

## **Forced PC as governments follow Orwell's 1984**

By Jennifer Oriel, The Australian, 15 January 2017

It is something of a paradox that the closing of the Western mind has taken place during the information age. As though afraid of uncertainty, the Left introduced a range of measures to regulate speech as the West began to realise the idea of open society. During the late 20th century, left-wing parties codified state censorship in discrimination law. In Australia, section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act was justified by appeal to protecting minority groups from words deemed offensive. A new form of censorship is developing in the 21st century. We are witnessing the birth of an Orwellian political phenomenon: forced speech.

The West is moving into a post-censorship age where the state suppression of free speech will be complemented by a regime of forced speech. The state will require not only the suppression of truth that offends its designated minority groups, but the public expression of untruths that reinforce the politically correct party line. As with the earlier transition from free speech to political censorship, the state will use minority politics as an instrument to justify forced speech.

The Northern Territory Labor government announced plans to reform the Anti-Discrimination Act in a recent discussion paper. The text reveals a party well-versed in PC ideology. Take the following definition of sexuality: "Sexual orientation is a person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of a different sex, or both persons of the same sex and persons of a different sex."

As well as confusing straights, gays and bisexuals, "modernising" discrimination law apparently involves rewriting biological fact. Labor wants to replace sex with gender identity in the act so "people of diverse gender are protected" and NT law is aligned with federal legislation. But the party goes further: "Sex is based on traditional notions that all people can be classified as male or female."

Birth sex is not a "notion". It is a biological fact. The act could be modified to ensure people born with intersex biology don't suffer from discrimination and people aren't treated unfairly simply because they are gender atypical.

However, the proposal to replace sex with "gender identity" as a protected attribute is problematic. The denial of biological reality could become a legal requirement if discrimination law is altered to protect gender identity. NT Labor's mooted reforms could include vilification provisions applying to its protected attributes such as gender identity and sexual orientation.

While race was used to justify state suppression of free speech, gender is emerging as the rhetorical instrument used to justify coerced, or forced speech. The British Medical Association has published a guide outlining trans-inclusive language. Consider the text on pregnancy: "A large majority of people that have been pregnant or have given birth identify as women. We can include intersex men and transmen who may get pregnant by saying 'pregnant people' instead of 'expectant mothers'." Alternatively, we could state biological fact by refusing to say "pregnant people". I don't care if you're a PC hipster, "in transition" or running the asylum, you're not pregnant unless you have a womb and if there's baby in there, you're an expectant mother.

When last in office, federal Labor attempted to create a vast regime of state censorship using minority politics and corrupted human rights to justify the assault on freedom. It proposed a media meta regulator. It introduced a human rights and anti-discrimination bill that listed a range of attributes to be protected from unfavourable treatment, defined as “conduct that offends, insults or intimidates”. Opposition legal affairs spokesman Mark Dreyfus has indicated that a future Labor government could consolidate all federal anti-discrimination legislation and establish “a standard about speech generally”.

The post-censorship age will be defined by a significant transition in which forced speech is introduced to complement the state censorship of politically incorrect thought. We will have to demonstrate submission to the party line by stating PC ideology is truth. We will have to reject even the traditional Marxist idea of a scientific society by denying biological fact. In the words of Orwell’s *1984* protagonist Winston Smith, we will have to agree that “two and two make five,” if the party says so.

A recent case in Canada illustrates the problem. At Wilfrid Laurier University, teaching assistant Lindsay Shepherd played a televised debate on the introduction of transgender pronouns such as xie instead of he or she. An academic argued requiring their use was a form of “compelled speech”.

Shepherd said that she had remained neutral in the class. However, university officials required her to attend a meeting after students filed a complaint. During the meeting, academics and staff from the diversity office cited human rights, students’ feelings, and a “gendered violence, gender and sexual violence policy” to argue against her presentation of the debate. Shepherd was admonished for violating policy on gender-based violence, transphobia and “causing harm to trans students by bringing their identity as invalid (sic), or their pronouns as invalid — potentially invalid”.

Note the categorical errors required to make PC fiction seem reasonable; free speech is equated to harm, dissent from the PC line is equated to violence, and pronouns are categorised as an expression of identity politics.

Forced speech is not a feature of free world politics. It is, however, a chief feature of totalitarian society. Survivors of communism recounted gruesome re-education programs that concluded only when dissenters demonstrated submission to the party by public recitation of communist state doctrine. In *The New York Review of Books*, Ran Yunfei, a Chinese intellectual who was held under house arrest, said: “The CCP created a parallel language system that is on an equal basis with the language of truth.”

In *1984*, the Inner Party official O’Brien explains to the politically incorrect protagonist Winston: “Whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth.”

An old friend asked why, after years of voting Labor, I left the Left. I considered justifying myself again with the chronology of exodus. But the truth is plain and blunt. Why did I leave the Left? Because two plus two equals four.