

Australians see all this as craven, cultural surrender by the ruling classes

By Maurice Newman, The Australian, 1 September 2016

When our Prime Minister thinks same-sex marriage is more important than freedom of speech, you know our liberty is in mortal danger. This is not a comment on same-sex marriage. It's an observation that Malcolm Turnbull would rather see the selective application of freedom than support equality and liberty for all by reforming section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act.

Turnbull acknowledges "the very worthy arguments" surrounding free speech but he dismisses it as unworthy of discussion because "it is not going to create an extra job, it is not going to ... build an extra road". Can something essential to our culture be thought so inconsequential that it means less than jobs and road building?

Not so dismissive are 13 Coalition backbench and seven crossbench senators. They have demonstrated courage by signing a bill sponsored by Liberal senator Cory Bernardi to rewrite section 18c. But don't expect the majority of senators, the media, academics or even business to back them.

Even the Prime Minister concedes "barely a day goes by when I don't celebrate that we are the most successful multicultural nation in the world".

Yet the Australian Human Rights Commission must justify its \$30 million annual budget. So when white students complained on social media about being excluded from an officially sanctioned "indigenous only" computer room, they found, to their astonishment and emotional and financial distress, they were defending a \$250,000 18c damages claim for the hurt feelings of an Aboriginal woman. Seeking to expose the act's absurdity and the partisan culture of the AHRC, David Leyonhjelm has complained that Fairfax Media racially abused him. Fairfax reports: "A source familiar with the Human Rights Commission's processes predicted the commission would dismiss the complaint, ruling white people can't be offended." If true, it illustrates that when equality takes precedence over freedom, we get neither, validating Liberal senator Robert Hill's foreboding when Labor introduced 18c in 1995, that it "presents an unacceptable threat to civil liberties in Australia".

This descent into absolutism is now infecting science. When "controversial" academic Bjorn Lomborg was funded to establish the Australia Consensus Centre at the University of Western Australia, his contract was cancelled because his views on climate change ran counter to the orthodoxy. Obviously, research based on scientific method is no longer welcome. Little wonder that Richard Horton, editor of medical journal *The Lancet*, believes that, these days, "much of scientific literature, perhaps half, may simply be untrue". Galileo would despair.

Speak to 11-year-olds today about global warming, human population and Australia's European settlement, and the response is remarkably consistent, so faithful has been the indoctrination. They know carbon dioxide is a pollutant, that people are destroying the planet and the British were invaders. But don't ask about free markets or free speech. In their world,

competition is discouraged lest feelings are hurt. As French philosopher Jean-Francois Revel warned, “Clearly a civilisation that feels guilty for everything it is and does, will lack the energy and conviction to defend itself.”

Back in 1978, the famous Soviet exile Alexander Solzhenitsyn noted the most striking feature of the West was its loss of courage.

“Such a decline in courage,” he said, “is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite. Many people living in the West are dissatisfied with their own society. They despise it ... A number of such critics turn to socialism, which is a false and dangerous current.” Nearly 40 years on, we are living with the consequences of Solzhenitsyn’s first impressions and, despite his warnings based on painful personal experience, socialism is the dominant ideology.

It is the absence of cultural belief, aided by the heavy hand of censorship, that assists Islamic extremists to establish support networks in Western societies.

In his book *The Suicide of Reason* Lee Harris writes, “The evidence, unfortunately, is that the West is not even remotely interested in mounting a defence of its values in the face of Muslim fanaticism. Worse, there are signs the West is even prepared to sacrifice some of its core values in order to appease those who have always despised these values.” True.

Well-meaning judges now accept “cultural difference” as a reason for leniency in sentencing. They tolerate disrespect in their courtrooms because of religious custom. And the ultimate irony, section 18c, for “social and historical” reasons, sanctions positive discrimination “to a particular group or minority”. Increasingly, Australians see all this as craven, cultural surrender.

Meanwhile, Bill Shorten insists we’re guilty of “systemic racism” and the Prime Minister prevaricates. Both seem oblivious to the spontaneous mood change under way. Neither declares freedom as society’s cultural bedrock because their ideal is bigger, ever more authoritarian government.

At the recent election almost 600,000 voters gave their first preferences to Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party. It is a warning to the ruling class, including the victim industry, that too many freedoms have been sacrificed on the altar of equality and “we know best”. Public tolerance is wearing thin. This is the real threat to social harmony, not reform of 18c.