

IRS tax exemption sanctions racism

The recent White House sanctioned and temporarily approved an Internal Revenue Service decision to restore federal tax exemptions to more than 100 church schools that refuse to admit black students jeopardizes the cause of civil rights in this country.

This reversal of an 11-year policy denying tax-exempt status to private schools practicing racial discrimination was at first passed by the IRS and then — after public protest — withdrawn and turned back to Congress for a decision. The government's weak stand on the tax exemption — by implication — can be seen as a mandate for continued racist policies by the church schools.

The initial response of the church school leaders is nothing short of appalling.

Bob Jones III, president of Bob Jones University, said the federal action gave his school a "clean bill of health." Jones went on to say the action was "a direct dealing from the hand of our Lord. . . . It has resulted in the answer of the prayers of God's people."

Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina was quoted as saying the federal tax exemption "puts an end to a decade of trampling on religious and private civil rights by the Internal Revenue Service, and freedom of religion will no longer have to take a back seat to bureaucratic determinations of public policies."

These statements — from the leader of a Christian university and an elected official — are alarming not only for what they say but for the gross hypocrisy they reveal.

Thurmond is applauding an errant act by a branch of the federal government. Although the action is not so errant in light of the Reagan administration's recent reluctance to back the reenactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Pres. Ronald Reagan reportedly wanted certain phrases in the Civil Rights Act changed.

He has since allowed the act to bog down in Congress rather than expedite its passage. This is not so much a matter of the Reagan administration advocating racism — but of the administration's conservative zeal. The administration believes the government shouldn't impose its will on public policy. The results of this is an administration that appears to care little about eradicating racism.

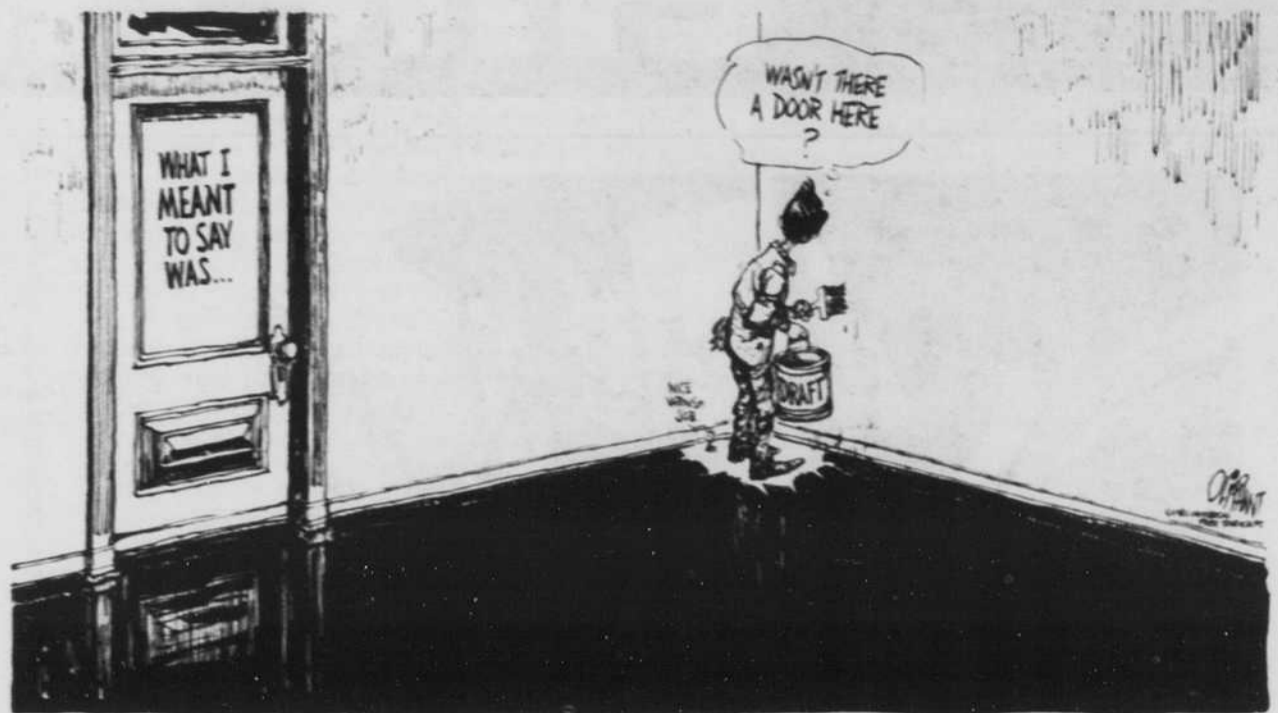
Racism did not suddenly cease with the Civil Rights Act of 1965. After hundreds of years of racial discrimination could a written law have such a profound influence on American behavior — especially on the intractable attitudes of the south?

The federal government is the only force in this country wielding enough power to ensure civil rights. One of the strongest methods to back civil rights is through tax. The merits of using tax as a means to ensure businesses and schools comply with the law is debatable. Yet, tax is a more benign avenue to maintain compliance with the law.

The IRS defended its initial decision saying they hadn't the authority to make national policy — only Congress does. But they had, by deed, reversed an important national policy. The wisest course for the IRS was to have held up granting tax exemption to the church schools until Congress had the opportunity to act. Fortunately, public outcry succeeded in persuading the IRS to put the matter back into the hands of Congress.

The statements issued by the presidents of the church schools following the first tax ruling were equally appalling. They, like a representative from the Goldsboro Christian Schools, were "very happy" with the government's change of position. To be "very happy" to be allowed to discriminate against a segment of the human population seems in direct violation of the basic tenants of Christianity. It should not matter whether the person is "Greek or Jew" black nor white. It should not — although it does to these 100 church schools.

The hypocrisy of the church schools — the hypocrisy and negligent attitude of the Reagan administration to have allowed the initial IRS tax ruling only fosters the climate in which racism is permitted to fester. Racism is a malignant disease — that can, if allowed to grow, turn a society violently against itself.



letters

Back pages

I am writing this letter in response to your highly personal and moving piece of Jan. 5, entitled "back pages" (although it actually appeared on page 2). You seem to think that, like the sheep gazing at Orwell's whitewashed wall, the people on campus are incapable of remembering the 1960's or anything that era stood for. You took it upon yourself to tell us what it was like to be a real revolutionary: one with real guns, real drugs, real sex, and real political activism.

Really Cort, I do not think your life was central to the politics of the time. People need to speak out against the brutal policies of state government, and always have, and always will. Your birth did not mark the discovery of revolution — neither did the 1960's in America. You were simply following a "fad". While you were getting sick on Colt 45 and "thrashing about" with your pantherlike girl, the real activists were fighting and dying for the real thing.

Your temporary attachment to what you describe as a glamorous game had no effect on the cause; neither did your subsequent, fickle abandonment of it, and neither will your childish vindictive coverage of the RCYB. From carefully inserted typographical "errors" in perfectly good copy, to purposeful withholding of letters of support, to fabricated quotes and articles like "back pages," you have proved your distaste of the RCYB and other politically active groups. You seem to think that because you are tired of playing revolutionary, everyone else should just give up the struggle, and play dead. You also seem

to think that anything they or anyone else ever did was modeled after your few years in Berkeley with Fast Fred, Annie, and Wendy.

With words like "hysterical," "radical," "children," and even "moderate" most recently, you attempt to humiliate others for their sincere actions. But I suspect that you, "remembering the craziness of riots, and the guns," are certainly more embarrassed by your actions, because they simply were not sincere. I would be embarrassed too.

You say, "We probably won't see the likes of such political activism in the near future." If "we" means you, perhaps you are right. But the real world is seething with a sincere rebellion that has never slowed, and is currently accelerating exponentially. This is not the "moderate second generation." You are assuming yours was first? It was not.

It wasn't even the fiftieth.

You say you've been in hotter beds than Eugene. Let me tell you something: you will be again, whether you are playing at being a revolutionary or an editor behind a desk.

You keep good company in attacking political activism in Eugene — the D.A., the judges and courts, the FBI. . . I'm sure that they would also agree that "America is a singular democracy." That is the kind of propaganda from "old-time lefties" they like to put up on the wall after it has been whitewashed — and on the "back pages" of papers like this one.

P.S. Who the hell told you that lesbianism is the ultimate of feminism? It is just a slightly broader philosophy than that.

Molly Widmer

Registration

On Jan. 7 Pres. Ronald Reagan announced his decision to retain draft registration. Of course the decision was never in doubt. Ostensibly Reagan's decision was based on the findings of a supposedly unbiased military manpower task force. If you believe it was unbiased you'll undoubtedly be overjoyed to learn that I'm in a position to sell you the Golden Gate Bridge at a very reasonable price. An example of the task force's bias from the very beginning was the inclusion as its executive director of Thomas Turnage, currently director of the Selective Service System, who as a member of the Reserve Forces Policy Board recommended, on March 11, 1981, a return to military conscription.

Reagan and his toadies have been bleating that this is a firm demonstration of our resolve. In a curious irony it is a signal but not to the Russians. What it demonstrates is that we are rushing headlong into another "noble cause" as Reagan likes to phrase it.

As you are subjected to government propaganda in the future you would do well to keep in mind the following quote taken from a Congressional Research Service study entitled "Oil Fields As Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study" dated Aug. 21, 1975. On page eleven it says "The Administration, Congress, or both — assisted by the mass media — could take steps to sway public opinion one way or another although success would not be assured."

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staff

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