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## Attacks abuse academia Right-wing McCarthyism obstructs

By Dolly Veale

David Lazar's exercise in know-nothingism, redbaiting, and right-wing bullying cannot go unanswered ("On-campus communist support appalling," Oct. 20).

Lazar, of the Bruin Republicans, declares it unacceptable that the César E. Chávez Center and the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies would sponsor a lecture by Raymond Lotta titled "Socialism is Better Than Capitalism, and Communism Will Be a Far Better World."

Lazar's method of attack is worthy of Joseph McCarthy.

First, Lazar responds to the Daily Bruin advertisement for Lotta's lecture by reciting standard lies about communism – precisely the assumptions Lotta takes on in his talk. Lazar and company want to keep people uninformed and ignorant about communism.

Next, Lazar suggests that by sponsoring Lotta's lecture, the two centers are providing "on-campus communist support." The centers were not endorsing Lotta's views, but rather striving to promote substantive debate about one of the most important issues of the 20th century and questioning whether the world we live in is the only world possible.

Perhaps it is this spirit of critical intellectual inquiry that Lazar finds so intolerable.

Finally, Lazar issues a chilling ultimatum:

"Academic freedom will not be served until these two centers either regain a sense of legitimacy, or risk being replaced by departments that do not dedicate themselves to historical revisionism and ideological hegemony."

Who gave Lazar the authority to determine the legitimacy of centers and programs serving the deeply felt needs of minority students and the cause of progressive scholarship?

Lazar's arrogance and threats might be laughable under other circumstances. But Lazar is playing his part in a concerted, reactionary assault on academia – and it has political backing from within the Bush regime – to muzzle critical thought and dissent in the university.

In the name of academic freedom, these forces want to turn the university into a place where there is no questioning of established government authority or the international role of the U.S., where there can be no challenge to the official narrative of American history, and where there can be no open debate about alternatives to capitalism.

These reactionaries want to purge or silence progressive and radical professors. They seek to destroy the influence of the 1960s and gut or dismantle black, Chicano and women's studies. Theirs is an agenda of intimidation and thought control.

This new McCarthyism must be opposed. The attacks on ethnic, women's studies and other progressive programs must be resisted.

Critical thinking and dissent must be defended and spread to society. The times demand this of us.

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