

# Brinkwire

## **Dissenters live in fear and serious debate is silenced by the woke mob**

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It gets more ludicrous with every passing day – and more sinister. Take the case of Professor Patricia Simon, from Marymount Manhattan College in New York, who made the mistake of failing to be sufficiently enthusiastic in the course of a Zoom meeting.

Accused of daring to nod off during discussion of an ‘anti-racist framework’ – a social-media picture seemed to support the claim that she fell asleep – Prof Simon faced nearly 2,000 demands that her contract of employment be terminated and she lose her livelihood.

‘I was not asleep as is implied at any point during the meeting,’ she said in her defence. ‘The photo was taken without permission when I was looking down or briefly resting my Zoom-weary eyes. I listened with my ears and heard the entire meeting.’

It’s a response worthy of 1960s China and the grovelling apologies forced upon the victims of Mao’s Cultural Revolution. But that would be appropriate, because a cultural revolution is exactly what is taking place in today’s America, where the woke mob has surrounded the citadels of democracy – newspapers, magazines, television stations and, of course, universities.

Dissenters live in fear. Serious debate is all but silenced.

A recent survey published by the respected Cato Institute reveals that 62 per cent of Americans say today’s political climate prevents them from saying things they believe because others might find their views offensive.

Just think about that: an overwhelming majority of Americans – across all political persuasions – have political opinions that they are afraid to share. It is positively Orwellian. How long until the same thing happens here – if it has not already? Even liberals are afraid, with a majority – 52 per cent – feeling they have to self-censor before speaking or writing. The same applies to 64 per cent of people who consider themselves moderates, and 77 per cent of conservatives.

These numbers are higher than they have ever been – representing a true threat to democracy. And even more worrying for those who value the future of openness and political diversity is the intolerance of the young, who are driving so much of this frightening new trend. Forty four per cent of Americans under 30 support firing company executives if it is discovered they privately donate their own money to President Trump. Fifty per cent of people who call themselves strong liberals support firing Trump donors from their jobs.

This tide of aggression towards people who merely happen to hold opposing views cannot be written off as a blip, for it is clearly part of a wider trend that has engulfed other Western nations.

When America sneezes, it is never very long before Britain catches a cold. A British political tradition that has for decades prized tolerance of other people's opinions – even when, or indeed especially when, we disagree with them – is about to be tossed away.

Proof that the bacillus highlighted in the Cato Institute's troubling survey is already infecting Britain can be seen in the treatment of Stephen Lamonby, who lost his job as a university lecturer for saying 'the Jewish are the cleverest in the world' and that 'Germans are good engineers'.

Mr Lamonby, interviewed in last week's Mail on Sunday, said these things in a one-on-one private conversation with a colleague, Janet Bonar, who denounced him to the commissars of Solent University in Southampton. Who then dismissed him.

Quite apart from the fact Mr Lamonby was making these remarks in a private conversation rather than in a lecture to students, or in a public address at Solent, and nothing he said was offensive or demeaning about any race or group, they also happen to be true.

I'm happy to state here that I wholeheartedly support his conclusion about Jews.

Although they make up less than half of one per cent of the world's population, between 1901 and 1950 Jews won 14 per cent of all the Nobel Prizes awarded for Literature and Science, and between 1951 and 2000 Jews won 32 per cent of the Nobel Prizes for Medicine, 32 per cent for Physics, 39 per cent for Economics and 29 per cent for Science. This, despite many of their greatest intellects dying in the Holocaust.

Mr Lamonby is only the latest person to be cancelled for holding legitimate views, which by no coincidence often tend to be conservative and traditional ones. We are not so far away from the Thought Crime from Orwell's 1984.

Once all value judgments regarding races and peoples are banned, my profession – history and biography-writing – would become impossible. Take any example from history and try to explain what happened without making any statement to the effect that any group of people were better or worse at anything than any other group of people, and you will quickly appreciate it cannot be done, yet that is where the woke-finder generals are taking us.

'At the Battle of Hastings in 1066, Norman battle tactics – which were in no way whatsoever superior to Saxon battle tactics – won a victory after a Norman archer, whose expertise in archery was precisely equivalent to that of his Saxon counterpart – fired an arrow into King Harold's eye. Thereafter, the centuries of Norman rule in England were no better or worse relatively speaking than any other period of history.'

This is what the 'Solent' version will be like. In many cases, the 'cancelling' is self-administered. Last week, the president and chief executive officer of an organisation called Technical Safety BC in Vancouver told the Toronto Globe and Mail that she was removing the word 'chief' from her official title in acknowledgment of racism against people of colour.

Progressivist absurdity and intolerance was captured brilliantly in Malcolm Bradbury's witty book *The History Man*, set in a new university in the fictional southern English town of Watermouth where Howard Kirk, the Marxist post-modern professor, persecutes anyone who disagrees with him in the name of 'generating the onward march of mind, the onward process of history'. The treatment of Lamonby and Patricia Simon was thus foretold nearly half a century ago.

What this intolerance will do is to force the teaching of history underground. Indeed it already has: Professor Nigel Biggar of Oxford had to hold an academic conference on the British Empire as a private seminar amid fears of how it might affect the careers of the historians who took part. Academic papers will one day be distributed surreptitiously, like samizdat underground newspapers behind the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

That is the kind of world we are moving towards. For the truly concerning thing about the Cato Institute survey is not that quite so many people fear that they might lose their jobs if they express their opinions, but that they are clearly right to feel that way.