

Marxist - Who's Marxist?

Written by Sheralyn Roman

The cuts are relentless and they are everywhere but education in particular seems to be taking a real hit to the solar plexus. I'd love to know why. Seriously. Can someone please explain to me why, when the very foundation of a modern, fully functional and healthy society is the education of its people, we are hacking away at our system with a meat cleaver? It's not like there won't be any long-term consequences or anything right? It isn't too much of a stretch to suggest that not just our education system but the principles of an educated, democratic society are at risk here. 'If we don't educate them, they can't ask questions' seems to be the new mantra. Cuts to education extend not just through primary and elementary where we've focused a lot of our attention recently but through to University students as well. Cuts to OSAP funding, student unions, and if that wasn't enough, just a few weeks back Mr. Ford sent an email to his followers suggesting university students were Marxist. That's a pretty inflammatory statement! Marxist? Let's talk about it.

Here's a quote from that email. 'Students were forced into unions and forced to pay for those unions, I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to.' Do we? Do we know what kind of crazy, underground communist 'nonsense' our kids are getting 'up to'? Is Mr. Ford picturing secret plots hatched in grubby basement apartments? (The apartments are grubby by the way because with severe changes to OSAP that's all a university student can afford.) In the most simplistic terms, Marxism represents, in part, 'the dictatorship of the proletariat until the establishment of a classless society.' Who is the Marxist in this scenario? Who is the Dictator? The 'proletariat' isn't dictating a damn thing. A Premier making rampant, unchecked changes 'dictating' to his own caucus how to act and dictating to gas stations that they must put stickers on the pumps 'it's the people of Ontario who are being dictated to. The students? Why, they're just trying to learn about the basic principles of democracy 'to question, to research, to learn and to advocate 'expanding their minds and their horizons.

Student unions cover all manner of costs at University. They help to ensure programs promoting student mental health and wellbeing are in place. They cover the costs of drop in centres for students who need a place to study or maybe grab a much needed cup of coffee that they couldn't otherwise afford. They cover things like 'walk safe' programs that ensure student safety as they move around campus. Some academic support programs fall under their umbrella and so too might student newspapers 'the kind of newspapers where students learn to question, investigate and debate. I don't know about you but I'd like to think my child has a safe space on campus, can get some help if it's needed and oh yeah, also learns how to question, investigate and debate 'not how to become another sheep in the flock blindly accepting the dictatorship.

In one week alone, in our house, we've received email after email from University sharing that there have been significant cuts to programming. First 'this' course is not available, now another has been cut, then a third - all because of cuts to programming. Other courses are now 'over-subscribed,' but there's not enough money to open a second class so it's a lottery for who gets in. The program is Journalism. I'm trying not to think it is a coincidence but it does make me wonder that if we can't afford to teach students about media and the important role it plays in a democratic society, what are we left with? A dictatorship? If students can't afford to attend school due to OSAP cuts, what are we left with? When you have a Premier who, in yet another email to his funders claims, 'the journalists are out there mocking us,' you begin to wonder who really has the problem with democracy? Oh and by the way 'Mr. Ford would like to make sure you can't sue the government anymore either. Marxist? Who's Marxist?