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ACCURACY IN ACADEMIA

Seldom has an organization that has done nothing except issue a news release agitated so many people. Pick up almost any newspaper, tune in on local TV newscasts, and you are apt to hear paranoid professors emoting about "intellectual goon squads," "mind intimidation," or imagined threats to their civil liberties.

What has caused this outburst of indignation? Has anyone suggested that they be fired from their positions? Or that their tenure arrangements be limited? Or that they should teach forty hours a week instead of six?

No, nothing so drastic. Someone has simply suggested that students take notes on college lectures, tape record them for accuracy, and report factual errors to a new organization called "Accuracy in Academia." It's a spin-off of Reed Irvine's Accuracy in Media which has been effectively monitoring the liberal media for years.

Why shouldn't professors and instructors at universities be evaluated for accuracy and objectivity? Everybody else who is on the public platform is constantly tape-recorded by unfriendly listeners who hope to expose a false, stupid, biased or bigoted statement.

Look what their enemies did with remarks by James Watt and Earl Butz. Did the professors rally round them and say how unfair it was that they were pilloried by tape recordings of unfortunate remarks?

Anyone who is spending the taxpayers' money simply has to endure the surveillance of the prying public. Most professors are spending tax dollars even if they work at private universities. It is a rare educational institution without any taxpayer support.

Some estimate that there may be 10,000 Marxist professors on college campuses. In our country, they have a right to be Marxists, but they have no right to preach Marxism on our money in a privileged sanctuary immune from public criticism.

None are so intolerant of free speech as the campus leftists. Jeane Kirkpatrick was forced off the platform at Berkeley by chants and noisemakers. She was scared off the campuses of Smith and Barnard altogether; the rowdy women are no more civil than the rowdy

men.

Other victims of leftist intolerance in the last few years were Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger at the Harvard Law School, Alexander Haig at the University of Colorado, and Henry Kissinger at Tufts' Fletcher School of Diplomacy. Most universities have failed to discipline disruptive students and to provide adequate security for the speakers.

The uncivilized behavior I have encountered on college campuses includes chanting, guffawing, belching, smoking pot, undressing, streaking, throwing food, hissing, and booing. This is the "intellectual" environment in which some professors are bleating about the "threat" to free speech if students report on what they said in class. You have to be kidding!

John Silber, president of Boston University, is almost the lone voice of sanity about this controversy. "I regard teaching as a form of publication," he said. "No professor has a right to complain if people report on, comment on, or criticize his teaching."

Another college trend that needs supervision is the cheating of students by universities that hire instructors who can't speak English well enough to be understood. Today, more than half the Ph.D. engineering students and about a third of the Ph.D. math students at U.S. universities are foreign.

Universities are becoming increasingly dependent on foreign graduate students to teach courses in computer science, engineering, mathematics, and the sciences. The complaints of students are escalating, and justifiably so.

It isn't just math and sciences. I had a foreign-born instructor in law school whose accent was so hard to understand that class was a waste of time. I stopped going and studied that subject on my own.

Now that four years at a prestigious college costs $60,000, it's time to urge consideration of a suggestion made seriously in a recent article in the Wall Street Journal: grant Bachelor's degrees by examination to those who choose to study on their own. Yes, they would miss the "social interaction" of college life.

But why should we all be forced into the same educational mold? Many of the world's most successful achievers were self-taught.