

Clinton's presence proper at memorial

It was more than President Bill Clinton's right to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monday. It was his duty.

Years ago, Clinton evaded the Vietnam War draft because he was opposed to the government's intervention in Southeast Asia. For Clinton and other youths like him, the war represented America at its worst — a nation devoted to fighting an increasingly non-existent communist threat while ignoring the many social problems that existed within our own country.

For people opposed to the war, it was senseless to sacrifice American lives — not to mention the lives of the South Vietnamese people who didn't always appreciate America's efforts — on a frivolous war we couldn't win.

The bottom line is that Clinton committed no crime. He simply exercised the rights given him by the U.S. Constitution to protest the government's policies.

In many ways, he observed the true spirit of patriotism: to show concern for the direction of his country, to not blindly accept policies that could be detrimental to America's well-being.

Clinton did not violate the respect of troops who either had served or were serving. By enlisting in the military, they were following their moral consciences. By avoiding the draft, Clinton was following his. And both sides deserved and deserve respect for following their principles.

Many veterans held signs Monday protesting Clinton's presence. A few examples: "Disabled and Dead Accuse You," "The Truth Convicts You" and "On This Wall is the Name of Those Who Took Bill Clinton's Place." But these veterans, despite their bitterness, need to put hard feelings behind them and respect the fact that Clinton had the resolve to question his country's actions.

And regardless of whether one believes Clinton should have served in Vietnam, it was Clinton's moral duty to respect those who died for their government's actions. He holds the office that makes the most important decisions in this country — decisions that could cost people their lives — and thus must appreciate the dedication and bravery of the people who served.

The fact that he is the only president in the last 12 years to attend a service at the Vietnam memorial signifies his understanding of both the sacrifices made and his responsibility to honor those individuals.

In addition, his choice to evade the draft does not mean he doesn't have the right to observe the deaths of his comrades. Those who died in wartime should be remembered by all, not by a select few.

In the end, that is the true purpose of a Memorial Day — to honor those who died fighting. It is not to belittle those who chose not to serve.

Regardless of whether one believes Clinton should have served in Vietnam, it was Clinton's moral duty to respect those who died for their government's actions.



COMMENTARY

Facts don't support requirement

By Henry N. Goldstein

The physical sciences are largely free from ideological preconceptions. Though mathematicians, physicists and chemists undoubtedly have their disciplinary squabbles, at any given time, within their areas of expertise, they agree on the true, the false and the uncertain.

Things are different in the (so-called) social sciences, where differing perceptions of truth and significance are subject to persisting dispute, are colored by ideological considerations and are difficult to resolve by controlled experiments.

Marx's interpretation of history differs radically from that of Macaulay, Schumpeter or Keynes. Milton Friedman and James Tobin have both won the Nobel Prize in economics, but their views on optimal Federal Reserve policy differ 180 degrees.

Is the search for truth and significance in the social sciences therefore hopeless? Surely not. Critical evidence can often be assembled to support one line of explanation and reject another, and when this happens, scholars of integrity will adjust their views accordingly. Thus, the failures of socialism and central planning in the former Soviet Union, China, India, Vietnam, Latin America and Africa should tell every thinking person something about the relative merits of capitalism and alternative economic systems when both are tried "in the real world" with real human beings as players.

Nonetheless, ideological preconceptions are bound to remain, and "disputation unending" is as likely to characterize the social sciences in the future as it has in the past. Accordingly, we should view any given "expert's" views in these areas with skepticism. Today's accepted wisdom is very likely to be tomorrow's discredited fallacy.

I am opposed to the multicultural requirement because I believe that the factual assump-

tions and ideological viewpoints of most of its proponents are mistaken and because the new faculty that would be hired under the proposal would almost certainly share their erroneous preconceptions.

Let me illustrate. Suppose we are exploring this question: "Why is it that tenured faculty in departments of physics, mathematics and economics at all leading U.S. universities are mostly males?"

The typical politically correct explanation will run along these lines: (a) For historical reasons, men constitute the overwhelming majority of tenured faculty in these departments; (b) In a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle ways, these established male faculty discriminate against women — first, as students in their undergraduate and graduate classes, second, in selecting new colleagues, and third, in their treatment of any women who happen (despite all the obstacles) to become fellow faculty members; (c) The problem in these academic departments is male prejudice; and (d) The remedy is "Affirmative Action."

But here is a very different, non-PC explanation: (a) Successful study and research in mathematics, physics and economics requires strong quantitative abilities; (b) For reasons not well understood, women (at age 18) have, on average, much weaker quantitative abilities than men. (In the 1990 and 1992 entering freshmen classes at the University, 19 percent of males had SAT math scores of 650 or higher; for entering women students, that number was only 6 percent.); (c) Accordingly, relatively few women choose to

major in these disciplines, and relatively fewer still choose to take graduate work in the subject; (d) Moreover, a woman's scholarly career in the critical early-adult years tends, on average, to be handicapped (to a greater extent than a man's) by child-rearing distractions; (e) Thus the paucity of females as senior academics in these three disciplines mainly reflects supply-side considerations and has little to do with (largely non-existent) discrimination by males; and (f) Hence, "Affirmative Action" is no remedy for this problem — if it is a problem. (Is the scarcity of white professional basketball players "a problem"?)

I submit that this latter, non-PC explanation is far more plausible than the former, PC explanation. But what is the chance that my preferred explanation would surface in a discussion of this issue in (say) a women's studies class led by a new "approved" faculty member? Slender to non-existent, I would bet.

So I am really questioning the probable intellectual substance of an expanded "multicultural curriculum." I do so because I question the intellectual substance of existing sources in women's studies and ethnic studies. This, you might say, is a simplistic, uninformed prejudice. My defense (or is it offense?) consists of the following figures:

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Percentage Distribution of Undergraduate Grades in Selected Departments, Spring Term 1992*

	A	B	C	D/F/N
Women's Studies	49.9	43.1	6.6	0.4
Folklore & Ethnic Studies	81.5	17.8	0.7	0.0
Economics	23.8	36.8	29.4	10.1
Mathematics	24.9	30.2	30.6	14.3

* These are the percentages for all "graded grades" plus any "Ns." The computation excludes grades of P, NP, W, I, X and Y. Source: Office of the Registrar, University of Oregon, A Profile of Students at the University of Oregon, Nov. 1992, Table 3.1, pp. 51-52

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