

EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily
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The Portland Observer

Thin skin dilemma

BY JOHN PITNEY

Whatever their political differences, Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, Jack Kemp and Ross Perot all share one problem—thin skin.

In the blistering atmosphere of a presidential contest, hypersensitivity to criticism can spur a candidate into disastrous mistakes. Strategists in each camp are undoubtedly planning to jangle their opponents' nerves and to protect their own candidate from self-destruction.

If the 1996 campaign organizations follow standard procedure, researchers are studying documents and videotapes, in search of ways to inflame the opposition's sore spots. The candidates themselves will largely refrain from making the most personal comments, leaving the dirty work to others.

Some attacks will come from "official" surrogates — public figures who openly work with one of the campaigns. Others will come from "unofficial" surrogates — supposedly independent pundits who write

op-eds and deliver sound-bites at a candidate's behest.

Clinton strategist James Carville dubs such people "quote sluts."

Each campaign staff must also make its candidate aware of his own vulnerabilities and prepare him for the assaults that are sure to come.

This is delicate work. Thin-skinned candidates tend to be sensitive about the charge that they are thin-skinned. But experience shows the worst thing a candidate can do is lose his cool. One blow-up on the campaign trail can be fatal.

Clinton generally controlled himself during the fall campaign of 1992. Since then, however, America has witnessed periodic displays of presidential pique under almost constant sniping from his opponents and the media.

In 1994, Clinton said: "I don't suppose there's any public figure that's ever been subject to any more violent, personal attacks than I have, at least in modern history, anybody's who's been president."

Clinton is especially testy about

charges that he is inconsistent. Asked recently whether he would sign legislation to pay the legal fees of the former head of the White House travel office, he contradicted earlier White House statements and snapped, "I never gave my word on that."

When a reporter noted that a presidential spokesman had said otherwise, Clinton blew up.

"He didn't talk to me before he said that. I don't believe we should give special preference to one group of people over others. Do you?" he said.

Dole is most likely to take offense at criticisms of his wife or attacks on his integrity. In the 1988 primary season, the rival campaign of then Vice President George Bush rubbed these feelings raw by hinting that both Doles had engaged in improper financial dealings.

When Bush unexpectedly beat him in the New Hampshire primary, Dole uttered the line that has haunted him ever since: "Stop lying about my record."

Dole's running mate, Jack Kemp, is just as vulnerable. Hating the ste-

reotype of the "dumb jock," Kemp boils at suggestions that he lacks depth or intelligence.

Years ago, when a journalist asked about "Bob Forehead," a vacuous cartoon character reportedly based on Kemp, the answer was brusque: "Joke, laugh, humor. It's not me. It's a caricature."

Ross Perot is the touchiest of them all. He is sensitive to harsh attacks. He is sensitive to mild critiques. He is even sensitive to figments of his own imagination, such as the mythical 1992 plot to disrupt his daughter's wedding.

Of the major figures in the race, only Vice President Al Gore is immune from such problems. Indeed, he suffers from an equal and opposite difficulty — the inability to register any human emotion at all.

As for the rest, the words of ancient Chinese warrior Chang Yu still apply: "If the enemy general is obstinate and prone to anger, insult and enrage him, so that he will be irritated and confused and without a plan will recklessly advance against you."

Getting back to a good education

BY STAN FARYNA

The emphasis on self-esteem above achievement and midnight basketball over mid-day math has not done much for students. They are still inadequately prepared to deal with life. Perhaps, they are now worse off than before. It is often argued that public schools are exposing children to the problems of self-indulgence and self-pity as opposed to the virtues of self-control and accomplishment.

Untutored in these virtues, it should be no surprise that young Americans misunderstand the world and their role in it. It is also no surprise that high schoolers are unable to make good decisions and execute moral action. Yet these powers have long been known to be noble qualities of human nature.

While a tutor at manual Arts High school in south Central, Los Angeles, I observed that those who went on to college enjoyed a greater self-confidence than those that were indifferent to an uncertain future. The college-bound students did not sim-

ply feel good about themselves; they felt good about themselves because of their achievements. Of course, they could never have achieved their accomplishments without self-mastery.

There is no question that learning more about who we are will help us to live richer lives. Just so, an education in self-mastery would improve our children's chances of doing well in the world. Indeed, an education that teaches self-control seems to be consistent with the mission of public education. It would provide the information understanding by which students might become better citizens and better students.

What would this education entail? Not more midnight basketball! As Thomas Sowell might have recommended: midnight math would better serve students' needs and their aspirations. Beyond midnight math, Aristotle's Ethics makes a good supplement to the three Rs.

More than 100 years ago, Aristotle was recognized as an essential part of true education. Without such an ed-

ucation, one might not have been admitted to Harvard as late as the 1900's. In the same tradition, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other famous men were all well-acquainted with Aristotle.

What does Aristotle have to offer to today's student? Aristotle's great treatise on moral life, the "Nicomachean Ethics," explains in a clear and understandable manner that happiness is constituted by living and doing well. Though his treatment of moral life does not consider religious dimensions, it is an excellent foundation in moral education for both the religious and non-religious.

While Aristotle is often taught in college, high school students could begin to understand themselves in the years that often seem that most confusing. After all, high school is a time when students ask themselves and others about who they are and what they are to do in this life.

How can we be truly happy? How can we trust in and have respect for ourselves? How can we merit the

respect and the trust of others? How can we make good judgments about what we are to do in both the sense of a big picture and in everyday life? There are answers to these questions. Aristotle explains that if we put our mind and desires in order, we will be able to answer these questions for ourselves. We need only put ourselves in order.

Virtue is doing what is right. Doing what is right demands making a good decision about how we will act. But virtue doesn't necessarily happen at once. It demands making a good decision again and again. Virtue is a special habit in choosing what is right over what is wrong.

Just as people who have quit smoking often do not stop smoking the first time they try it, so virtue is difficult to achieve. It is possible and the rewards are rich.

Virtue teaches us how we shall accomplish good things. This is the kind of thought-provoking and straight-forward education that high school students seem in need of most.

perspectives

The Future Of Higher Education: Anywhere!

In this turbulent year, 1996, we have 51 million school children boarding, at some point, that 12-year express hopefully destined for the ivy halls of a higher education. In a not-overdrawn metaphor, we state that it is becoming increasingly difficult for many to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

What we are about here is a determination of how America's 'State' universities reached their present state of financial uncertainty and structural unpredictability. Such a task is monumental and we do not presume to give the full answer here. We can, however, provide a few benchmarks along a timeline of a little over a hundred years. From there one can follow up on indicated areas of research.

For openers let us begin with that classic documentation of fact and law used by lawyers, judges, researchers and others who find it useful to confirm their assertions, beliefs and doctrines before their peers, and the world: "Documents of American History", by Henry Steele Commager. It's at your public library.

This respected historian and researcher has the following to say about "Document No. 216, the Morrill Act, July 2, 1862", (U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XII, p. 503). "This act, granting public land for the support of industrial and agricultural education is...the most important piece of legislation on behalf of education ever passed. Under the terms of this act some 13 million acres of the public domain have been given to the states for the establishment of mechanical and agricultural colleges.

It was Abraham Lincoln who signed into law one of this nation's first landmark pieces of social legislation — popularly known as the "Land Grant Act." The concept of 'education for all the people' fitted in very well with America's expansionist views—"Westward Ho!" and Horatio Alger's, "Go West Young Man". These were the times when the "Populist" movement was beginning — an unlimited future for

the "common man."

Incongruously, the all-black 9th and tenth calvary was assigned the hard and dangerous job of protecting the westward-bound settlers, the builders of the transcontinental railroads and the telegraph lines from the Native Americans — And, then, they were promptly denied admittance to most of the new land-

grant institutions. And on the southeast coast, they were promptly thrown out of schools by

the reinstitution of racial barriers such as the infamous "Black Codes."

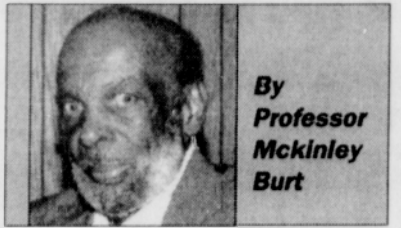
The bill which followed World War II introduced hordes of veterans to the idea of being the first in their family to attain a college degree — an opportunity to enter that land at the end of the rainbow, America's middle-class.

But there has been a steady attrition in the where withal that students/parents can muster for the ticket to the promised land. When the original student-loan program created in 1965 became ruinously expensive, Congress introduced a new program in 1992 with interest payable from day one. At the same time the nation's state universities (including Oregon) are experimenting with some rather inspired economics under the increasing pressures of faculty and plant costs.

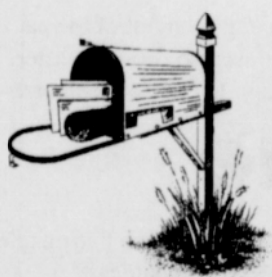
Some state-universities have responded to the nation-wide phenomenon of budget cuts by simply reducing the student body and/or course offerings. Increasingly affected by a "brain drain" are states like Oregon whose financial and administrative foot work have left something to be desired.

An August 23 Oregonian article by Romel Hernandez states that a third of Oregon's college bound students left the state last year, compared with just a fifth in 1988 (for 4 year colleges).

And, then, there are the many who have no route. The happy, gregarious, up ward-bound throng of yester-year has become somewhat subdued and pensive. Can you blame them?



By
Professor
McKinley
Burt



Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
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GOP bill could hurt minority businesses

BY JENNIFER AGWUNOBI,
SPECIAL TO THE NNPA

The Republicans are introducing a bill in Congress that may set back minorities and women even further.

If passed into law, HR 2128 or the Equal Opportunities Act of 1996, will effect minority and women business owners, and can have serious economic consequences for minority communities — including higher unemployment rates. The bill will eliminate affirmative action programs in the Federal government by making it illegal to consider race or gender when awarding Federal contracts or subcontracts.

Opponents of the bill say it threatens to turn back the clock for minorities and women because of hidden provisions that severely weaken ex-

isting anti-discrimination laws which have long had bi-partisan support Congress.

This new legislation comes in response to Presidential candidate Bob Dole's bill which comprehensively eliminated affirmative action in the Federal government, including education, employment and contracting. After receiving what the New York Times called "continued criticism" for his party's insensitivity toward minority groups and women, Dole withdrew his bill. However, the Republicans' amended bill singles out minority business owners and focuses on eliminating affirmative action programs in government contracting.

According to data from Americans for a Fair Chance, a consortium of six prominent legal organizations headed by women, African Ameri-

cans hold less than 2.5 percent of top jobs in the private sector. Women hold only three to five percent are minority women.

The lack of affirmative action programs tends to diminish contracting opportunities for women and minorities. For example, when the City of San Diego was ordered to end its affirmative action program, its public works subcontracts awarded to minorities plunged from 21.3 percent to a mere two percent. Philadelphia abandoned its affirmative action program, public works subcontracts awarded to women or minority firms dropped 97 percent.

"Affirmative action opens the door and gives me an entree and chance to bid...I've been able to secure other contracts because I've had this opportunity to demonstrate the quality of my work," said Judy DeAngelo, a carpentry contractor from Chicago.

According to data from the National Committee on Pay Equity,

women represent only five percent of top management in the largest U.S. industrial and service firms. Women earn only 72 cents for each dollar a man earns. African-American women earn 64 percent and Hispanic women 54 percent of white men's earnings.

"I would also point out that with the truly minuscule amount of contracts let to women and minorities, those white male contractors receiving 98 percent of the work have little reason to complain," said DeAngelo.

Critics of affirmative action complain that it takes job opportunities away from white men in favor of minorities or women.

But the facts show that affirmative action creates opportunities for white men.

Million of white men are employed by America's minority and women-owned businesses (which employ more workers than the Fortune 500 world-wide).

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Death penalty challenged

he execution of Douglas Wright is wrong because the death penalty itself is unjust and criminal.

The powerful and wealthy put to death those who are poor and powerless, and disproportionately of color. Most of those on death row could not afford to hire a lawyer. It proves that there are two laws in the US, one for the rich and one for the poor.

Also the death penalty is used against those that challenge the status quo. For instance, in the 1880's the Haymarket martyrs, who were

union organizers and radicals, were murdered by the state of Illinois for fighting for an eight-hour work day. In the 1950s the Rosenbergs were framed as atom spies and executed for refusing to turn in their fellow activists when US officials wanted to crank up the cold war and silence criticism of capitalism.

Douglas Wright should not be executed and the death penalty should be abolished. It does nothing to reduce crime. Instead it is a tool of violence against the working class.

Sincerely, Adrienne Weller

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