

RESPONSE

Waste of space: a satire on public libraries and librarians

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Iszi Lawrence is an artist and author. She also debates with Skeptics in the Pub. Most of all, she is a stand-up comic.

Socialism is evil. This is a fact as solid as Creation itself. Why then, in 2012, is it still creeping into society? Its tentacles, once severed by Ronald Reagan, still twitch and convulse through our everyday lives. It is time we swept them away, once and for all.

Rahm Emanuel is mayor of Chicago and just one of these tentacles that needs eradicating. He not only encourages big government, but does so at the expense of our freedom. He has attacked the symbol of American freedom, the automobile. The car represents freedom; it is the cornerstone of modern American culture (alongside baseball, guns and the double gulp). It is bad enough that Emanuel is raising vehicle sticker prices (a tax hike whose only merit is that it hits the poor harder than the job creators), but he is doing it to pay for public libraries. Before her resignation this year, Mary Dempsey, the Public Library Commissioner in Chicago, declared:

Chicago Public Library is grateful for the Mayor's continued support of the vital role libraries play in Chicago neighborhoods and that he has found additional funds toward continuing that work ... This plan strikes the right balance, ensures that all Chicagoans - particularly the children of our city - have access to library services, and that our limited resources are being used in the most effective way possible.

So, it is Mr Emanuel's plan to reward the lazy, welfare-dependent, unproductive citizen with books paid for by the working man. He is punishing those of us who contribute the most to society and rewarding those who feel entitled to have access to whatever book they like. Perhaps he would like us to pay for their holidays next? Or their healthcare?

Is it any wonder the publishing industry is in trouble if people are sharing rather than consuming? This attack on market freedom is outrageous. Everyone understands that freedom means pulling yourself up by the bootstraps and getting yourself to a mall, using a credit card to pay market price, and then watching the debt soar. Paying only the monthly interest lets your bank repackage the debt into random bundles for sale to hedge funds, doubling, trebling, quadrupling its real value.

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This is the American Dream. By undercutting the market price, you are ripping silver spoons from the mouths of job creators.

With the exception of that great visionary, Ayn Rand, most authors are bitter and twisted sad sorts who live alone with cats and have as much business sense as a toddler dropping coins in a well. But they need our help so that they can help themselves. Try telling them this and their impoverished, warped minds just cannot cope. Phillip Pullman, an atheist and believer in talking polar bears, is one such Brit writer making a fuss over in France or wherever. Let's put it this way: there are 79 public libraries in Chicago. If there were 79 filling stations dispensing free gasoline, the oil industry would blow another deep sea oil rig! And who would blame it? The idea that investment in libraries does anything other than provide rain shelter to wandering vagrants is absurd. Libraries themselves are leisure centres for the unemployed. These wretches waste their lives huddled in libraries when they might be out searching for work. Heaven help us if they actually pick up a book.

Knowledge is power, power corrupts, corruption is a crime, crime doesn't pay. Supplying layabouts with free knowledge leads only to trouble. The last thing hard-working families need is children sitting quietly at home filling their heads with other people's words. Who knows where these words have come from? Perhaps not from anywhere as sensible as Fox News. Most writers die in obscurity and poverty. They are at the opposite end of the success spectrum from the entrepreneurs who make society great. Do you really want your kids reading books? The one thing the wise and beautiful Donald Trump has taught us is that every investment needs a return. We need hard cash rather than airy-fairy education. Who ever got rich reading books? Libraries are time wasters. To build a strong economy, you must spend time spending.

Imagine the cost to society if indulging in the free activities provided by libraries made people content? Without shopping? Where would we all be then? When imagination replaces ambition, we all suffer. What happens when someone loses the drive to achieve higher salary and bigger house? They stop working, that's what. They waste time and effort talking to their children. Happy children become lazy adults who don't consume, who pursue pointless careers in the arts or academia that lead to government-funded jobs, who waste time in the streets protesting about whores' rights and sperm whales. They ruin good society.

I am not calling for all libraries to be closed immediately. In the current economic climate, there isn't much profit to be made from selling the land. Libraries can be gradually phased out. Even this perfectly reasonable proposition encounters vicious opposition, generally from the sort of people who want something for nothing. Well, it is time these people learnt what hard work involves, like my parents and grandparents did.

Over in England, Prime Minister Cameron is forcing the welfare bums to do their own dirty work. They are forced to volunteer to run their own libraries. This is an amazing system. Libraries can run perfectly well without professional staff. Putting books on shelves; you hardly need a qualification for that. It's much like shelf-stacking in Walmart. And encouraging librarians and library supporters to find their own funding will help them meet the challenges of the job market. This is something we in America should take from our English cousins. Yes, of course the books must still be paid for, and the lighting, and the rubber stamps and all the bits of coloured paper that decorate public libraries. But our British friends have an

answer for this too. Most of these costs can be covered by yard sales. Volunteers can raise a bit of cash by baking cakes and shaking charity tins.

But this is still evil socialism. It is still the government wanting people to read who would otherwise, in a free market, know their place. I say go further, remove all subsidy and really make libraries private enterprise. Never mind stocking boring old books: you could have a library dedicated to *50 Shades of Grey*, sponsored by Victoria's Secret. Or Baptist-funded libraries that miss out that pesky science section. This way everyone gets paid and only the most marketable books (the best ones) get read.

Rahm Emanuel has attacked all of us by attacking our freedoms. For what? To spread socialism. Books come at a price. They foster discontent and erode the work ethic. This is a call for freedom. Isn't it time elitist snobs paid for their own *Dora the Explorer* adventure books?