

Trump v Harvard is a fight over fascism

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The Trump regime revealed a core part of its fascist intention yesterday when it announced actions against Harvard University.

According to the [New York Times](#):

A letter the Trump administration sent to Harvard on Friday demanded that the university reduce the power of students and faculty members over the university's affairs; report foreign students who commit conduct violations immediately to federal authorities; and bring in an outside party to ensure that each academic department is "viewpoint diverse," among other steps. The administration did not define what it meant by viewpoint diversity, but it has generally referred to seeking a range of political views, including conservative perspectives.

Harvard decided to say no. As a result, last night, the Trump regime announced that it would freeze \$2.2 billion in grants to Harvard, spread over multiple years, along with a \$60 million contract.

Let's be clear: Harvard can afford this. It has a duty to fight Trump, given the wealth that it has. Education there will not end, as yet, because of it having taken this stance. Many other US universities will not, of course, be in such a position.

It has said, again, according to the NYT:

"No government — regardless of which party is in power — should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue."

I agree with that. I think the word 'private' was extraneous. What we are very obviously seeing is a blatant attempt to limit what might be said, taught, understood, researched and tolerated at universities. That is the antithesis of what a university should be about, although probably not when it comes to economics these days, where only neoliberalism is allowed (and I am not joking).

The attempt that is being made is, in fact, a reflection of a desire to recreate the hegemonic power of neoliberal thought within economics right across the university sphere.

Neoliberal thinking is based on a series of assumptions in which the autonomy of the individual is not respected. Their ability to choose is implicitly assumed to be controllable by market behaviours, or why would the virtues of advertising and marketing be so lauded? The right of government to intervene is denounced. The consequence of corporate actions is ignored, hence, climate change. And the goal of wealth maximisation, which is very obviously only possible for a few, is promoted as if it should be the goal of all, even though that is clearly not possible. The assumptions on which these outcomes are modelled are not based on any observable form of human behavior. The absurdity of this is ignored. Economics is about the creation of theory to justify the status quo power structure within society, and not to actually educate or inform, let alone suggest how matters might be improved or reformed.

This is what Trump wants across education, I have no doubt.

He does not want a diversity of views. That is the last thing he desires.. Instead, he wants unthinking compliance.

What he wants is subservience. And obedience. The last thing he will want is freedom of speech. When that is what his regime says, they are Goebbelian in their statements, stating the exact opposite of what they really desire.

Nor will he wish for innovation, thinking, or alternatives. He is more than happy with what is, and unquestioning acceptance of it.

This is, in other words, anti-intellectualism. That is, and always has been, a core feature of fascism, whichever way you want to define it.

Fascism is based on myths that a majority of the population can always see through. It requires unquestioning acceptance of a world view. Where questions arise, force is used. That direct threat is already implicit in the Trump threat to foreign students at Harvard. It is also direct in the sense that financial pressure, used in the way the Trump regime is using it, is a use of force. The fascist knows they cannot win the argument with the intellectual, so they frighten them into silence instead.

Will Harvard win this battle? It has to. If it does not, the USA has succumbed to fascism. I may not love all that Harvard is or represents, but it is better than the fascist alternative.

Might it do that? I cannot know.

But what I do know is that despite all this, Starmer will still be saying we still have a special relationship with the USA. Of that, you can be sure. Is that because he is a

fascist enabler? Is there another explanation available?