

# THE EVANGELICAL OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE

## *The Petty Politics of Pronouns*

Roland Weisbrot— November 4th, 2016

Greetings comrades! Or so sayeth **Alberta's new LGBTQ guidebook for schools** as an alternative to avoid “offensive” pronouns such as him or her – after all, it is the current year.



If you have ever read *1984* by George Orwell then you may very well be tempted to think this dystopian fictional novel is becoming increasingly less fiction and more reality, but that is beside the point.

Between this guidebook and the recent happenings at the University of Toronto as a result of the proposed Federal Bill C-16, it is clear that the pronoun issue has become overtly political. A group of individuals who identify as either “transgender” or “intersex” in Canada who, **at the very most**, make up **2% of the total population**, have managed to make age-old pronouns an

issue of grave concern. So great is their influence that when a tenured professor of psychology at the University of Toronto (UoT), Canada's top-ranked university, decided he was not going to use the other

suggested pronouns (they, ze, zir, etc.), he was threatened with suspension and expulsion and **harassed by hordes of “Social Justice Warriors.”**

Traditionally, Western society has respected and even held in esteem the Academy and the highly educated. Yet, in videos such as the one I linked to above it is clear this group has no respect for either the professor or his credentials. This is just as much a negative reflection of the individuals swarming the professor as it is an overt example of the UoT’s administration’s pathetic unwillingness to side with their faculty and preserve a space of intellectual freedom. Given the fact that intellectual freedom is one of the marks of a university, it should be difficult for anyone to call an institute without this trait a “university.”

If anything, I wish to highlight the danger that politicizing social issues presents to civilized society. First of all, if something is classified as a “social issue” chances are there is little to no agreement on how the situation should be addressed. The very worst thing a government can do is choose a side and then force it on everyone else, regardless of the reasons - ideological, religious, or otherwise - that a person may possess in opposition to it. I think the British Columbia Court of Appeal worded it best after siding unanimously with Trinity Western University, a Christian institution, regarding their Law School, stating:

**this case demonstrates that a well-intentioned majority acting in the name of tolerance and liberalism, can, if unchecked, impose its views on the minority in a manner that is in fact intolerant and illiberal.**

Secondly, the old saying “give them an inch and they will take a mile” still rings true; in other words, pronoun politics is a slippery slope. If there are criminal consequences for refusing to use pronouns that have

only started appearing in the last few years, what exactly will be demanded next? How long will it be until churches, synagogues, and mosques are censored? Ultimately, well-intentioned “progressive” legislation will degrade itself into a method to silence opposition. We are already seeing the signs of this in Canada in the form of pronoun politics and other “progressive” legislation, and as of now we are fast approaching a watershed moment regarding the future of our country.

May I make it abundantly clear that I recognize the rights of individuals who identify as either transgender or intersex. Those rights, however, do NOT include silencing of other viewpoints (as we find in *1984*). Much like a transgender person would not want to be fired because of their identity, a professor should not have to fear for his job because of an opinion, offensive or not.

Our society is great because we allow diversity of thought, opinion, and dialogue, not because we stifle it.

