



## Tolerance “Will Bury You”

Often the most enjoyable humor is the unintended kind, as in the oft-quoted Yogi Berra line about an overly popular restaurant: “Nobody goes there anymore, it’s too crowded.” Or when Archie Bunker said of live theater, “The age of entertainment is over! Today we got television.”



All right, I can’t verify that Yogi Berra actually said that, and I know Archie Bunker is a character of fiction. But even in real life, grown-ups still say the darnedest things. I find amusing, for example, some letters to the editor expressing shock, outrage, and galloping indignation at the *New Hampshire Sunday News* policy of not publishing wedding announcements of same-sex couples. Indeed, one such letter caused me to laugh out loud — or “lol,” as the techies like to say. It warned of what will happen to a newspaper that stands obstinately in the path of “progress”: “I can guarantee you that both technology and tolerance will bury you into the ground,” wrote the broadminded, totally up-to-date reader. “New Hampshire is a forward-thinking state that doesn’t put up with your ignorance and outdated policies.”

I don’t know why the Manchester-based newspaper would be buried “into the ground,” when the city has long since closed its landfill, and recycling is the order of the day. But what really caught my attention and tickled my fancy was the thought of being buried by “tolerance.” Tolerance has turned out to be a rather stern taskmaster. A state that thrives on tolerance, the gentleman declared, simply will not “put up with” the kind of permissiveness that allows a privately owned newspaper to cling to a former way of thinking that deems a union between two persons of the same gender may be a great many things, but marriage is not one of them. Oh, for the good old days when the only one threatening to bury reactionaries in America was the bully in the Kremlin. “Tolerance” now appears as a kinder, gentler Khrushchev.

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I was struck also by the number of references in those letters to the calendar as the ultimate authority on such matters. This is 2010, after all. The policy is “outdated,” which means it reeks of “ignorance” of how people are supposed to think today. The fact that most people don’t think that way — same-sex marriage has been defeated in every state that has held a referendum on the proposal — apparently doesn’t matter. Neither do tradition, religious authority, and the moral strictures of thousands of years. All must all be swept aside for the sake of a bold new order decreed by a small, highly vocal minority that considers itself morally and intellectually superior to those of us whose minds and morals must still be in the Dark Ages.

Chesterton observed that every age is modern in its time, but ours appears to be the first to congratulate itself on the fact that today is not yesterday. The comedian Flip Wilson put it even better when he parodied that attitude in the person of Reverend Leroy of “The Church o’ What’s Happenin’ Now!”

Theoretically at least, people who belong to what might be called “The Church From Way Back Then” do not lose their rights just because they are fortunate enough to own a newspaper. But the prophet of “tolerance” would “bury” the recalcitrant newspaper — bury it “into the ground,” by Sappho, with little



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on October 25, 2010

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apparent concern for the pollution of our groundwater. The writer would doubtless bury the First Amendment in the same grave, there to keep the newspaper company, as befitting the gentleman's zeal for tolerance and inclusiveness.

"It's 2010," he writes with consciousness-raising perception, "and whether you're a private organization or not, you have no right to deny people who purchase your product the right to announce their marriage." People have a right to purchase or not purchase products as they please, but it is interesting that the writer is so insistent on the "right" to have something as cherished as a wedding announcement published in a newspaper he finds "disgusting and a disgrace." It calls to mind the joke about a woman at a resort hotel who complains about how bad the food is there. "And such small portions!" she adds.

That letter and others like it reflect the kind of thinking that inspired a letter to the *New Hampshire Union Leader* a couple of years ago, claiming that Title IX of the U.S. Code, dealing with gender equality in school programs, requires a newspaper to devote equal coverage to male and female high-school athletic teams. The underlying premise, apparently, is that all information and all activity in the private as well as the public sphere must be recast in the image and likeness of Caesar's decrees. It is the notion that, as George Will once described it, "every institution must be broken to the saddle of the State."

And freedom? Well, that is increasingly becoming, in the words of an old song, "just another word for nothin' left to lose."



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