

Strengthened Standards Improve College Work

by William E. Davis

(William E. Davis is chancellor of the Oregon State System of Higher Education.)



Nearly four years ago, the news media were reporting the findings and recommendations of an indictment of American education called "A Nation at Risk."

Even if you don't remember the report, you may remember what it said: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

Nine months earlier, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education had begun to attack the problem.

And in May 1983, board members adopted new, strengthened admissions standards for students seeking admission to Oregon's public, four-year colleges and universities.

We have just received the payoff—a report showing that last year's freshman, the first class admitted under the new requirements, are doing better work.

- Their grades are better.
- Their Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are higher.
- And they are taking harder college classes.

The old admissions requirements were based solely on grades, regardless of what classes a student took.

By contrast, the new admissions standards require four years of English, three years each of math and social science, two years of science, and two years of college-prep electives.

The College Board reported, for example, that by 1984-85 more than 80 percent of Oregon students had taken four years of English, compared with only 64 percent in 1979-80.

High school principals have told me that before the

new admissions requirements, they sometimes had trouble filling a single physics class; but now, they say, they can fill five or six classes.

It stands to reason that if students do more to prepare themselves in high school, they will do better in college. And they are.

Consider:

- The college work of freshman admitted under the new requirements did significantly better work, especially in math, foreign languages and English composition.

- Last year's freshman enrollment in basic-level intermediate Algebra declined 17 percent — and by 33 percent among those freshman who were graduated from Oregon high schools. Meanwhile, students enrolled in more college-level math, English composition and foreign language classes.

- SAT scores rose 11 points overall for 1985 entering freshmen and rose 29 points for minority ethnic groups; meanwhile, the 1986 statewide scores were second only to those of New Hampshire students.

For 1986, in fact, Oregon's combined verbal and math score (930) on the SAT was 24 points above the national score (906); the score of freshmen entering Oregon State System schools (947) was even better — 41 points above the national score.

We will share our report on the work of college freshmen with all Oregon high schools, who can use it to review the performance of their own graduates.

Our aim, like theirs, is to strengthen education of Oregon students at both levels.

William E. Davis is chancellor of the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Governor Neil Goldschmidt has established economic development as a number-one priority for revitalizing Oregon's economy. His recent and somewhat successful junket to the Far East lends credence to his well-publicized "Oregon Comeback" pamphlet which outlines, in part, how he proposes to accomplish this.

While his predecessor, former Governor Victor Atiyeh, did lay the groundwork, Neil brought home the "bacon". To both, Oregon is thankful.

The Japanese firm that is proposing to expand its operations to Oregon will be located in Clackamas County. Hopefully, when employment opportunities are announced for the new industry, N.E. Portland will receive its fair share.

This brings us to the question in mind. With a forty percent unemployment rate in northeast Portland and a continuing exodus of business and industry, we wonder just what the Governor has planned for this area's economic recovery. For starts, we suggest the following:

1. Issue a mandate to all state administrators to either comply with Affirmative Action policies or resign. The courts have recently clarified employment goals for minorities, and it's long-awaited decision should provide employers with the necessary tools to hire them without fear of legal recourse. It certainly would provide the opportunity to correct one of Oregon's biggest miscarriages of justice.

2. Establish an office of minority business and enterprise with the director reporting directly to the office of the Governor. This person would monitor all contracts awarded by state agencies to ensure proper compliance and minority participation. This would eliminate the mockery currently underway in state government in so far as awarding contracts to eligible minority firms.

Perhaps leadership from the state could serve as an inspiration to the City of Portland which recently thumbed its nose at the minority contracting firm of PEN-NOR, Inc.

Koch's Ego Costing Taxpayers

Last Wednesday, the Portland City Council authorized spending \$10,000 for a private attorney to defend the city against another lawsuit filed by City Commissioner Bob Koch.

Koch, a former police lieutenant, has filed suit to obtain a leave of absence from the Police Bureau while he serves on the City Council. The \$10,000 allocated by the city for legal fees, plus the \$10,000 authorized last year in another suit filed by Koch, has cost Portland taxpayers a total of \$20,000. This amount doesn't include the costs of legal fees for the appeals.

Commissioner Koch should put aside his ego, and stop squandering public money by forcing the city to defend itself against frivolous lawsuits. Both lawsuits filed by Koch have no merit.

In the first suit against the city of Portland, Koch challenged a 10-day suspension he received in 1985 meted by former Portland Police Bureau Chief Penny E. Harrington. Harrington suspended Koch without pay after he discussed with Ron Herndon, co-chairman of the Black United Front, possible discipline actions against two police officers involved in the infamous "Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em" T-shirt episode.

Koch's actions allegedly violated a Police Department rule prohibiting police from criticizing Bureau operations and policies. Although the suspension was ruled valid by the Multnomah County Circuit Court, Koch has appealed the decision to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

In his latest suit against the city, Koch is protesting the Portland City Council ruling that denied him a leave of absence from the Portland Police Bureau while he serves on the City Council. Koch wants the leave so he can return to work after his Council term ends and earn a police pension. Koch challenged the Council's decision in Circuit Court and lost. Once again, his ego got the best of him. Koch refused to accept the court's decision, and, once again, filed an appeal to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

The Observer respects the constitutional rights of each citizen to challenge the legal system in an effort to

attain their due process under the law. However, the question of due process isn't applicable in the lawsuits filed by Koch. It's a case of sour grapes.

In his first suit, Koch alleged that his constitutional right to free speech was violated when former Chief Harrington suspended him. Koch's assertion is nonsense. Every organization must have rules to ensure that the organization operates efficiently and to prevent individuals from operating out of a vacuum. Koch made a mistake when he broke departmental rules and should accept his punishment like anyone else.

In his latest suit against the city, Koch is protesting the city's decision that denied him a leave of absence from the Police Bureau in order to save his pension. Candidate Koch stated during the campaign that he would resign from the Bureau if he won the Council position from former councilwoman Margaret Strachan. However, once he won the Council seat, Commissioner Koch changed his mind.

If the Portland City Council had granted Koch a leave of absence from the Police Bureau, they wouldn't have acted in the best interest of the city or the public. As an elected official, Koch must make decisions on police-related matters. Granting him a leave while he is a city commissioner will indeed influence Koch's decisions on police business before the Council and is a direct conflict of interests, especially given the fact that Koch accepted money from the powerful Portland Police Association during his campaign.

Furthermore, it would be unfair to allow Koch to reserve himself a position on the Portland Police Bureau when African Americans and other minorities aren't given an equal opportunity to become police officers or a fair chance to advance within the Bureau once they're employed.

Given the economic hardships facing the city, particularly in Northeast Portland, it's a disgrace that public money is being wasted because of Commissioner Koch's refusal to put aside his ego.

Racism's Ugly Reprise: Its Roots and Our Responses

by Norman Hill

Black History Month is a most fitting time to examine the causes and consequences of the recent spate of racist incidents around the country. The well-publicized outcrops of racial bigotry—the killing in Howard Beach, the terrorizing of a black cadet by Klan-garbed students at the Citadel, an attack on black students at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), the assault on an interracial march in Forsyth County, Georgia—should disturb all Americans.

But what are the underlying factors of these outbreaks? And what should be the response of the black community and others concerned about these repugnant events?

There are those who maintain that the new manifestations of racial animosity are caused by long-simmering prejudices boiling to the surface. But while knee-jerk discrimination and racial bias will likely remain a stubborn reality in any multi-cultural society, there are profound differences between the nature of today's racism and the racism that existed in America before the elimination of segregationist laws in the mid-60s. Consequently, new approaches to understanding and dealing with the problem are essential.

The "old" form of racism was based on prejudging all blacks as somehow inherently undeserving or unworthy of equal treatment. Color was the sole consideration, not, as Dr. King noted, "content of character." This perception was codified in laws that barred blacks from full participation in American society in such areas as public accommodation, transportation, education and voting.

What makes the new form more insidious is not its outward manifestations. We are all familiar with hooded Klansmen and howling mobs. The difference is its basis in the misuse and misreading of observed sociological data. It is rooted in the perception that the social pathology of the black underclass—unemployment, crime, welfare dependency, family dissolution, the breakdown of social values—is attributable to race, not poverty. Even more disturbing, society misinterprets statistics dealing with comparative rates of black crime, prison population, teenage pregnancy, single-parent households, etc., as indicating racial inferiority. It is not only that the poor are being blamed for their poverty, but by misreading the plight of the underclass as an issue of color not poverty, society is projecting social pathology on all blacks, and singling blacks out as projects of dread and bigotry. This is a truly dangerous development. Today, a young casually dressed black man (or a Hispanic, for that matter)—be he a lawyer, doctor or minister—might not be buzzed into an exclusive boutique in New York not because of his color, per se, (as in the past) but because in the current social atmosphere color has become automatically associated with criminal or anti-social behavior.

Paradoxically, these misguided and odious perceptions have emerged at a time when profound economic

changes have hurt a growing segment of Americans of all races. Under these circumstances, racial conflict is all the more tragic since the victimizers have more in common with their victims. The unemployed white teenager in Queens and the unemployed black youth in Harlem should be class allies, not enemies. Neither the dispossessed farmer, nor the laid off white factory worker in Detroit, nor the idle black steelworker in Pittsburgh, can improve their condition until they recognize that they must join in a common struggle. The social pathology that growing elements in society are attributing to race exists everywhere there is poverty and economic dislocation, both here and abroad. Social deterioration is rampant among the white jobless in England as well as among unemployed black youths in New York. These conditions can be found with increasing frequency in predominantly white towns in this country ravaged by deindustrialization.

To combat bigotry and injustice today requires tactics that will address the profound economic changes that have had an adverse impact on all of America's poor, although unquestionably blacks have felt that impact more. Boycotting white businesses that serve blacks is not the answer. Nor is marching in an all-white town that is segregated, not by law, but by tradition. While such protests may briefly focus media attention on a particular situation, they have little long-term impact.

As long as the government fails to offer an economic and social agenda that will help all Americans, racism, intolerance and ethnic stereotyping will increase. As long as the Administration ignores the plight of the poor underclass and as long as some civil rights leaders insist on special agenda for black poverty rather than for poverty in general, the fires of the new racism will be further fueled. Those concerned with reducing racial animosity and securing social and economic equity must continue to work through the political process to press the government to adopt an agenda committing billions of dollars for education, job-training for the unemployed and displaced workers, and social programs to help ease the suffering of all of America's poor.

Economic justice cannot be legislated by the single stroke of a pen or the taking down of "Colored Only" signs. Nor can it be achieved by adopting the strategy and tactics of the 1960s. Black economic and social progress is intimately tied to the national economy performing well for all Americans. Today, we are becoming a polarized country of haves and have-nots, a situation that is a fertile breeding ground for racism, hate, and scapegoating that pits the disadvantaged or hard-pressed against each other. Unless there is a concerted effort by the government to apply all its resources to alleviating this country's economic problems, the rifts in our society will grow ever wider, and will have ominous consequences.

Norman Hill is President of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.

20 Tax Tips To Help You File Your 1986 Tax Return

Every year, filing your income tax becomes more complicated. Over the past 12 months, taxpayers have heard more information about their income taxes, as compared to recent years, because of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. But many will be glad to know that this year, for the last time, they can still file under the old rules, according to the Oregon Society of CPAs.

Here are 20 tax tips to refresh your memory on the old tax law.

1. The 1986 Tax Reform Act will have virtually no effect on this year's tax return.

2. The IRS provides copies of old returns for \$4.25 apiece.

3. Single individuals should itemize their deductions when they exceed \$2,480. Next year this will rise to \$2,540.

4. Married couples who file jointly should itemize their deductions when they exceed \$3,670. This will rise to \$3,760 on your 1987 return.

5. Itemized deductions include unreimbursed expenses for medical and dental care, interest payments, state and local taxes, sales taxes, charitable contributions, casualty and theft losses and certain job and investment costs. Next year, some of these will be eliminated while others will be restricted.

6. A married working couple can deduct 10 percent of the lower paid spouse's earned income — up to \$3,000 — which can reduce a couple's tax bill as much as \$1,500. This is the last year you can take this deduction.

7. Sharp increases in annual income may qualify you for income averaging, a formula that gives you a tax break. This will be impossible to take advantage of after this year.

8. If you pay someone to care for a child or another dependent while you work, you may qualify for a tax credit; up to \$720 for one child and up to \$1,440 for two or more dependents.

9. If you move to be closer to your job in 1986, you may be able to deduct the moving costs, including temporary housing, from your taxable income.

10. If you contribute to a political campaign in 1986, you can get a tax credit of up to \$50 (\$100 on a joint return).

11. Even if you do not itemize deductions, you can deduct one-half of charitable contributions made in 1986. Under the new tax law, this deduction will only be available to those who itemize.

12. If you donated to charity more than \$500 in furniture, clothing or other non-cash items, you must file a new IRS form — No. 8283.

13. If you donated to charity more than \$5,000 in non-cash contributions or more than \$10,000 in nonpublicly traded securities, you must also report it on form No. 8283, but you need to have it signed by a qualified appraiser and the recipient of the donation.

14. You can contribute to an Individual Retirement Account until April 15, 1987 and lower your 1986 tax bill while saving for retirement. Many people will find that, because their income exceeds set limits, they will not be able to make a tax-deductible contribution to an IRA for 1987.

15. You can contribute up to \$2,000 of your 1986 earnings to an IRA and twice as much if you are married and both you and your spouse work. Married persons — when only one spouse works — can contribute up to \$2,250. This will remain true, but will also be restricted.

16. Even if you apply for an extension to file your return, there are not extensions to the IRA contribution deadline.

17. You can contribute to an IRA even after you begin making withdrawals, as long as you have earned income or received alimony and are under age 70 1/2.

18. Custodial fees for IRA or Keogh accounts are deductible if they are paid with funds outside the account. Next year, this will be part of your miscellaneous deductions.

19. You can get a four month extension on filing and incur no late payment or filing penalties, if you pay at least 90 percent of your 1986 tax bill by April 15, 1987. But, you will have to pay interest on any taxes you owe.

20. You can still claim a deduction for the cost of hiring a CPA to prepare your tax return. This is true under the Tax Reform Act of 1986 as part of your miscellaneous deductions. Those that exceed two percent of your adjusted gross income will be deductible. However, even if you don't qualify, you might find it well worth the money.

Next Week: Special Three-Part Series

Beginning next week, The Observer will be running a three-part series on the book, "Capitol Hill in Black and White" by Robert Parker. In the series, we will describe Mr. Parker's "revelations of the inside and underside of power politics as the Black former maitre d' of the Senate dining room."

Befriended by Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, Parker served as maitre d' of the Senate dining room from 1964 to 1975. He moonlighted as a waiter for some of Washington's most influential people at

their private parties. He saw and heard a lot (and a lot of what he wasn't supposed to), some of which will appear in the series.

Born a sharecropper's son, he was befriended by LBJ (with whom he developed a love/hate relationship) in 1940, and became privy to important secrets as he arranged private meetings between Dr. Martin Luther King and senators afraid to be seen in public with him.

Watch for this exciting series beginning March 26th in The Observer.

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