

# The Washington Times

## Keeping an open mind on campus

April 3, 1999

Section: C

COMMENTARY

Edition: 2

Page: C3

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University professors may enjoy sitting all day in a stuffy little room gabbing about academic politics, but why should the rest of the world pay any attention at all?

Let me suggest a few groups of people who should care if higher education is subverted in the service of ideology:

- Legislators, who have to decide how much money should go to public institutions, and whether it is well spent.
- Taxpayers, who have to come up with the money.
- Employers, who have little need for employees expert only in victimology or oppression studies.
- Students, who want an education that will prepare them for life and for work.
- Parents, who will help pay for it.

That is, one way or another, just about everybody.

At the conference of the Colorado Association of Scholars I attended March 13, Jerry Martin, president of the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni**, spoke about his organization's efforts to help those groups play their parts more effectively.

**Alumni** often hear little about the college they graduated from except what's in the bland glossy **alumni** magazine or the occasional fund-raising letter. But if

they inform themselves and act together, they can offer a useful counterpoise to faculty activism.

Mr. Martin didn't happen to mention it, but independent student papers report campus news without prettying it up. A good many are online, and any prospective donor hit up for a major gift should read a few weeks' worth.

And if the administration has tried to censor the student press, or has allowed campus radicals to steal or trash issues of the paper, demand to know why before sending money.

Mr. Martin talked about how believers in the traditional academic virtues of intellectual tolerance and academic freedom can work to restore them.

I should say that only a minority of faculty, probably a small minority, actively works for the politicization of the curriculum and the campus. But professors for whom politics is the first priority of education work much harder at campus politics than their colleagues. That's why you repeatedly see faculty senates voting to support racially discriminatory admissions or hiring practices, while polls show faculty as a whole oppose them.

The tactics used by the campus left, Mr. Martin said, are based on the work of Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci argued that class warfare alone would never bring down the industrial democracies. They are too strong, and they rest on consensus; to win, you must take over one by one the institutions that manufacture consensus, that mold and shape public opinion.

First discredit traditional institutions; marriage, the family, religion.

You've heard these arguments: Marriage is a capitalist plot, the instrument of the patriarchy to oppress women. Any kind of family is as good as any other kind. Religious beliefs have no place in public life.

Second alter the language so it's difficult to frame opposing arguments.

Everybody's against racism, but it's awkward to argue against "diversity."

Finally create alternative institutions to replace the old ones.

Of course, it wasn't necessary to create new universities; for the most part, the existing ones are led by people only too happy to advance the progressive agenda. The media have been more resistant, at least by comparison.

Mr. Martin's adaptation of Gramsci's principles to defend the universities' traditional values starts with challenging dominant views at every opportunity.

No surrender to the Brezhnev doctrine of the campus left (what's mine stays mine, what's yours is negotiable).

Refuse to be intimidated. The all-purpose epithet "racist" is freely employed, not because racism is epidemic on campuses, but to silence opponents.

We saw that recently when a faculty committee at the Denver campus of the University of Colorado issued a report harshly critical of UCD's lax oversight of its five international campuses. Former dean Marvin Loflin attempted to discredit the critics by calling the courageous and candid report "racist" because it acknowledged corruption was a problem in Moscow. As if that was news to Russians.

Take your case to the public. When Georgetown University dropped its Shakespeare requirement for English majors, Mr. Martin recalled, his group held a teach-in, with performers from the Folger Shakespeare Library. The university was quick to deny it had made any change (although it had).

"When they start denying what they do," Mr. Martin said, "you've won the argument."

Linda Seebach is a nationally syndicated columnist.

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