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Committee Secretary
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SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY INTO ACADEMIC FREEDOM

I am a university student at Sydney University studying economics. I have only completed one semester at university but I have already experienced left wing bias in lectures and tutorials. In many ways though, my education at a Catholic high school in Wollongong allowed for the generation of left-wing bias even more so than at university. At high school the teachers have a hands-on approach in small class room settings of about 20 students. They know all of the students personally, and as such students are much more susceptible to indoctrination. I hold enormous pride and respect for my high school, and am grateful for the excellent education I received. The only part of my secondary education that I look back on in disgust, rather than contentment and pride, is the left wing bias entrenched in curricula, course content, and teachers.

The curricula for many subjects at high school is organised in a way that promotes a single underlying anti-conservative voice. These curricula already biased in nature are further reinforced by the opinions of teachers. I found that the curricula and course content, as well as my teachers in School Certificate Australian History, HSC Extension History and HSC Advanced English disallowed for differing perspectives and ideas to develop amongst students. Instead left-wing ideologies were promoted through the vehicles of feminism, Marxism, post-modernism, and multiculturalism.

School Certificate Australian History, looked at several topics, amongst them were the Cold War, women's liberation, Australian multiculturalism and migration, Aboriginal rights and reconciliation, and finally the dismissal of Gough Whitlam. These topics all adopted an inherent viewpoint that conservative governments over the years failed, whilst Labor Governments were extremely successful. A feminist agenda was promoted through the topic on women's liberation, Marxism was valued through the topic on the Cold War, and in the topic on Aboriginals and multiculturalism John Howard was labelled as a "racist". My teacher indoctrinated the students to believe that Howard was an unsatisfactory leader because of his commitment to the Iraq war, and rejection of Aboriginal apologism. However, my teacher was not critical of Gough Whitlam in any circumstances. In fact, she not only extolled Whitlam's reforms, but she also violently accused the Fraser opposition for Whitlam's downfall. She would not allow for differing viewpoints on these matters. When I attempted to defend Malcolm Fraser or point out the high inflation, unemployment and government debt during the Whitlam Government I was immediately silenced. Criticism of Whitlam was disallowed and praising Fraser was suppressed. I argued with this teacher after class, where she told me "Gough Whitlam

was the best Prime Minister this country has ever seen. I got to go to university for free because of him”.

HSC Advanced English was little better. Ted Hughes’ poetry and Shakespeare were studied at length. This great literature should be studied; however, the curriculum and course content direct this study into a single anti-conservative direction. Ted Hughes’ poetry was meant to be studied critically, and interpreted according to each student’s context. Instead it was studied critically through a single feminist perspective. It was merely another opportunity where teachers can force their radical views on students, who have not yet formed their own political opinions. Shakespeare, arguably the best playwright and linguist, was studied not in a traditional sense but through different ‘readings’. These readings are modern issues and contexts, therefore we could study the great works of Shakespeare, but only if it was through either a feminist, post-modern or Marxist reading. I find it deeply disturbing that more emphasis was placed on left-wing readings, rather than actually understanding Shakespeare’s texts.

HSC Extension History was meant for students to “challenge, criticise and interpret the context, methodology, perspectives and study of history overtime”. Historians from the ancient, medieval and the modern world were studied. The course was designed for students to develop a post-modern understanding of history, rather than a classical or modernist view. I classify myself as a ‘critical modernist historian’, rather than a ‘post-modernist’, however, in order to maximise my marks I forced myself to write things that I didn’t even agree with. My favourite historians were Keith Windschuttle and Geoffrey Blainey and I loved the idea of professional historians uncovering the facts of the past through meticulous study of evidence. However, my teacher did all she could over several periods to completely discredit modernism, Windschuttle and Blainey. She basically killed the need for history in its entirety. She would inform the class that “history isn't about facts...it’s about perspective, and modernist's wont survive in this class. Challenge the false views held by Windschuttle with the more valuable views of Henry Reynolds. Then you can truly appreciate the Black Arm Band View of History”. I was told that Australia had a depressing history based on British invasion and imperialism. I thought Australia had a good history. With all of this pessimism and post-modernism no wonder many Australian’s do not understand the significance of Australia day, federation or the ANZAC spirit. Teachers have killed history in Australia and are doing our students a disservice.

I think that the current education system needs to be changed. We should allow students to form their own opinions based on the impartial content given to them by teachers. University looks like it will as biased as high school. Every student has the right to pride in their unbiased education, and no teacher deserves the right of indoctrination. We need to make education fair.

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