PS for 2/14/91

Censorship on College Campuses

The initials P.C. came into our language in the 1980s to mean Personal Computer. But in the 1990s, P.C. stands for Politically Correct, which represents a new wave of intolerance that is sweeping the college campuses. In this year of the Bicentennial of the ratification of the First Amendment, it is extraordinary that the secular universities in America are restricting freedom of speech.

P.C. means that students and faculty on university campuses must speak only “politically correct" opinions about gender, race, nation, history, lifestyle, and numerous other categories of people who proclaim themselves victims. P.C. is shorthand for the growing demand on some college campuses to prohibit speech which may be considered offensive to some identifiable group and to impose penalties on deviationists as severe as expulsion, endless hearings, appeals, lawsuits, social harassment and ostracism.

The campus radicals of the 1960s have risen in the academic hierarchy and now are safe in tenured positions. They no longer have to take to the streets; they control the university administration, policies, and curriculum, and now they are trying to coerce others to conform.

For the last 20 years, radical activist groups have been inserting courses that advance their ideology into the university curriculum. They are no longer satisfied with this. Using the slogan “cultural diversity," they now demand that courses promoting their own narrow world view be mandated for **all** students.

They say that their goal is to eliminate prejudice, but the “prejudice" they want to eliminate is the notion that Western civilization should occupy a central place in education. It's not sufficient that students and faculty are required to refrain from insulting various minorities; students and faculty are required to “affirm” the presence and value of various minorities and activist groups by studying their writings alongside those of Aristotle, Shakespeare and Locke.

The first major victory of this movement was some three years ago when Stanford University expunged from its curriculum its traditional course in Western civilization. More recently, universities from coast to coast have been requiring courses which some people call "Oppression Studies" or “'Racism 101.”

A recent cover story in **Newsweek** magazine stated that P.C. is “a totalitarian philosophy" and “Marxist in origin, in the broad sense of attempting to redistribute power from the privileged class (white males) to the oppressed masses." Even the generally liberal **New York** magazine called P.C. “demagogic and fanatical" and said it includes "multiculturalists, feminists, radical homosexuals, Marxists, New Historicists."

What unites all these groups is their assertion that Western culture and American society are thoroughly (not just occasionally) racist, sexist and oppressive. The heart of the P.C. argument is
that Western culture is inherently evil, that the doctrine of individual liberty is itself oppressive, and that the entire world is one big conspiracy against women.

Under a P.C. regime, political content is the most important thing about everything. For example, a teacher of a freshman composition course at the University of Michigan wrote that he would teach writing skills “in connection to social and political contexts" so “all of the readings I have selected focus on Latin America, with the emphasis on the U.S. Government's usually detrimental role in Latin American politics."

Under P.C., joking is definitely not allowed. For example, at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the student-conduct code bans “discriminatory comments" in the form of "name calling, racial slurs, or Jokes."

At the University of Pennsylvania, a student on the university's “diversity education" planning committee wrote a memo mentioning her “deep regard for the individual and desire to protect the freedoms of all members of society." A university bureaucrat underlined the word “individual," commenting “This is a 'red flag' phrase today, which is considered by many to be racist. Arguments that champion the individual over the group ultimately privilege the 'individuals' belonging to the largest or dominant group. "

Multiculturalism, which amounts to an academic attack on the Great Books written by “dead white European males," is a P.C. slogan. So is Deconstructionism, the notion that no book has intrinsic merit and so no work of literature may be identified as " "great" or a "classic." Another P.C. notion is “gender feminism," which means that “male power" is evil and should be repudiated, along with “patriarchal books" like the Bible and sexist subjects like traditional history with its emphasis on great men and great deeds.

Professors who oppose P.C. have their own organization called the National Association of Scholars, based in Princeton, New Jersey, which is "committed to rational discourse at the foundation of academic life." The president, Stephen Balch, says that Western civilization has earned its place at the center of the university curriculum because it is responsible for the single most compelling idea in human history - individual liberty.

This compelling idea is sweeping the world everywhere except on U.S. university campuses. We hope P.C. will prove to be a passive fad like hoola hoops, but don't count on it because the P.C. troops are now locked in with job tenure on the campuses.