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UNFAIR ATTACKS ON REAGAN

Anti-Reagan media reporting about the Grove City College case, now before the U.S. Supreme Court, is a good example of how news is manufactured in order to feed the media myth called the "gender gap." The real problem is an information gap.

A Washington Post news story dished up this lead sentence: "The Reagan Administration, reversing more than a decade of Federal policy, plans to argue before the Supreme Court that an educational institution may continue to receive Federal funds for some purposes even if some of its other programs discriminate against women."

Likewise, the lead sentence in a New York Times news story reported: "The United States Commission on Civil Rights criticized the Reagan Administration today for endorsing a narrow interpretation of the law barring sex discrimination in school and college programs receiving Federal aid."

Both stories, and other similar ones, included anti-Reagan thrusts masquerading as "news." The articles were filled with quotations from anti-Reagan feminists who said they were "dismayed," who charged the Administration with dealing a "setback for women's rights," and other similar invectives.

The news articles gave the disgruntled, dismissed members of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission another round of access to the media so they could attack Reagan again. The impression was forcefully conveyed -- as news, mind you, not as editorial comment -- that the Reagan Administration is somehow closing the door on women's rights and that henceforth women will be denied opportunities to higher education.

I searched in vain in the news stories on this subject for a coherent explanation of what really happened, or for some kind of explanation of the Reagan Administration's position.

The truth is that the Reagan Justice Department is simply taking the proper position of upholding and defending the Title IX statute as it is written. If the liberals and the feminists aren't happy with the statute, they should get Congress to rewrite the law. In

the meantime, that isn't the Justice Department's job.

The basic law against sex discrimination in schools and colleges is Title IX, passed in 1972. The prohibition against sex discrimination applies to "any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

The law clearly does not apply directly to schools or colleges; it applies only to "any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." There is a world of difference between the two.

The liberal and feminist activists are doing their best to bring the long hand of Federal control into every nook and cranny of every school and college. They argue that, if a college even has one student who receives a student loan, then the college should be subject to endless bureaucratic rules and regulations.

The reason the liberals and feminists are so angry now is that they had persuaded the Ford and Carter Administrations to assert Federal control over every college if even <u>one</u> student had the benefit of a student loan, even though the college itself did not receive a penny of Federal aid. The Ford Administration issued a regulation effective July 18, 1975 which distorted Title IX to make it apply "to each education program or activity <u>operated by such recipient</u> [school or college] which receives <u>or benefits from</u> Federal financial assistance."

The emphasized words were not in the statute at all. By mischievously adding them to the regulation, Federal control was extended to every program operated by every school or college that receives any Federal benefit -- whether or not a specific program itself receives any Federal assistance.

The issue in all this is not "women's rights" but Federal control of education. There isn't the slightest evidence that Grove City College discriminates against women or intends to discriminate. A handful of colleges have refused to accept Federal aid because they prize their independence from Federal control, record-keeping and harassment. No one has to attend those colleges; thousands of others are available.

No good is served by wasting the time and resources of the Federal government to get those few colleges to knuckle under, or by arrogantly distorting the law to appease the liberals as was done under previous administrations.