The Outrages Taxpayers and Parents Pay For

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The reluctance of the University of Colorado (CU) to fire Professor Ward Churchill is showing the public that colleges and universities are nests of subsidized radicals. Churchill is no anomaly; like-minded professors hold forth on campuses all over the country.

Repeated surveys report that Democratic professors outnumber Republican professors by about 10 to 1, but that ratio doesn't begin to reveal the outrageous leftist culture to which college students are subjected. Many professors are Marxists or other varieties of radicals who hate America.

The Churchill episode confirms leftwing Professor Richard Rorty's boast that universities are now "the power base for the Left in America." Churchill's Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, and African American Studies are not merely studies or departments; they are university-financed "movements" of the Left.

Churchill and the 199 CU faculty members publicly defending him claim the mantle of academic freedom for his offensive statements likening the 9/11 victims to "little Eichmanns" and referring to the "gallant sacrifices" of the "combat teams" that killed 3,000 Americans. They want academic freedom also to shield him from charges of plagiarism, false claims of Indian status in his affirmative action job application, and misrepresentation of sources in his academic writings.

Public opinion supports the verdict that Churchill was guilty of "conduct which falls below minimum standards of professional integrity," which is the University of Colorado's standard for dismissal of tenured professors. Instead, CU president Elizabeth Hoffman resigned, saving herself from the task of either firing or defending Churchill.

The most frequent complaint I hear from college students is that professors inject their leftist political comments into their courses even when they have nothing to do with the subject. An anti-Bush tirade, for example, might stream forth without warning in math class.

This politicizing of academia is confirmed by a survey commissioned by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. It reported that 46 percent of students at the 50 top U.S. universities and colleges say professors "use the classroom to present their personal political views."

The survey also showed that 74 percent of students said their professors made positive remarks about liberals while 47 percent reported negative comments about conservatives.

Of more concern is the survey's report that 29 percent of students said there are courses in which students must agree with the professor's political or social views in order to get a good grade. That sort of intellectual oppression ought to be exposed in the evaluations of professors that students fill out each term, but according to 83 percent of the students polled, there isn't anything on the evaluation form to report a professor's imposing his irrelevant political and social ideology on the class.

Professorial bias against conservatives in general and George W. Bush in particular is exceeded only by the bias against traditional morality. We are indebted to columnist John Leo for revealing the shockers at Wesleyan University: "the naked dorm, the transgender dorm, the queer prom, the pornography-for-credit course, the obscene sidewalk chalking, the campus club named crudely for a woman's private part," and more.

Prospects for change in campus bias any time soon are dim because of the lock that the radicals have on the hiring of new professors, the granting of tenure, and selection of publications by academic journals and the university press.

Meanwhile, tuition and fees were up 10.5 percent last year and 14 percent the year before. Over the last 25 years, tuition increases have annually exceeded the consumer price index by 3.5 percent.

The scandal that over 30 percent of university students do not graduate within six years is a direct consequence of the easy availability of government grants and loans. Why hurry if your easy-going campus lifestyle is heavily subsidized, even for taking remedial courses to learn what you failed to learn in high school?

On the other hand, university presidents are doing better and better: 42 presidents of private colleges and 17 presidents of public universities draw salaries of more than a half million dollars a year. Nine universities pay their presidents more than $700,000.

There is no evidence that the taxpayers are getting more for our money, or that students are learning more, or even that additional revenues are spent on instruction. The average score on the Graduate Record Exam is lower today than in 1965.

The exorbitant rise in tuition is largely caused by the increased amounts of government money spent without accountability or any kind of market discipline. Federal grants and loans to students provide a direct financial incentive to colleges to raise the sticker price of tuition in order to extract more from the government as well as from students and their parents who don't receive financial aid.

The only way to put a lid on tuition prices is to eliminate the tremendous incentive caused by government subsidies. Follow the money.