Confronting The Campus Radicals

by Phyllis Schlafly Jan. 14, 2004

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David Horowitz thinks that anybody who cares about the future of America should confront the fact that U.S. colleges and universities are the fountainhead of financing for the radical movement in America. He has personally taken up the challenge to do something about this.

Horowitz was a leftwing campus activist in the 1960s, but he says that men who were too radical even for him and his '60s publication "Ramparts" now hold tenure at major universities. During the 1970s, these hardcore leftists achieved critical mass on university faculties, took control of hiring committees, and then saw to it that only leftists were hired.

Now there are literally tens of thousands of "hard-line Marxists" in academic sinecures. They have made universities "a subsidiary of the political left and the Democratic Party."

These hard-core leftists have no shame about using the classroom podium for political speechmaking. They may be teaching a course in biology or Shakespeare, but that doesn't inhibit them from launching into tirades against American policies or in favor of the Communists in El Salvador, or assigning students to write a paper on why George W. Bush is a war criminal.

These radical leftists have redefined the mission of universities. Instead of the pursuit of knowledge and truth, universities today see themselves as agencies for social change. Horowitz says the change they seek is fundamentally anti-American.

The amount of money universities have to carry out their leftwing mission is mind-boggling. Whereas conservative and pro-American intellectual sources (such as the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute) and conservative journals may have budgets of a few million dollars, universities have billions of dollars. A great portion is taxpayers' money (through research grants and student-financed tuition), and in addition the leftists control most student activity assessments.

Many people have decried the bias of universities, but David Horowitz has a plan of action to turn it around. First, expose how bad the situation is, and second, challenge them directly by using the liberals' credo of diversity against them by calling for intellectual diversity.

For years, the universities have sanctimoniously proclaimed the sanctified value of diversity, but they define diversity to mean only giving space to radical leftwingers and feminists. Horowitz's Center for the Study of Popular Culture made a survey of 32 colleges and universities and reported that the overall ratio of Democrats to Republicans is ten to one.

At Cornell University, which is typical, 95 percent of the faculty who are registered to vote are Democrats. Of the faculty in the government department, only one of 23 members is a registered Republican.

At almost every American university, conservative professors are drastically outnumbered. Rep Jack Kingston (R-GA) says, "Most students probably graduate without ever having a class taught by a professor with a conservative viewpoint."

Kingston and Rep. Walter B. Jones (R-NC) have introduced a bill to promote the most important diversity of all, the diversity of ideas. Their bill calls on colleges to end discrimination against hiring conservative faculty and against students.

Senator Judd Gregg's (R-NH) Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing on the issue of liberal bias on campus. Witnesses testified that colleges intimidate students and faculty, force them to take "diversity training," and condone harassment of students who write conservative columns for campus publications.

Anne Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, was one of the witnesses. She said, "Rather than fostering intellectual diversity . . . our colleges and universities are increasingly bastions of political correctness hostile to free exchange of ideas."

Horowitz's new organization, Students for Academic Freedom, has attracted students on about 90 campuses with the goal of demanding a more balanced point of view among faculty and in campus lecture series. They are promoting an Academic Bill of Rights as a policy statement for colleges to adopt so that students can enjoy intellectual diversity with fairness for conservative viewpoints.

It is refreshing that conservative students are increasingly fighting back against academic intolerance. Some conservative students at the University of Texas have begun compiling a "Professor Watch List" to warn students about professors who use their classes for liberal indoctrination.

Students have sued Shippensburg University, Texas Tech University and a California community college as part of a campaign to abolish the notorious campus speech codes. These students are backed by the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE).

A recent hearing by the Colorado State Legislature uncovered outrageous examples of classroom indoctrination and faculty retaliation. Students who are willing to come forth and expose some of these classroom outrages are invited to check out the website of Students for Academic Freedom.