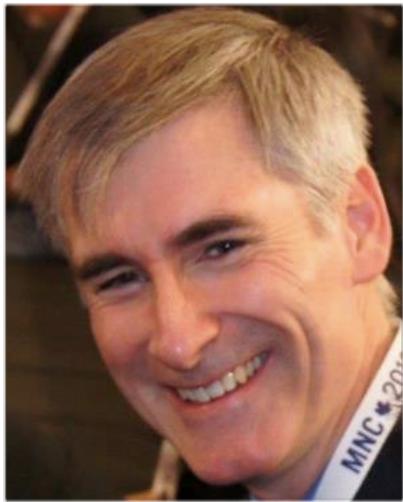


THE EVANGELICAL OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE

*Conservatives Champion Freedom—
But Not Where it Counts Most*
David MacKenzie 03-06-2017

Today, I must begin with an accusation. Conservatism— particularly the variety that sympathizes with libertarianism— has not been **proactive** enough in supporting freedom of thought.



The problem is rather predictable. The conservative desire for “limited government” is an ideal that has passive (more than massive) implications. In practice, it places few legislative roadblocks in front of those who are eager for more more social-engineering. Because larger government is the last thing conservative libertarianism wants, its representatives inside government and bureaucracies are rather few. One might as well ask cats to enact their own leash-laws.

Hence, our cause is politically paradoxical. The world needs more conservative legislators to believe in less interventionist government.

On this topic, several news reports struck me recently. The first was the **NFL's attempt to intimidate the State of Texas** in its desire to produce anti-predatory bathroom legislation. In much the same manner, and for similar reasons, the **NBA attempted to bully the State of North Carolina** in 2016 with similar boycotts and divestment. Secondly, I was struck by the Ontario Catholic Teachers Union petitioning Canada's Prime Minister for **greater access to abortion**. Yes, you read that correctly. A group of supposed Catholics wants to petition a supposed Catholic in order to entrench policy that is demonstrably non-Catholic.

Next, I was struck by reports of the existence of a form of sensitivity training in Canada's federal public sector— a gender “equality test” among bureaucrats that gives every appearance of **coercive indoctrination for sexual identity politics**. Lastly, I was appalled by reports of a private Michigan meat processing facility, whose owner was being **threatened with shutdown** by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) because he advocated for traditional marriage. One might think that an abattoir would be the last place to find the politics of the boudoir, but apparently not.

Between these various symbols of corporate and public sector intervention, one should perceive an existential threat to conservative politics. Clearly, conservatives don't replicate themselves within the system very well. For sound philosophical reasons, we don't meddle in the Statist ways the Left meddles. But, unfortunately, neither do we politically insist upon entrenching new forms of systemic freedom which would readily give people more room to conscientiously breathe within the public realm.

When a public sector union becomes dominated by left-wing ideology, its conservative membership is likely to disengage, and become more passive— fearing, perhaps, for its own job security. Yet, this situation also contains even more implications. With public sector unions being consistently left-of-centre, a sitting conservative government may never

be anything other than a mere veneer overtop a fundamentally hostile context. This issue is one reason why former Prime Minister Harper may, at times, have given the impression of being on the defensive even when it came to his own governmental departments. Since the Left tends to grow bureaucracies faster, it's not surprising that those same bureaucracies reflect the ideology that coddles them most.

The Catholic Teachers Union of Ontario is a testimony to a bureaucracy now completely out-of-touch with its *raison d'être*. Doubtless, there are vast numbers of pro-life Catholic teachers in Ontario, but one would never know it. Instead, the union gives every impression of being uniformly informed by left-leaning and church-hating ideology.

Conservative Catholic teachers, likely inspired by the simple desire to love kids and do their job, are obviously having difficulty politically projecting a more authentic Catholic ethos inside their own union. They've experienced a kind of *coup d'état*. Their present representatives think nothing of sending Justin Trudeau a perverse political request for greater abortion access— completely misrepresentative of Catholic spiritual teaching. In a more honourable time, the leaders of this union would resign. Today, however, power rather than doctrinal integrity defines the tactics of radical ideologues.

The United States has, since 1790, explicitly rejected a religious test for either its offices or its employees. In 2017, however, Canadian federal employees are subjected to a gender-based analysis (GBA) test inflicted, one might argue, with religious-like zeal. Yet, few seem to object— even though aspects of this Canadian test contain some of the same gender politics that the Australian State of New South Wales recently rejected for its school system— ostensibly because **it wasn't good science**.

Given this kind of ideologically “weaponized” culture, we shouldn't be surprised that even meat inspectors want to exterminate businesses for their owners' beliefs in traditional marriage, or that several Alberta

unions and associations recently announced their support for **drying up all public funding for private schools** in the Province. If unions and government departments really believed in people, they'd advocate for greater consumer and conscientious choice. Quite noticeably, however, they are instruments of control.

Radicalized bureaucratic structures need to be deconstructed. The next political priority for conservatism should be for greater ideological and conscientious freedom within established organizational structures. Diversity of opinion matters. At barest minimum, public sector unions need formal conservative branches or "wings", because public unions should represent the broad ideological spectrum of its constituency. Barring this, conservatives will have little choice but to advocate for "right-to-work" legislation that simply bypasses the ideological chokeholds held by these unions.

To conclude, then, a mere glance at political culture should alarm conservatives as to our strategic failure to foster the best aspects of our social thought. If the mainstream media is leftist, and if Hollywood is leftist, and if professional sport is militantly leftist, and if the health unions, the government workers' unions, and the teachers' unions are all overtly leftist, then where, precisely, is conservative governance going to find the space to grow its base?

Hence, it should be a reasonable goal of contemporary conservatism to support **systemic** protections for the freedom of association within associations. In a world of homogenizing tendencies, it is the free-market of thought that is most at risk. Conservative thought is being smothered, ironically, by those ideologues who claim to understand "oppressive systems" best.

As such, the Left is becoming the very thing it once despised. And conservatives are looking as disorganized as cats for not making the appropriate political adjustments.

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