

MAOIST ROOTS OF DEPROGRAMMING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on recent calls to deprogram Trump supporters:

The Catholic League, like all advocacy organizations, makes maximum use of its First Amendment right to freedom of speech. To this extent, the increasing calls for censorship of organizations that espouse traditional moral views is worrisome.

We live in a time of unparalleled attacks on free speech, emanating from establishment sources, including the media. One might think that the media, which does not exist without freedom of speech, would be reflexively opposed to censorship, but not anymore. In many cases, those who work in the media are leading the charge to silence what it sees as its opposition.

This is much more dangerous than the McCarthyism of the 1950s: the variety of tactics being advocated today extends far beyond anything the senator from Wisconsin had in mind. For example, calls to deprogram Trump supporters is now one of the most popular strategies for silencing any organization that has praised Trump's record.

The Catholic League has lauded Trump's policies on religious liberty. We will continue to do so. But we know that our critics are not content to disagree—they would like to deprogram us, if they could. Though calls for deprogramming are now routine, they began last summer.

Last summer, failed White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci said those on the left should view Trump supporters, and especially those who worked in the administration, as candidates for deprogramming. A few days later, CNN's Don Lemon targeted all of those who voted for Trump in 2016. "And I think a lot of people need to be

deprogrammed, right now, before they cast their next ballots.”

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich showed his fondness for Stalinist tactics a few weeks before the election. “When this nightmare is over,” he tweeted, “we need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It would erase Trump’s lies, comfort those who have been harmed by his hatefulness, and name every official, politician, executive, and media mogul whose greed and cowardice enabled this catastrophe.”

After the election, the totalitarians went into high gear, zeroing in on Trump voters. David Atkins, a prominent California Democratic operative, said he knew exactly what he wanted to do, but was unsure how to do it. “No seriously...how ‘do’ you deprogram 75 million people?” He asked, “We have to start thinking in terms of post-WWII Germany or Japan.”

Harvard students, who would never consider themselves to be the unwitting dupes of brainwashing, called for reeducation and moral rehabilitation camps. A Bernie Sanders employee was caught in a Project Veritas sting saying, “we need to send all the Republicans to the reeducation camps.” Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said she wanted to “deradicalize” those who were “radicalized” by Trump.

One of the most clarion calls to deprogram Trump supporters came when Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson said, “there are millions of Americans, almost all white, almost all Republicans, who somehow need to be deprogrammed”; he added that they are members of a “Trumpist cult.” Former “Today Show” host Katie Couric also voiced her support for deprogramming, arguing the need to deal with those “who have signed up for the cult of Trump.”

An attorney for Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) went too far even for his left-wing employer when he set his sights on the kids. Caught by Project Veritas, Michael Beller announced, “We go for all the Republican voters, and Homeland Security

will take their children away. And we'll put them [Trump supporters' children] in re-education camps." He was subsequently fired. He should move to North Korea.

The roots of deprogramming are found in Maoism. Once Mao Zedong seized power in 1949, he moved quickly to launch the first of his "thought control" campaigns. Everyone from intellectuals to housewives were chosen for "self-education and ideological remoulding of the liberated people."

Under Mao, "thought reform" reached a level the world had never seen before. It was a U.S. foreign correspondent, Edward Hunter, who in 1951 wrote a book, "Brainwashing in Red China," that detailed the workings of "thought reform." Ten years later, American professor of psychiatry Robert Jay Lifton wrote, "Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism." It became a classic.

Lifton fingered two key elements of "thought reform." The first was "*confession*, the exposure and renunciation of the past and present 'evil.'" The second was "*re-education*," or the "remaking of a man in the Communist image." To cite one example, young Chinese students had to confess how wrong they were to respect their parents—they were forced to denounce them. That set the stage for their *re-education*.

Do people like Katie Couric have any idea what they are promoting when they call for deprogramming? Do they know that there is nothing more totalitarian than having government send in agents to police our minds?

The Catholic League will never yield in its fight for freedom of speech. We need all the allies we can get.