's in the nature of campus revolts that the leaders aren't going to be satisfied with limited reforms to the school; they are inspired by inflated rhetoric, and they see themselves at the center of a great moment in world history.

A moment in which the rest of us are, incidentally, roadkill. As the story from Canada above shows, a current target is art and literature. Comedy that people find funny is becoming rarer [all the time](#) because only a few targets are permitted and—it is just human nature—they may not be the ones people would enjoy seeing skewered. Humourist Mark Steyn's travails in Canada give us [some sense of this](#).

2. *Progressive academics are training "child soldiers" to carry out their revolution against intellectual freedom.* Put simply, they are teaching their rioting students attitudes, values, and beliefs that guarantee failure in work and healthy relationships.

Reader, would you want, as a colleague, someone who put a middle-aged woman professor at [Middlebury College](#) in the hospital? No? Then think what your answer means. In an age when most graduates face job shortages, students who have been encouraged in transgressive behaviour must simply continue their "revolution" off campus. That may be [all they know](#) how to do. Hardest hit, incidentally will be the disadvantaged students who lacked social confidence and firm guidance early in life. As so often, social justice gurus do the most harm to the people who are least able to evade them.

3. *The current university system is [genuinely corrupt](#).* It is sustained on the backs of unjust labour conditions for most teachers and on unsustainable debt for many students. As

classicist Victor Davis Hanson [explains](#), “ Part-time faculty with PhDs are paid far less than tenured full professors for often teaching the same classes – and thus subsidize top-heavy administrations.” And students, who owe more than \$1 trillion in non-forgivable loans, perform poorly on tests due to poor teaching as far back as grade school. These people have good reason to be angry. But they are routinely manipulated into choosing the wrong target: People of whom their teachers disapprove, as opposed to the system that is causing their problems.

4. *Traditional media are desperate. Despite their historic reputation for promoting free speech, now that their gatekeeper function is eroded, they have little to lose from joining a crackdown on intellectual freedom.* Such a crackdown would mainly harm their smaller, more independent competitors. And they are highly concentrated: Six corporations [control](#) 90 percent of US media, down from 50 in 1983. A few companies [channel news](#) to hundreds of millions of people. Such media may be magnets for social justice warriors seeking a broader sphere of influence without interference from alternative media.

How long will the war on freedom last? As long as we tolerate it. We make that decision every day. And the choice grows starker every day.

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