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The Issue of Intellectual Suppression

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In the Western liberal democracies, the dominant ideology is that *intellectual suppression* happens only elsewhere. Intellectual freedom is hailed as something guaranteed and protected in the 'free world'.

The study of *intellectual suppression* challenges the claim that things are fundamentally different in liberal democracies. Certainly, there is more opportunity to express unpopular opinions in such societies than in milltary or state socialist regimes. But at the same time suppression is an important factor in the dynamics of capitalist democracy.

It was in 1979 that I first became sensitised to the pattern of suppression of intellectual dissent going on around me. At the time I was working at the Australian National University in Canberra. Since going there in 1976 I had regular contact with members of the Human Sciences Program, which offered innovative teaching in the area of environmental studies. The Program had been under attack since its early days from traditionally minded figures at the university. When one of the staff members in the Human Sciences Program, Jeremy Evans, came up for tenure, he was rejected. Evans at the time had an average publication record and was widely acknowledged as an inspiring teacher. It seemed to me, and to many others, that Evans' tenure was being blocked because he was associated with a critical environmental programme.

Earlier, I had read of the case of Peter Springell, a scientist who got into trouble with his superiors because of his research on environmental issues, and who eventually left his job with the Commenwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. I had made contact with Clyde Manwell, Professor of Zoology at the University of Adelaide, who had spoken out critically about pesticide spraying against fruit fly, an act which led to an attempt to sack him from his post. Another, earlier, case at the Australian National University came to light at the time : John Hookey, lecturer in law and the teacher of environmental and resources law, had been told he would not receive tenure. The case was very similar to that of Jeremy Evans.

There seemed to be a pattern when a scientist or academic spoke out or did teaching or research which threatened vested interests—especially in industry or government, or their supporters in the scientific or academic

communities—then that scientist or academic risked coming under attack. The attack could be in the form of denial of tenure, blocking of research funding, denial of promotion, blocking of publications, harassment, smear campaigns or sacking.

In several senses, there is nothing new in suppression. In state socialist countries and under military dictatorships, suppression of intellectual dissent is routine and pervasive. Furthermore, intellectual suppression in many such countries is only one aspect of a wider repression of any opposition to the government. Opponents and potential opponents of the ruling powers may suffer imprisonment, torture and death.[1]

There was a military coup in Turkey in 1980. The military government has repressed dissent coming from any quarter. One prime target has been the universities. A large number of academics have been dismissed from their jobs, some have been imprisoned and some murdered. Academics who have been dismissed under the State of Siege are banned from any employment by the government. New legislation has been brought in to control the universities, providing for direct administrative control, teaching of state doctrines and denial of civil liberties to academics. Students have also come under attack by the regime. It is clear that critical ideas are threatening to the military rulers and that they are willing to take extreme measures to keep the universities under control.[1a]

In May 1987 there was a military coup in Fiji. As the new regime cemented its power in the following months, intellectual freedom was an early casualty. Newspapers and radio stations were closed, censored or taken over. Academics at the University of the South Pacific in Suva have been warned not to oppose the military government. Some staff have been detained by police briefly and at least one has been badly beaten; many are hoping to leave Fiji. William Sutherland, a political scientist from the University, is in exile and is forbidden re-entry to the country.

After further inquiry and investigation, I wrote my first paper on suppression, documenting cases in the environmental area[2]. As a result of this, I came in contact with more and more cases of suppression. Partly this was by being sensitised to the processes involved. When I read newspapers, magazines or books, passages indicating suppression suddenly grabbed my attention where previously I might have passed over them.

On the other hand, because I had written about suppression, people sometimes contacted me with information about a case they were involved in, or which they knew about. Through numerous conversations and much correspondence, my files on suppression have grown relentlessly.

During the editing of this issue of *Philosophy and Social Action*, I decided to write down some of the cases that have come to my attention over the past year. The number and variety of cases is considerable. I list a selection here—only ones for which there is published documentation—not as a systematic account but rather to indicate both the diversity of cases and the regular patterns involved.

In 1985 a Peace Research Centre was established at the Australian National University, funded by the Australian government. Since its inception, the Centre has been attacked by right-wing opponents of peace research and peace studies. In particular, the Head of the Centre, Andrew Mack has been accused of spreading 'disinformation' and serving the interests of the Soviet Union. Mack has responded capably to the attacks. I had assumed that the inaccuracies and polemical nature of the attacks would discredit the accusers in the eyes of most reasonable people. But Andrew Mack believes that the Centre's future may be at stake. Many politicians would like to get rid of the Centre, and the attacks, even if refuted, may aid in this.

John Sinclair is a well-known conservationist in Australia. In the 1970s he led the successful struggle to save Fraser Island, off the coast of Queensland, from sand mining. Although the mining was supported by the Queensland government, the federal government intervened to prevent it. The Premier of Queensland, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, publicly criticised Sinclair's job performance in the Queensland Education Department. Sinclair sued for defamation, won, and then lost on appeal. Costs were awarded against him, including $30,000 costs for Sir Joh. Sir Joh is seeking to declare Sinclair bankrupt to collect the money. This case illustrates the imbalance of power in social struggles. The government of Queensland indemnified Sir Joh against any damages in the defamation case ; Sinclair had no such protection.[4]

Australian subscribers to *The New Internationalist* did not receive the June 1987 issue. The issue deals with, among other things, the Unilever Corporation. The magazine received legal advice that the issue should not be published in Australia.[5] Defamation laws are very strict in Australia. The effect of these laws is that those with power and money—politicians and corporations in particular—are able to inhibit criticisms.[6]

Recently I attended a conference called Ecopolitics II, in Hobart, Tasmania. The conference was organised through the Tasmanian University Research Company (TURC). It turned out that the two managers of the TURC, Michael Lynch and Cassandra Pybus, had just been sacked from their jobs. Lynch and Pybus believed that they had been discriminated against because of their political views, namely their concern about environmental issues rather than the narrower interests of industry. After the case received attention in the press and state parliament, an agreement was reached: the dismissal was withdrawn, and Lynch and Pybus resigned.[7]

In December 1986 I visited the United States. No sooner had I arrived than I came across the story of George Shirley, a teacher at Alisal High School in the Los Angeles region. In the space of a few years, Shirley performed a near miracle in persuading and helping an unprecedented number of Alisal graduates to enter higher education, including many prestigious universities—a miracle because 85% of Alisal's students are from minority groups, mainly Latino, which are normally written off as incapable of top academic performance. Although his efforts to help disadvantaged

groups generated enormous enthusiasm among many students and parents, they also seem to have created enemies at the school. Shirley was not rehired for the 1986-1987 school year.[8]

In the 1960s and 1970s, during the upsurge of social activism in the United States, especially in response to the Vietnam war, the Federal Bureau of Investigation turned its attention to many protest groups, defining legal social protest as a form of subversion.[9] In the mid-1970s, public exposure of the crimes of the intelligence agencies stimulated government moves to curtail such illegal monitoring of dissent. But with the Reagan administration in the 1980s, government involvement in monitoring and harassing dissenting groups again entered the agenda. There has been a pattern of "break-ins, infiltration, spying, tax audits, mail tamperings, customs difficulties and general harassment of groups and individuals opposed to Reagan administration policy in Central America."[10]

One of the government agencies which harasses dissident groups is the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which can subject target individuals and organisations to exceptional scrutiny.[11]

The usual pattern of suppression is against those who are critics of the established order, and in Western societies this usually means that few who are suppressed are 'right-wing' in the conventional sense. (Of course, in communist countries open supporters of capitalism are routinely suppressed). But there are some cases of suppression of those on the right, and some of the best documented cases involve the IRS.

George Hansen of Idaho, for many years a member of the US House of Representatives, has a flawless record as a supporter of right-wing causes. But his activism against the IRS got him into trouble.

Hansen and the National Coalition of IRS Whistleblowers have documented many cases in which the IRS has used heavy-handed tactics to collect taxes, including armed invasions of homes to confiscate property, the selective auditing of critics of the IRS, heavy pressure on IRS employees to break the law in collecting taxes, and the targeting of whole neighbourhoods (for example in the wake of natural disaster) to demonstrate the power of the IRS. Hansen made a major effort in Congress to put controls on this sort of behaviour by the IRS. For his efforts, Hansen was himself the subject of highly damaging IRS scrutiny.

Hansen was not the first victim. In the 1960s, Senator Edward Long of Missouri led a congressional inquiry into the IRs. Just before the 1968 election, Long's tax returns were leaked to the media, casting a blight on his campaign. Long lost the election ; a later investigation found nothing wrong with his financial records. A similar thing happened to IRS critic Senator Joseph Montoya of New Mexico, who lost office after the IRS leaked false information about his tax returns.[12]

The point is that the Internal Revenue Service is a very powerful bureaucracy. Although it has ties to the government and other parts of the 'establishment', and hence is especially likely to be used to harass left-wing

critics of government policy, powerful bureaucrats within the IRS also have a vested interest in opposing any scrutiny of its operations; whether from the left or the right.

Najwa Makhoul is a Palestinian and Israeli citizen. After receiving a Ph.D. in 1978 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in urban and regional studies, she returned to Israel where she planned to establish an interdisciplinary scientific journal, in Arabic. The Israeli authorities refused permission for its publication for security reasons (which they have not revealed) even though, as an Arab publication, each issue would have been subject to Israeli censorship.[13] Makhoul's case illustrates well the constraints imposed on those who are seen as capable and willing to intellectually challenge the ruling powers.

Outside of Israel, the greatest support for the policies of the Israeli government is found in the United States. Criticising Israel can be risky. In Los Angeles, a group of Palestinians, including many long-term US residents, whose politics were well within the mainstream, were arrested and accused of violence. Their only 'crime' was distributing publications supporting the Palestinian cause. The method of the arrests is only explicable in terms of suppression of Arab thought.[14]

Right-wing critics of Israel and Zionism have also complained of suppression. The Liberty Lobby is a group advocating a populist programme of "America-first nationalism, armed neutrality, aloofness from involvement or interference in the affairs of other countries, and freedom of the people from repression and exploitation by governmental and big-bank financial power". The Liberty Lobby in the 1970s began providing a daily radio programme to stations around the country. A few segments on the programme criticised Israel and Zionism. The Anti-Defamation League of B'ani B'rith launched a campaign to get the Liberty Lobby off the air, which involved direct protests to radio stations, leaflets, articles and orchestration of complaints from listeners. The campaign was largely successful in creating a perception of the Lobby as anti-Semitic (rather than anti-Zionist which it openly is).[15]

Another type of case I've read a lot about recently is suppression of feminists. An important article here tells about the experiences of lesbian academics who were sacked from their jobs.[16] This is a form of heterosexual discrimination, but it is also intellectual suppression because the lesbians who are sacked are almost always those who are open about their sexuality. The message is that it's all right to be different, just don't tell anyone about it. As is usual in academic suppression, in every case 'legitimate' reasons were used to justify the dismissals. It was only by pooling their experiences that the pattern of discrimination became obvious to the victims.

Another target to attacks in academia is women's studies. There are histories of harassment and cutbacks documented at a number of universities.[17] Women's studies, especially where an active feminist stance is taken, is a major threat to much work in the orthodox disciplines, which is dominated both by men and by male perspectives.

Related to this is one of the most publicised cases of suppression in recent years, the suspension of Wendy Savage from her practice as an obstretician and gynaecologist at the London Hospital in April 1985. The official reason was that she was a danger to her patients, and five particular births were cited. The real reason, in the eyes of many, was Savage's approach of putting mothers in a greater decision-making role when giving birth. The suspension led to enormous public outcry, including major demonstrations. A lengthy inquiry was held, which vindicated Savage. She returned to work in October 1986.[18]

The Savage case is a well-documented history, exceptional both in the public nature of the struggle and in the resounding victory for Savage. Many other threats to intellectual suppression are less spectacular and more difficult to mobilise against. Often these threats take the form of policies.

For example, the US government regularly censors writings by federal employees and subjects many of them to lie-detector tests.[19] The trends in the US are long familiar in West Germany, where the official policy of *berufsverbot* denies government jobs to members of left-wing groups and to many social activists, and where protesters are often subjected to police violence and excessive fines or imprisonment. Furthermore, the 'technology of political control', which includes riot-control weapons used by police, sophisticated surveillance equipment, computerised data-bases on individuals and groups, and monitoring of cars and bank deposits, is increasing the capability of police to inhibit and repress dissent.[20]

There are also whole areas where suppression is routine but seldom comes to light. The pharmaceutical industry is notorious—to those who study it—for corrupt practices, and suppression of those who challenge these practices is frequent.[21] The pharmaceutical industry is only one industry of many for corruption and suppression.[22] The tobacco industry, in its rearguard battle to defend cigarette sales, has frequently attempted to suppress criticism.[23]

In a rather different category are the Freemasons, a secret society whose members may make reprisals against dissidents, especially those who expose corruption in the order.[24]

Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett was the first Westerner to report the effect of radioactivity at Hiroshima. For over forty years he covered a series of the world's 'hot spots'. His 'crime', in the eyes of Australian government bureaucrats, was to present the other side, including the Korean and Vietnamese wars from North Korea and North Vietnam. Although widely acclaimed throughout the world for his work, for twenty years 'conservative Australian governments sought to obstruct and discredit Wilfred Burchett by every means available to them, from quite lawless denial of his rights as an Australian citizen to pressure on Australian newspapers not to publish his material'.[25] Through the refusal to provide him with a passport, intellectual suppression in Burchett's case took the form of excluding him from Australian society completely.

The above examples of suppression illustrate the immense diversity involved. Are there some general features or patterns in suppression'? The following are some points that I believe are important.

Few cases of suppression are publicised. The instigators almost always justify their actions on 'legitimate' grounds and do not trumpet their behaviour to the world. The victims often blame themselves or avoid publicity which may hurt their future career. Furthermore, probably the largest number of cases involve actions such as denial of publication or denial of appointment, where it is extremely hard to prove that suppression has occurred. The publicised cases are the tip of the iceberg in terms of numbers.

The most serious suppression is usually less publicised. The publicised cases are unrepresentative of the most common and, arguably, the most serious and effective suppression. Publicity is more frequent in countries where elite control over dissent is weaker. Dissidents in universities, for example, are more able to publicise suppression because of the rhetoric of free inquiry than are dissidents in government or industry. Where suppression is sufficiently pervasive, even word of the existence of suppression is suppressed.

More fundamental is what can be called 'structural suppression': institutional arrangements which allow no opportunity for effective dissent. The poor, the illiterate, those embued with the dominant ideology and those conforming because of their dependence on precarious sources of income have little opportunity or inclination to engage in the luxury of 'intellectual dissent'.

Suppression is a feature of power struggles. Suppression does not fit easily into the usual explanatory categories of social science. The mainstream approaches of pluralism and functionalism do not talk about suppression : it is an aberration from the proper processes of liberal democratic society.

Marxian categories of ownership of the means of production and hegemony focus on structures, and do not extend easily to incorporate the processes of suppression which often depend on the capricious actions of individuals. Furthermore, suppression is not always in the service of capital : it is most pervasive in state socialist countries as well as military dictatorships and is also a regular feature of government bureaucracies, political parties (right and left) and trade unions. In each of these areas, news of suppression can be an embarrassment to Marxian scholars.

Arguably, the social science disciplines themselves are built on a whole history of suppression of dissident views.[26] Those theories and scholars who have thrived in this process are unlikely to focus on suppression, especially when the suppression is carried out by colleagues and administrators on whose good graces they depend. The scholarly neglect of suppression is similar to the scholarly neglect of state terrorism and repression.[27]

Suppression is a penalty for dissent. Just as important are prizes for cooperation. While critics of pesticides frequently suffer suppression, those

who support pesticides often reap grants, consultancies and promotions.[28] If the carrots for cooperation are potent enough, the stick of suppression may only be needed rarely. To study suppression, it is important to put it in the context of the wider processes of social control.

The perpetrators of suppression are seldom penalised. Because suppression, virtually by definition, involves the exercise of power by a strong group against a weak opponent, there is little opportunity for redress. Although Wendy Savage was vindicated by a major enquiry, it was she who was suspended and forced to struggle for many months to regain the status quo. Her attackers suffered no formal penalty.

It is important to oppose suppression. Dissent from dominant views is a potent challenge to the powers that be. This is apparent from the paranoia about dissent in repressive regimes. Why, one might ask, would a government with a monopoly over repressive violence be worried about a few critics armed only with words ? Such governments are worried, because their rule depends to a great extent on support or acquiescence from the mass of the population. Dissidents, by exposing the nakedness of the emperor and by showing that dissent is possible, can inspire opposition.

Freedoms are gained and protected by continual struggle, not by resting on formal guarantees or a hope that things won't get worse. This is why it is important to defend the freedom to dissent even of those we don't agree with and those we may not like personally. Opposition to suppression is part of that struggle. It is important to persevere even though some dissidents, in the face of suppression, decide to acquiesce and conform rather than persist in dissent.[29]

The articles in this issue deal with the above points and others. Avi Adnavourin gives an insight into internal academic politics in his account of the sacking of R.M. Frumkin. Frumkin himself eloquently tells of the immense psychological cost of suppression for the victims, something that is hard to appreciate for those who have not been through it.

The remaining articles deal with some of the wider ramifications of suppression. Cedric Pugh describes suppression of dissent in housing policy at an individual level and in terms of its wider impact. Fumihiko Satofuka draws a picture of the social structure and history of Japanese society which explains why it is so difficult for dissident views to be expressed. Finally, C.M. Ann Baker and Clyde Manwell in two articles describe the interest groups involved in agriculture and their role in two major areas for suppression, and document the harmful consequences of this suppression.

Many of those involved with *Philosophy and Social Action* have direct experience with suppression. The founder-editor, Dhirendra Sharma, was improperly transferred from his post at Jawaharlal Nehru University, apparently because of his criticisms of the nuclear establishment in India.[30]

But Sharma is no stranger to controversy. Commenting on his transfer, Noam Chomsky wrote, in 1984, that he had known Sharma for 20 years and that he was "a courageous and effective participant in the American anti-war

movement, and has since done important and highly valued academic work in the area of science policy while continuing with his engagement in defence of civil and human rights in India and elsewhere in the world. His active opposition to the Indo-China war apparently cost him a U.S. government research fellowship in the year 1969-70."[31]

Two members of the editorial advisory board, Hassan Arif (Pakistan) and Maina-wa-Kinyatti (Kenya) were dismissed from their jobs and have been imprisoned for several years because of their views. Two other members 'Africa Associates', Mahmood Mamdani (Uganda) and Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (presently in Tanzania) have also suffered intellectual suppression. In 1985, Mamdani was deprived of his Ugandan citizenship for delivering a lecture critical of social and economic system by the "democratic" government of Dr. Milton Obote. His citizenship has now been restored after the overthrow of the Obote government. Wamba-dia-Wamba, a noted authority on the Marxian political history, has suffered imprisonment in his home country Zaire. He is now in exile, teaching at Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.[32] Therefore it is most appropriate that *Philosophy and Social Action* publish this special issue on intellectual suppression. □

Acknowledgements. Many individuals have provided me with documentation and insight into suppression cases, only some of which are mentioned here. Ben Kiernan and Pam Scott offered valuable comments on a first draft.

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THE WAYS OF SUPPRESSION

Intellectual suppression mostly occurs with due legal process within a formal institutuional system. Bertrand Russell described his own case ;

> I was invited by Trinity College, Cambridge, to become a lecturer, but not a Fellow. The difference is not pecuniary ; it is that a Fellow has a voice in the government of the College, and cannot be dispossessed during the term of his Fellowship except for grave immorality. The reason for not offering me a Fellowship was that the clerical party did not wish to add to the anti-clerical vote. The result was that they were able to dismiss me in 1916, when they disliked my views on the war. (I should add that they reappoint me later, when war passions had begun to cool.) If I had been dependent on my lecturship, I should have starved.
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> (*From* : "*Free Thought*", *in* SCEPTICAL ESSAYS, *Unwin Books, 1962 ed. p, 104*)
