

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? A victory for the thought police

Former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal had it just about right when he quipped that, 'The politically correct crowd is tolerant of all viewpoints, except those they disagree with.'

We see this kind of intolerant tolerance everywhere these days, particularly in the political arena and, of all places, in universities, where there is a 'correct' way to think and an 'incorrect' way to think, and no room whatsoever for diversity. And the biggest irony, of course, is that those who are trying to stamp out diversity are the same people who claim to be champions of it.

Still, despite the growing prevalence of this unfortunate trend to shame and silence anybody who strays from the gospel of the accepted wisdom, writers, of all people, would still feel free to express their views, whether readers like them or not.

But, alas, it seems even that wall is tumbling down.

We see that in last week's resignation of Hal Niedzvieki as editor of Write, The Writers' Union of Canada's in-house magazine, for the horrific 'crime' of daring to disagree with the organization's leming-like endorsement of something called 'cultural appropriation,' i.e. the practice of someone who is not a member of a particular ethnic group writing about those who are in the group. The thinking is that unless say you are an Indigenous person you can't be allowed to write about Indigenous experiences. (I note that champions of this twisted view never hesitate to write about groups, e.g. WASPs, which they are not part of. But we digress.)

Let me say that, having been writing for half a century, I join the National Post's Jonathan Kay in confessing that until this controversy blew up, I too was completely unaware of the TWUC's mandate and its magazine, Write.

But I should have thought that any organization dedicated to promoting writers and writing would not advocate censorship of its members when it comes to the self-centred causes of some of its noisy activists.

But it seems that would be wrong. TWUC not only accepted Niedzvieki's resignation ? and his abject apology, which of course is never enough in the eyes of the radicals ? it issued a groveling statement about the 'pain' that the article caused and concluded that his article was a symptom of 'structural racism' or perhaps even 'brazen malice.'

So what, pray tell, was Niedzvieki's unforgiveable crime? What mean-spirited, blatantly racist, inhumane tripe did this man actually publish in his magazine?

Brace yourselves.

He wrote ? and I can barely bring myself to repeat the horror of it ? in a magazine entirely devoted to Indigenous writing, that 'I don't believe in cultural appropriation . . . In my opinion, anyone, anywhere, should be encouraged to imagine other peoples, other cultures, other identities.'

That's it, folks.

He dared stray from the orthodoxy of the narrow-minded 'liberals' who run this organization and who have decreed that 'outsiders' horning in on their territory are insensitive clods. Worse, actually. They are perpetuating centuries of racism by the dominant culture and must be stopped. Period. End of story.

In the pedantic world of these people there is absolutely no room for debate, no time for disagreements, the same attitude which afflicted Christian churches in medieval times and still besmirches some mid-Eastern belief systems today.

By all means disagree. Write a letter, send an email, ramp up your Twitter account. Tell Niedzvieki where he is wrong and why.

But do we really want to live in a world where even people who offer written views to the public are bullied into cowering in a corner and nodding meekly as the mouthy militants trample any semblance of free speech or open debate in their maniacal quest for a world in perfect harmony with their vision, and their vision alone?

As I've said, I had no knowledge of Niedzvieki or his work, but have since discovered that he has devoted his professional career to championing what any reasonable person would define as liberal causes.

Yet in this one area ? where he stands accused of 'cultural genocide' ? he has fallen on his own pen and cannot ? ever ? be forgiven for the pain and suffering he has wrought on all those hypersensitive souls who lack the character and the strength to simply agree to disagree.

The truth has been decreed. Disagree at your peril.

And the thought police win another round. Pity.

