

# Virginia Scholar

Newsletter of the Virginia Association of Scholars

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Number 11

ISSN 1073-7235

March 1997

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**VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS**

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**G**reetings and Happy New Year! May all VAS members be blessed in 1997 with happiness and good health.

The State of the Union Address was remarkable this year. President Clinton focused principally on education, though yours truly just can't find Education among the enumerated Federal powers listed in the U.S. Constitution. (By the way: how many Republicans have pointed that out?) Constitution aside, for a moment, it's worthwhile to reflect on the state, in 1996, of the search for the Truth – certainly one rough-and-ready function of the education VAS members promote every day.

At schools across the country, youngsters are taught that Ancient Greece robbed Africa of its heritage in order to bolster its civilization. Mr. Ron Karenga, author of a course syllabus for one such school in Chicago, contends that black children's self-esteem requires this "history". The fact that it is fake seems of little concern to school officials. As Mary Lefkowitz points out in her superb *Not Out of Africa*, "Afrocentric" education is replete with such errors, misjudgment and downright lies.

The new version (circa 1996) National Standards for History in the Schools, published by the Council for Basic Education, reads in many places like an "I hate America" brochure. In its section on modern America, the Council highlights the "continuing tension among Protestants, Catholics and Jews, most dramatically exemplified in the resurgence of Protestant fundamentalism". In a section on the Great Depression and World War II, it contends that students should learn about "the irony of racial minorities fighting for democratic principles overseas that they were still denied at home". In the section on postwar America, it argues that students should be able to "analyze the continued gap between poverty and the rising influence of the middle class". In a section devoted to the Vietnam war, it insists that students should be able to "explain the composition of the American forces recruited to fight the war." In a section on the American Labor Movement, it advocates that students be able to "explain the response of management and government at dif-

ferent levels to labor strife in different regions of the country". The constant insinuation, throughout this book of "Standards", is that the United States is a country where the moral gloom of oppression and protest virtually never gives way to sunshine.

Also in 1996, President Clinton attempted (with elections nearing) to educate all Americans to the plight of burning black churches, recalling one particularly poignant episode while he was growing up in Hope, Arkansas. The only things wrong with that picture are: 1) that black churches are not being targeted by arsonists today; and 2) that no black church at all burned down during Bill Clinton's youth. Another "new truth" from our Education President?

These "experiments" with the truth need unremitting criticism, else they take hold. I am reminded of a television debate some years back. In it, Professor Stanley Fish of Duke University (a post-modern English professor who dabbles in Legal Interpretation, and whom I have had the occasion to debate myself) self-righteously termed the National Association of Scholars (our umbrella organization) a "quasi-fascist organization". He was immediately challenged by his opponent, Dinesh D'Souza of the American Enterprise Institute, to substantiate his outrageous claim. In reply, Fish meekly announced, "I was merely speaking metaphorically."

As Herbert London (of NYU and the New York Association of Scholars) has noted, Socrates' enemies now appear to rule the Republic. Words are whatever you want them to mean. Post-modernists liberated from the shackles of rational thought by the "politics of meaning" may have discovered new freedom, but in the process they have undermined the disciplines on which rational discourse depends. Core curricula are jettisoned (see the soon-to-be published VAS study on this subject) and standards dumbed down (stay tuned for a VAS colloquium on this point), all in the name of another new truth: "equal access" to diplomas, jobs and fortune for all.

May VAS resist these new truths with vigilance and courage.

*Michael I. Krauss*

*We hold science in awe. We defer to its expertise, even to scientific theories that contravene common sense (as in quantum mechanics or relativity). Because science has become the role model for all authoritative knowledge, we have extended that courtesy to other fields of knowledge. Plain damage has resulted therefrom, for example through permitting “experts” in “education” to institute one “reform” after another, all based on theories that clearly contravene common sense and everyday experience.*

Science<sup>1</sup> acts upon us in countless ways:

- Science has transformed our way of life, by immeasurably raising our standard of living via technology; that’s a platitude of the conventional wisdom.
- Our philosophies of life have been largely fashioned in response to modern science. That’s less widely but still generally recognized.
- “Science” has become an omnipresent, universally imitated role-model. That’s just as consequential for everyday affairs, but rarely noted.

The interplay of science and technology is complex and will not concern us further here<sup>2</sup>. What modern science did to humankind’s view of the world is encapsulated in Johannes Kepler’s conclusion, in the early 17th century, that “the universe is not similar to a divine organism, but rather is similar to a clock’.... *But clocks are things you can tinker with.* You buy and sell clocks; wind and adjust them; redesign them; replace them, even, without too great a pang of guilt, smash them. If the world comes to be perceived as genuinely ‘clocklike’, with man in the external role of ‘clockminder’,... other attitudinal changes are likely to follow... [that] amplify those aspects within our cultural tradition that speak of ‘man’s dominion over nature’... [and] diminish... [and make] more tentative,... reverential attitudes towards nature now commonly classified as ‘religious’, and which stress man’s ‘unity with nature’. The world is no longer ‘divine’. Our ‘common-sense’ attitudes, and our whole pattern of behaviour, have changed”<sup>3</sup>.

Darwinian natural selection completed the process: not only the inanimate world but living things too came to be seen as machinery. Thus the modern “scientific” world-view: all can be explained by natu-

ral laws and material mechanisms; religion is scientifically a superstition and socially an opiate for the masses. Though many intellects manage to combine scientific expertise and religious belief<sup>4</sup>, popular interpretations of science tend to promulgate the simplistic view that science has (rightly) displaced religion. A fine recent discussion of this theme is in Bryan Appleyard’s *Understanding the Present*<sup>5</sup>, which stirred up appropriate controversy (scan some of the reviews the book received<sup>6</sup>).

Science’s overthrow of religion was owing to science’s unquestionable success at providing a convincingly coherent description of how the natural world works. By the late 19th century this was so impressive that science’s method came to be regarded as a universal road to reliable knowledge. That view persists: nowadays everything wants to be “scientific” and everyone wants to practice a “science” (see *The Cutting Edge*, p.19).

Until early in the 20th century, science was a commonly shared part of public intellectual discourse. The “Two Cultures” of C. P. Snow<sup>7</sup> – mutually uncomprehending literary and scientific cultures – did not exist before the 1900s. Scientific matters were of salient interest to writers, theologians, and other members of the intelligentsia. Practicing scientists were also popularizers of science, in public lectures as well as in writing.

As the 20th century advanced, so did intellectual specialization. Philosophy of science separated from the practice of science. Popularization of science became a task of science writers and journalists rather than of scientists<sup>8</sup>. Within science, specialties and sub-specialties proliferated.

The authority of science as arbiter of knowledge, of scientists as experts and gurus, was put beyond question by the successful Manhattan (atom-bomb)

***THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL***

***IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING***

Project of World War II. Obviously society could only benefit by encouraging as much scientific research as possible, employing science wherever possible, doing in all imaginable ways what science does. "Science" became the universal source of admiration – and, of course, of envy and jealousy and that sincerest flattery, imitation<sup>9</sup>.

Within science, it makes sense for experts in the manifold sub-specialties to accept each other's findings and opinions without much ado. There is sufficient overlap of specialties to allow reasonable if somewhat superficial judgments to be made across sub-disciplinary boundaries; moreover it quickly becomes plain when borrowing hasn't worked, and the appropriate adjustments are made.

Overall and certainly in the longer run, all engaged in science agree on how problems get solved and arguments settled: *the proof is in the pudding*. What works works, what doesn't work doesn't work, and it's no use wishing or pretending otherwise; it doesn't pay to try faking it when your experiment doesn't run or your theory is *wrong*.

Settling arguments and solving problems goes so rationally (albeit not necessarily quickly!) in science because Nature's voice (again, in the long run) is so powerful *on the issues that science deals in*. No sane person would nowadays hold that matter is an indivisible fluid rather than atomic. No sane person would nowadays hold that we would fly off into space if the Earth really were rotating. Too many demonstrations can be performed for such errors to be insisted upon as truths. Scientific results and theories are open to all to test and confirm as they will. If something long satisfactory turns out to have a flaw, those who study the matter will agree (eventually, once enough data have been amassed).

Science is **unique** in this settling of argument on ultimately empirical grounds. When it comes to matters of human behavior or public policy, the evidence is rarely so clear and never so compelling that all sane people find themselves forced to concur; nor do the "experts" in those fields speak with a single voice **even about technical issues in their own bailiwick**.

Within science the experts may disagree over public policy: "Should a Superconducting Super-Collider be built?" "Is it time for a Human Genome Project?" But on **technical** issues, there is significant unanimity (again, given that sufficient evidence is in): more energetic particle collisions are needed to discover "new physics"; insight into human develop-

ment will come from a knowledge of the sequence of bases in the human genome. **In non-scientific fields there is no expert unanimity even on similarly fundamental issues internal to the subject**. Explanations of human behavior by Freudians differ from those of non-Freudians, and the latter do not agree among themselves. Equally eminent sociologists give different advice, even diametrically opposing advice, about how to deal with inner-city crime, or with lagging educational performance, or with disadvantaged minorities – not just on whether or not to institute particular social policies because of the resources needed, they differ in their **claimed sociological understanding** of these matters.

**while it is possible  
to speak wisely about education,  
no one can speak definitively<sup>10</sup>**

Science acquired its reputation through **scientific** successes: explaining about gravity, energy generation in stars, radioactivity, etc.; and employing the successful explanations for useful things – antibiotics, lasers, transistors, etc. etc. So the opinions of expert scientists came to be seen as worthy of acceptance. The conventional wisdom has not, however, successfully distinguished matters on which that is appropriate from matters where it is **not** appropriate, namely on anything **beyond the technical scientific issues**. The scientists who built the atom bomb were no more qualified than anyone else, to pontificate about whether or not it should be used. High-energy physicists are no more qualified than anyone else, to decide whether \$20 billion should be spent on a Superconducting Super-Collider. Molecular biologists are not qualified to decide whether or how society shall actually use genetic engineering. Scientists of necessity must have the say as to what is possible and what it might take; but decisions on whether or not to do something are not for the experts to make – making social decisions is unavoidably a political process.

Science separated from the common intellectual culture as the 20th century wore on, at least in part because of the very success of science. The cumulative knowledge amassed in the separate specialties began to exceed what any individual could master. Physics and chemistry delved so deeply into Nature's processes that the observational techniques

and their interpretation became ultra-specialized. To contribute meaningfully, to carry on research, even to properly **understand** the technicalities, it was now necessary to become a specialist.

Nineteenth-century science could be conveyed satisfactorily in everyday terms. Our present, much deeper understanding of Nature cannot. Little particles behaving like billiard balls could be envisioned with little if any stretching of imagination. But 20th-century science performs uses models without counterpart in direct human experience and often **counter to common sense**: atoms as mainly “empty space”! The “electrons” that form their outer “shells” not really particles but probability distributions of charge density – even though we talk of their “spin” and “orbit”?! Light often behaving like waves, which we understand by analogy with waves on water for example; yet at other times light behaving like a stream of particles, “photons”!? Indeed all sub-microscopic entities somehow like waves some of the time and somehow like particles the rest of the time! When they move very fast, moreover, they get heavy and their “time” slows down!?!

So the success of modern science brought us to a stage where it's natural to view scientists as experts with insights that cannot be fully shared with ordinary mortals; experts whose word should be taken even against plain common sense.

That wouldn't matter if we appropriately deferred to scientists' expert opinions only on technical matters inside science. But our society often lapses **inappropriately** into deferring to scientists' opinions **even on matters outside the technicalities** of science. Far more damaging even than that, though, is that our society has increasingly conferred on “experts” **in all fields** the same aura of authoritative knowledge and understanding that has surrounded scientists for a century or more. And so it has come about that we accept opinions and advice for action in matters of education and social policy that are clearly counter to sound common sense and to manifest experience.

#### **SPEAKING OF COMMON SENSE...**

“We have just learned from Churchill Livingstone that they cannot publish any paper without their copyright form being signed by all authors, including deceased authors”

*Milton Schlesinger, letter to  
Chemical & Engineering News 11xi96, p.6*

How else to explain, for instance, that “experts” in “education” for much of this century have been allowed to indoctrinate school-teachers into such misguided “philosophies” of teaching that the resulting performance of school students in the United States is worse than in most other developed countries?

**E**ducationists and social scientists like the rest of society covet the status of being “scientific”. Now one of the marks of modern science is that its knowledge is hermetic, available only to initiates. So one way to impress on others that one is “being scientific” is to use theories or “explanations” that run counter to common sense, that “make sense” only to initiates. “‘Common sense’ has received widespread negative treatment in introductory sociology textbooks”<sup>11</sup>; “what sociologists say about common sense is the self-serving ideology of a vested interest group seeking to establish and maintain a monopoly over ‘its’ professional turf”<sup>12</sup>.

**Educationists like other “social scientists” have come to pride themselves on contravening common sense, as a totem of scientific status:** “we must... let go of a ‘common sense’ theory of learning”, says the Professor of Education (p.16).

But on matters of social policy, **including matters of science or technology**, common sense is the only rational guide. The reasons are legion:

- In many fields, “expert” does **not** entail “able to predict” or “able to do”. For instance
  - “in our time a successful cancer researcher is not one who ‘solves the riddle,’ but rather one who gets a lot of money to do so”<sup>13</sup>.
  - As a world-recognized “expert” on the Loch Ness monster, I have a comprehensive knowledge of the literature about it, the folklore, the personalities – but that gives me no ability to advise where or when the Monster can be viewed, nor do I even know what it is.
  - An “expert” in “education” could be familiar with everything ever written on the subject without being qualified to advise how education should best be organized or what teachers should actually do in a classroom or what “good” or “bad” teaching might be.

Yet so hypnotized are we by the notion of “expertise”, especially *scientific* expertise, that journalists see as fit to print such experts' profundities as “Black English has an internal logic, a pattern of construction ‘based on sound scientific principles of language’... [from Jerry Sadock, University of Chicago]... The

school board's reasoning [in calling for Ebonics instruction] is 'not PC [politically correct], it's scientific fact' [from Gregory Ward, Northwestern University, a linguist on the executive board of the 6000-member Linguistic Society of America]"<sup>14</sup>.

Again, the British Government sees value in a code of publishers' conduct to be "monitored by... experts in the fields of sex education, adolescent sexual development and ethics"<sup>15</sup>. But if the "experts" in those fields knew **how to get desirable results**, then there'd be scant need for a publishers' code in the first place. Those "experts" will no doubt deploy their scientific anti-commonsense expertise with similar absurdity as the "many psychologists [who] are concluding... [that happiness is] largely determined by genes, not by outside reality"<sup>16</sup>.

- Though there are at any given time dominant viewpoints among the communities of economists, educationists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and the like, **there are almost always substantial minorities dissenting from any majority view**.

In the natural sciences, by contrast, there is a single "paradigm". Disagreements are **temporary**, on **details**. Outside the natural sciences, however, there is **long-term, ideologically based disagreement over basic issues**. You get different "explanations" and contrary advice from Marxists and from non-Marxists. There are different schools of thought about learning, about what social justice might be and how to attain it, and over all other issues in human affairs. There are no insights sufficient to resolve our dilemmas to be found in the often counter-commonsensual "expertise" of Adlerian, Freudian, Jungian, Skinnerian, or any other type of "expert" psychological thought.

Given disagreement among the "experts", we have only common sense to guide us, **which** of the experts to follow – or whether to ignore them all might be "doing exactly the right thing" (p.16).

- Reality or Nature have been shown by science to run differently than common sense **only in matters of non-human scale**: the contraction of time at high speeds, the inability to measure separately momentum and position of a "particle", the "wavicle" nature of sub-microscopic entities – all these have no counterpart in macroscopic, everyday affairs. The proof of such counter-commonsensual models is that by using them **correct predictions of actual behavior follow**. In human

affairs, we are perfectly able to observe results like the relative ignorance and incompetence of American school-children compared to most European ones. It **cannot be true** that American education is based on better models of teaching and learning if its results are worse.

While the results of American grade-school education are admired neither at home nor abroad, the education that graduate students receive in the United States, especially in the sciences and engineering, is the envy of the world. **But that is an educational haven that has not (yet?) been influenced by educationist theories**: it remains solidly based on much "rote learning", dreary time-consuming effort, and rewards only for results and not for time spent. Which, of course, is why it has remained successful.

The lesson is further driven home by the well known fact that, increasingly, those who succeed best in graduate work are students who received their preparatory undergraduate education in Asia or in Europe rather than in the U.S.

*The people in his office could not speak or write English properly...  
'All the letters sent from my office  
I have to correct myself'<sup>17</sup>*

American educationists for decades have indoctrinated prospective teachers with notions that offend common sense:

- That left to their own inclinations, children will "gravitate toward good academic experiences" (p.17).
- That teachers don't need to know subject-matter content, only "how to teach"<sup>18</sup>.
- That schools can and should engage in social engineering as a higher priority than teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic<sup>19</sup>.
- That instilling inherent self-esteem in children will lead them to achieve something, rather than *vice versa*<sup>20</sup>. (So it isn't really surprising that we now have college students with sufficient "self-esteem" to argue for grades higher than can be justified by their performance<sup>21</sup>.)
- That reading English can be learned non-phonetically by some "word-recognition" or "whole-language" approach<sup>22</sup>.

- That teaching can be best carried on for the benefit of all students if classes contain the widest possible range of abilities.
- That learning occurs best in “open classrooms” where different groups do different things simultaneously and noise and bustle prevail.
- etc. etc. etc.

The well attested consequences, **over decades**, have been:

- poorer performance by American students than by Asian or European students on tests of all sorts;
- complaints by employers of high-school and college graduates that their new employees are **incompetent**.

→A well-spoken, not obviously unintelligent cashier could not give my wife change from a \$20-dollar bill for a \$13.64 purchase when the cash-register’s calculator was inoperative.

→When I told that story in class, one woman topped it: she had stymied a cashier by offering \$10.21 for a \$9.21 purchase.

→At a recent conference between scientific experts and businessmen, some of the latter mentioned that they now preferred to hire older people rather than new graduates, because though more expensive the latter could at least read and write and figure<sup>23</sup>.

**Over decades** the response by the education establishment has been to put into practice one bizarre, farfetched “innovation” after another, none of them adequately tested beforehand and all of them contrary to common sense. A recent article<sup>24</sup> summarizes in horrifying detail the innovations in math teaching since World War II:

For four decades the United States has skittered from one math fad to another – each bringing re-written textbooks, new training courses for teachers, and new homework assignments to befuddle parents...

Our math instruction oscillates between the same poles that shape and reshape our culture, politics and even our morality. We are torn between discipline and liberation, between demanding performance and promoting self-esteem... [We] fixate on facts and formulas one moment, then complain the next that such ‘rote learning’ fails to produce ‘true understanding’...

Such conflict among professional educators would be unthinkable in a country like Japan where instruction changes slowly, **guided by classroom successes**...

17-year-olds [in the US] are no stronger in math than 20 years ago. Only six of 10 high school seniors can compute with decimals, fractions and percentages. Fewer than one in 10 can use beginning algebra... ‘Things the average [college freshman]

## VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

PLEASE HELP BY GIVING

*Virginia Scholar* started in December 1993. As well as to NAS & VAS members in Virginia, it goes to members of Governing Boards of the major Virginia universities, to media representatives, to NAS affiliates in other states, to such organizations as the Center for Individual Rights, and to an increasing number of individuals who heard of it by word of mouth and expressed interest.

There’s no ready way to judge the impact we’re having. But as Editor I treasure:

- a Governing Board member who joined NAS after reading *VS*
- several alumni who did likewise
- a couple of alumni and others who wrote to university administrators on matters *VS* had brought to their attention.

That’s the sort of thing that helps me stay enthusiastic about the job of Editor. Frankly, if it were just a newsletter to distribute among our own members I would not find it worth the time put in.

NAS, which has fully funded our activities up to now, believes State affiliates should become financially self-supporting. If you’re a member and want to help us continue and expand our outreach activities, please consider making us one of your favored charities.

If you’re not a member of NAS or VAS but have been getting *VS* and enjoy it, please consider making an occasional gift.

PLEASE HELP BY DOING

**Share *Virginia Scholar*** with as many people as you can. Pass it around. Tell us where to send complimentary copies. We have extras of most of the back issues. Ask us for a bunch and **send them to the Departments on your campus** with a request that they be circulated among the faculty.

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student would know backward and forward 12 years ago, these students don’t know at all,’ said Jerry

**THE EXPERTS SPEAK**

by Christopher Cerf & Victor Navasky<sup>25</sup>  
is a **DEFINITIVE COMPENDIUM**

**OF AUTHORITATIVE MISINFORMATION** – utterances by experts in various fields that those experts might dearly have wished to be able to retract. Add to their collection this definition of The Golden Rule, reworded by D. W. Miller & M. K. Starr who are “management experts”:

**The Golden Rule is another codification of considerations which should govern our choice of actions lest we end by sub-optimizing in terms of our interpersonal objectives**<sup>26</sup>

As Jacques Barzun noted in citing this, “In our day, parody never exceeds actuality”.

Rosen of Cal State Northridge, lamenting how students now use calculators to add single-digit numbers

Note how even a critic accepts without comment that “demanding performance” and “promoting self-esteem” are somehow *opposed* to one another when in actual fact self-esteem is gained through meeting demands, and the stiffer the demand, the greater the resulting self-esteem.

Note even the critic’s tacit acceptance that “rote learning” and “true understanding” are somehow *opposed* to one another when in actual fact the first is a necessary step on the way to the second. I was throughout school among the top students, yet I’ve never been able to learn any general principles or “skills” without a lot of drudgery of memorizing and practicing *specifics* first, **before** gaining any “true understanding” of what I was doing.

Over most of human history in most countries much learning was successfully instilled into most children. We can do it again, in the United States, if we will just use humankind’s accumulated experience and **common sense**:

- Left to their own choices, children **do not** “gravitate toward what’s good for them” (17) – they become savages, as *The Lord of the Flies*<sup>27</sup> graphically describes. “The reason teaching has to go on is that children are not born human; they are made so”<sup>28</sup>; “none of us is born human; each is what he learns to become”<sup>29</sup>.
- Children need to be taught, they cannot be left to “discover” for themselves, be it in traditional

modes or in front of a computer screen.

The vacuity of the very expensive rush into Infotech (“information technology”) in schools and colleges has been cogently criticized by a number of people with high expertise in information technology, for example:

“Exactly which problem will Web-surfing attack? Our children’s insufficient shallowness? Excessive attention spans? Unhealthy fixation on in-depth analysis? Stubborn unwillingness to push on to the next topic until they have mastered the last? We need *less* surfing in the schools, not more. The Web is a great source of pictures – are we trying to cure our children of excessive interest in the written word? Depraved indifference to glitz and snazzy graphics?”<sup>30</sup>

- Children love to learn and are capable of learning an astonishing range and amount of stuff from the earliest of ages.
- Children are enormously proud of what they learn, they derive enormous satisfaction from it. All we need do is show them proper approval for the learning they do and thereby reinforce the enjoyment they get from it. Learning can be learned to be **fun in itself**. Learning doesn’t have to be disguised as television or game-playing to be enjoyed.
- Beyond a certain point, learning more requires indubitable effort and concentration and freedom from distraction. Children can make the transition to that **provided we don’t apologize to them for it, or tell them that it shouldn’t be like that**. It is necessary for civilized society that humans learn to delay gratification. So in schooling, children must progressively be led to accept longer and longer delays between the effort put into learning and the rewards that come from it.
- Children are perfectly able to understand, **if only we will put it to them**, that success in intellectual matters requires the same dedication as success in sport. No one becomes a star, or even minimally competent, in football or basketball without putting in **hours of daily practice over many years**. Becoming educated entails putting in equal amounts of time on homework: memorizing, practicing, correcting errors, periodically reviewing the basics.
- Neither children nor most adults easily do what’s best for them. The customer is **not** “always right” in matters of health or education, for example. One who joins a health spa cannot demand fitness

in exchange for the fees paid, the fitness comes only if the customer properly uses the facilities provided. Similarly, paying taxes and fees to schools and colleges does not and cannot entitle anyone to learn anything if they will not do the necessary work.

After decades of under-achievement and mis-guidance, are we perhaps at last ready to bring common sense and achievement back into our schools and colleges? “Experience does seem to show... that it is the traditional methods that help our children learn more effectively”<sup>31</sup>.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> I'm using the not-uncommon definition that “science” equals “the natural sciences”

<sup>2</sup> For a summary and further references, see Henry H. Bauer, *Scientific Literacy and the Myth of the Scientific Method*, University of Illinois Press, 1992, pp.124-8

<sup>3</sup> David O. Edge, “Technological metaphor”, in D. O. Edge & J. N. Wolfe [eds.], *Meaning and Control – Essays in Social Aspects of Science and Technology*, Tavistock, 1973

<sup>4</sup> For example, John Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker*, Princeton University Press, 1994

<sup>5</sup> Bryan Appleyard, *Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of Modern Man*, Pan Books, 1992 (Doubleday, 1993)

<sup>6</sup> For example *Economist* **323**, 2v92, p.105; Don Cupitt, *New Statesman & Society* **5**, 8v92, p.33; Richard Webster, *Times Literary Supplement* #4650, 15v92, p.25; Ian Hacking, *London Review of Books* **14**, 28v92, p.5; Simon Wolff, *New Scientist* **134**, 30v92, p.44; Roy Herbert, *ibid.* **138**, 29v93, p.43; Timothy Ferris, *New York Review of Books* **40**, 13v93, p.17; Stuart Sutherland, *NYTimes Book Review*, 27vi93, p.23; Jeffrey Marsh, *Commentary* **96**, xi 1993, p.48

<sup>7</sup> C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures: and a Second Look*, Mentor Books, 1964 (Cambridge University Press, 1963)

<sup>8</sup> John C. Burnham, *How Superstition Won and Science Lost*, Rutgers University Press, 1987

<sup>9</sup> “Imitation is the sincerest of flattery”, Charles Caleb Colton (1780-1832), *Lacon* I #217

<sup>10</sup> Neil Postman, *The End of Education*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995, p.139

<sup>11</sup> James A. Mathisen, “A further look at ‘common sense’ in introductory sociology”, *Teaching Sociology* **17**, vii 1989, 307-15

<sup>12</sup> John Pease, “Sociology and the sense of the commoners”, *American Sociologist* **16**, 1981, 257-71

<sup>13</sup> Erwin Chargaff, *Voices in the Labyrinth*, Seabury, 1977, p.89

<sup>14</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, 4i97, pp.A1,15

<sup>15</sup> *Press & Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland), 12vii96, p.17

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Goleman, “Happiness may lie in your stars”, *International Herald Tribune*, 18vii96, p.10

<sup>17</sup> Prince Charles of England, cited in *Guardian* (UK) 12vii96, p.1 — British educators having adopted American educationists’ theories

<sup>18</sup> When I first heard this, I did not believe it could be literally true. But in 1956 or 1957, in Ann Arbor (MI), that assertion was made to me by the

principal of the local high-school. See also, for example, Albert Lynd, *Quackery in the Public Schools*, Grosset & Dunlap, 1953 (Little, Brown, 1950)

<sup>19</sup> This began before 1920: Richard Mitchell, *The Graves of Academe*, Little, Brown, 1981, especially “The Seven Deadly Principles” (p.69ff.)

<sup>20</sup> I have this too on direct authority, of recent graduates from Colleges of Education

<sup>21</sup> See for example Kurt Wiesenfeld, “Making the grade”, *Newsweek*, 17i96, p.16

<sup>22</sup> Spoken language predates writing by an unknown number of millennia. Writing was devised as a way of representing **sounds** – even such so-called ideographic scripts as hieroglyphic, Mayan, or Chinese are not *purely* “thing-pictures” but a mixture of those with phonetic symbols (failure to understand that set back the decipherment of Mayan by decades – see Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, Thames & Hudson, 1992). The “word-recognition” scheme followed from William Wundt’s (1832-1920) finding that **adults used to reading**

“recognize” words as they read without having to sound them out; and theorists thereupon decided that reading could be **taught from scratch** in that manner – hence generations of American school-children have had difficulty learning to read. Following that misapplication, American educationists evolved and put into practice one theoretical gimmick after another, none of which work in practice, but they refuse to return to the phonetic method **that works throughout the civilized world**. For instance “Ebonics” is invented as a self-standing language instead of accepting the finding of decades ago that children learn to read easily **provided the writing is phonetic enough** – indicating that “Ebonics”-speaking children should be taught to speak standard English on the way to teaching them to read – see William Raspberry, “Ebonics, ‘third round’”, *Roanoke Times* 12i97, HORIZON3

<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, Professor John Cairns

<sup>24</sup> Richard Colvin, “Formulas for math problems”, *Los Angeles Times* 5i97, pp.A1,22,23

<sup>25</sup> Published 1984 by Pantheon Books (Random House)

<sup>26</sup> *Executive Decisions and Operations Research*; cited in Jacques Barzun, *Science: The Glorious Entertainment*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, p. 176n

<sup>27</sup> William Golding, *The Lord of the Flies*, Faber & Faber, 1954 (Coward-McCann, 1962)

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Barzun, *Teacher in America*, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954, p.17 (Little, Brown, 1945)

<sup>29</sup> Michael Oakeshott, “A Place of Learning” in *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education*, ed. Timothy Fuller, Yale University Press, 1989, p.21

<sup>30</sup> David Gelernter, professor of computer science at Yale, in *Weekly Standard*, 4xi96 (cr. *Chronicle of Higher Education* 29xi96, p.B7)

<sup>31</sup> Donald MacLeod, “Stick to tradition, Charles tells teachers”, *Guardian* (UK) 12vii96, p.1

**POSTSCRIPTS**

If that chain of reasoning is sound, and as biological science becomes less and less explainable in everyday terms with the continuing advance of molecular biology, one would predict that biologists, pure and applied including clinicians, will offer increasingly anti-commonsensical advice **that society will swallow**. Indeed, such high-tech medicine as liver or bone-marrow transplants may already be examples: they offer brief survival with little quality of life and yet are touted as progress and thought to be everyone's right to have. The acceptance of the HIV-causes-AIDS hypothesis against so much commonsensically understandable evidence may be another instance.

That the inappropriate use of the natural sciences as universal role model is a significant factor may also be supported by a comparison of English-speaking with other developed countries. Only in English has "science" come to mean simultaneously "natural science" and "guaranteed true". In German, for example, "knowledge" is *Wissenschaft*. Scholars and scientists are equally *Wissenschaftler*. Scientists and humanists are distinguished as *Naturwissenschaftler* and *Geisteswissenschaftler*. Humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences having always enjoyed equally status, European humanists and social scientists felt no need to make their approaches like those that worked in chemistry or physics: "In America economists, sociologists, and the like call themselves scientists. This is much rarer in Europe. The name matters because it signals an intellectual attitude – in particular that in due course theory and facts will be as transparent as they are in physics and yield similar certainties" (Frank Hahn, "Bounded Economics", *Science* **252**: 1014-5, reviewing Herbert A. Simon, *Models of My Life*).

Perhaps that's why philosophical aspects of political science continued to be practiced in Europe whereas in the United States political science and sociology increasingly felt the need to become "quantitative". Perhaps this is why European educators have not sought "scientific" status by evolving anti-commonsense theories and practices, leaving European schooling more effective than American.

Our readiness to accept proclaimed expertise and its anti-commonsensical preaching may nowhere be more striking than in multi-culti matters. Individuals and groups are pronounced "experts" in

race relations, sensitivity training, sexual-harassment education, and the like; yet plain experience and common sense should tell us that **no one is so "expert" in these matters as to be qualified to instruct others how to behave**. But as with Chargaff's "successful" cancer researchers, the only criterion applied to these multi-cultist experts is how well known they are and how high are the fees that they can command. They're far from alone, of course; our society harbors at least equally qualified experts who make fine livings doing past-life regression and UFO-abductee therapy, selecting high executives for their client universities, and so forth and so on. Josef Martin's corollary to Barnum's theorem applies:

***There's a sucker university administrator appointed every minute, anxious to evade responsibility by using "expert" consultants paid for not out of his own pocket***

**GALILEO AS A ROLE MODEL**

John Furedy, Professor of Psychology and President of the Society for Academic Freedom & Scholarship, contrasts Galileo's insistence on **the facts of the matter** with the all-too-common politically correct avoidance of reality by administrators, faculty, politicians and others. Here's an abstract of his essay. The full text is at <http://www.webcom.com/-zurcher/furedy/eppur16.ht>

**The Decline of the *Eppur si muove* Spirit in North-American Science: Professional Organizations and PC Pressures**

Galileo's *sub-voce* and probably apocryphal denial of the geocentric position represents the value of disinterestedness – that what governs enquiry is the search for truth. This attitude has come to govern the physical sciences, and, to a certain extent in the 20th century, the biological ones. However, the social sciences and humanities are more obviously influenced by politically correct (PC) pressures. Still, the PC-derived culture of comfort has affected even scientific organizations in North America, and this note presents four relatively simple stories that illustrate this abandonment of the *eppur si muove* spirit. The stories, which recount how organizations have handled controversial and (to some people) uncomfortable issues, suggest that it is not only the humanities and social sciences that have to worry about the PC virus; physical and biological scientists and their organizations are not immune.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

by Henry Bauer

**Tidbits from correspondence and media**

The last Virginia Scholar (#10, p.13) carried some material about the declining performance of college students and their increasingly inappropriate attitude toward learning. I had become aware of the phenomenon through personal experience teaching freshman chemistry. Correspondence in a professional newsletter (Chemical & Engineering News) revealed that my observations jibed with those of many others. I came to exchange experiences with scores of other people. I was invited to talk at a conference, where I summarized my own experience and what I had gleaned from others. A mention of that in U. S. News & World Report, and the interest displayed by the 150 or so people who heard my presentation, brought a great deal more correspondence. My mailing list on this subject now stands at about 150.

Here are some further tidbits that recently came my way. Because several correspondents worry about administrative reprisal, I give only disciplinary affiliation and State (not institution, e.g. "Texas" stands for one of the colleges in Texas, not for the University of Texas):

**Observations**

"My story relates to a young lady in a recent differential equations class. When I took her to task after many absences she told me, very sweetly and condescendingly, that she really couldn't attend my class very often because it conflicted with the soap opera "General Hospital", which she normally watched with her girlfriends in the dormitory every afternoon" (Mathematics, Virginia).



"I'm not especially fond of the current generation of young people and hope that things change soon" (recently retired University President, unusual – unique? – in that he had been held in the highest regard by most faculty, administrators, students, and alumni...).



In my talks and articles (or preprints), I've been speculating that the declining student performance and worsening of attitudes has so far been seen more in Arts & Sciences than in the professional curricula. So I was very interested to hear, **this year**, the following about a Statics course mandatory for all engineering freshmen (Virginia):

Over the last few years, precisely the changes I describe have been noticed – **the failure rate has gone from about 5% to above 30%**, in the majority of cases because the students just didn't do the work.



"many students do not want to or do not have the time to study their assignments.... Back in the 50's when I was a student at ... (in Michigan) if I missed 1 day in Metallurgy my grade dropped 1 point, I would go from an A to a B etc. The administration backed the instructors on this. During my recent teaching experience the students grumbled if I took roll call and kept records of their attendance" (Indiana).



The 1995 survey of freshmen had showed the highest percentage ever of students frequently bored in class – 33.9% (VS #10, p.16). For 1996 the figure is 35.6%. No doubt the education experts and administrators will infer that the number of boring instructors has gone up yet again.

34.3% had missed class or an appointment through oversleeping. 57.2% "found it difficult to study at home" – no reason for the difficulty being specified, however<sup>1</sup>.



In an astronomy course on the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, at... City College, the final assignment was to give the evidence and state conclusions about the possibility of a government cover-up. Almost all the "evidence" presented by students came from television entertainment programs<sup>2</sup>.



The Third International Mathematics & Science Study found the United States spending more per capita than other countries but performing only about average among 41 countries surveyed. "There is no simple answer to this complex problem", according to the Professor of Education who directed the study. Another, however, was clear that high achievement "usually comes down to good old-fashioned hard work"<sup>3</sup>

What will those educationists discover next?

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Students doing a senior research project in environmental science protested their supervisor's presumption that they should remember material they had had years ago in freshman chemistry (Chemistry & Environmental Science, New Jersey).

They've been trained to that by our schools, of course. Virginia is setting out to test students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 in English, math, science and social studies, and the tests are to be cumulative. "I don't think it's fair... to test them on material they covered three years earlier" said **a member of the School Board**; thereby "saying that students shouldn't be expected to retain a common body of cultural knowledge in core subjects"<sup>4</sup>. I wonder whether it's also unfair to expect basketball or football players to remember what they learned the previous season?

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"I was a full-time mathematics teacher in high school a couple of decades ago but became increasingly disillusioned with the course (and courses) of education. More and more students were being sent to me without the prerequisites for the subject I was supposed to teach them. As you pointed out, those students were also increasingly unwilling to do the work necessary to master the subject.

For the past few semesters I've been teaching one course, trigonometry, at... a Community College.... hardly any of the students enrolled in trigonometry had had geometry. I spend huge amounts of time trying to quickly re-teach things as simple as how to square a binomial (no, the square of a sum isn't just the sum of the individual squares), but many students keep committing the same simple mistakes anyhow" (Texas).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"am experiencing the same sorts of things you mentioned. However, unlike what you mentioned about

administration, my administrators are very concerned about this trend as it is having a big impact on our retention" (Nursing, Ohio).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"almost all of your remarks echoed in my own experience as a teacher of mathematics at a large state university over a period of more than 30 years" (Pennsylvania).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"Yes, I do have the same experience with our students. It is difficult to pinpoint where the 'new generation' [is] coming from" (Chemistry Department Head, Tennessee).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"During the 1980s the... use of SAT-preparation courses went from <20% of the students to >50%... The course providers advertise... an average improvement of ≈100 combined SAT points... Therefore... there was... SAT inflation... [even] after the great SAT score decline from 1963-1980...

...in 35 years of educational rot, we have had 2 letter grades of grade inflation" (Chemistry, Pennsylvania).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"student lethargy... lack of intellectual drive among the students" (Mathematics, at one of the leading research universities in California).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"[I] give students a complete list of 'review questions'. Exam questions are taken from these lists. I offer to check, one-by-one, the answers to these questions for any student who wishes... [The] motivated students finish... with close to 100% averages... [but] the reaction of the typical student is pathetic... [with] some scores as low as 20%" (Geology, Oklahoma).

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

There's been quite a lot in the media, especially in the last couple of years, about misbehavior by college athletes. In the pre-game TV show<sup>5</sup> at the Orange Bowl between Nebraska and Virginia Tech, for example, a long list was shown of athletes from both teams who had been found guilty of various offenses ranging from shop-lifting to assault. A local newspaper gave Va. Tech's record over 15 months as "22 arrests, 20 victories, six convictions, four charges dropped and one loss"<sup>6</sup>

There's been a lot of comment, too, about the ineffectiveness of coaches in controlling their players' conduct – see V.S. #9, pp.3-5 & #10, pp.18-21, for instance. Before last year's Sugar Bowl and this year's Orange Bowl, Cornell Brown insolently displayed on his helmet the player numbers of suspended teammates<sup>6,7</sup>.

Well, these "student"-athletes are just as much members of Generation X as are their non-athlete co-students. Just as faculty are bewildered by the increasingly lackadaisical, irresponsible, short-attention-span, anti-learning attitude of students and don't know how to deal with it, so are coaches bewildered by players who fail to take direction from them in more and more ways. Commenting before the Orange Bowl, just-retired Coach Lou Holtz of Notre Dame recalled that 25 years ago players and others shared a sense of obligation and responsibility, whereas nowadays it's all about "rights" and "entitlements". Commentator Craig James recalled his days as captain of one of the teams, when he and other captains and the players collectively took responsibility for correcting and disciplining fellow players who misbehaved in some way.

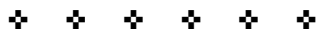
Maybe much of the evidence is "only anecdotal", "just personal impressions", that today's younger generations are significantly different in attitude from those of just a decade or two ago; but when the same view is held by such unlikely bedfellows as faculty and coaches, as well as by former students and former athletes, surely the chances are that there's something to it.

**Students' expectations**

"Under the law, the public school system expects nothing of students, not even personal responsibility" – with the result that we have, from a seventh-grade science teacher in one of the top 10 schools in Oklahoma, "a true story, but you won't believe it. There are students in her class who refuse to do anything. What I mean to say is that they receive an absolute zero"<sup>8</sup>.



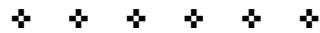
"I agree with your statements... 'During the last decade, college students have changed for the worse', and 'Expect good grades without attending class or studying'.... The majority of today's college students would have flunked out of Va Tech during the 1930's and 1940's during their freshman or sophomore year" (Va. Tech. alumnus, class of 1943).



"I did better than most people and I don't see why I don't deserve an A... The girl next to me worked her butt off and was barely passing. That is not right" (freshman , California, anonymously "evaluating" a calculus instructor).



"My wife works as the assistant to the Dean, Applied Sciences and Technology at a large Community College... while sitting in a refresher math course was besieged with under-the-breath comments from people fresh from area High Schools....why this is so simple I can do this with my eyes closed etc. Finally after having enough distraction, she retorted, 'If it's so easy why did you test yourself into the course?' Needless-to-say those kids couldn't even do it a second time around" (D.C. area).



"Some of the complaints... made to the administration about me included:

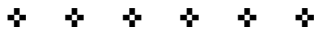
1. If students gave the wrong answer in class, I would tell them that their answer was wrong. [See "Truth in jest", below!]
2. On two difficult problems which all students had missed on an exam, I refused to simply write out the answer... I told them they needed to make an attempt to work out the problems themselves and then come to see me when they got stuck. One student later wrote to the University President that 'I have never had an instructor before who refused to answer questions'" (Geology, Oklahoma).



E-mail received by a senior, much-loved teacher (Biology, Virginia):

"Dr. B-:

The exam we took today was more difficult than I thought it would be. This distresses me because of my experience with Biology last semester. I took GENERAL Biology assuming that it would give me a BROAD idea of the subject. Last semester, that was not the case. Our class average was a 68% b/c we are all NON-majors & our teacher focused on minute details as opposed to the basics. I was under the impression, based on Dr. S-'s introductory class, that our tests would be logical & simplified, therefore, we would not need a curve. I did not want to take a Biology class that I knew went into great detail. I know of other classmates who feel the same way. I ask that you warn Dr. H- of these expectations before Thursday's class."



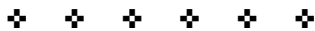
“just before the final exam in one of my classes... one of my students grumped loudly in class that I gave more homework than she had in high school” (English, Arkansas).



“Attempts to improve high school students’ performance fail, a new book argues, because they run up against a formidable adversary: a teenage culture that frowns on school success”<sup>9</sup>.

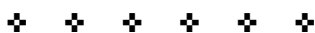


“I didn’t miss anything in class, did I?” — An essay by Sanford Pinsker on this not-uncommon query from students was in the *Washington Times*, 2ix96.

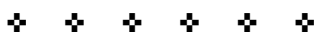


“I’m... actively involved in opposing SET [Student Evaluation of Instructors]. We went down to defeat 34-2 two years ago.... my stands have made me a pariah. Oddly enough ... it’s difficult for the Pro-SET people to attack me too strenuously since I also get very high SET scores. It really rattles them when someone who can get 5.5 out of 6.0 says ‘these numbers are totally meaningless!’ I can also demonstrate that the courses I myself teach have a very clear correlation between average class grade and my SET score.

It’s so bad now I’m actively discouraging competent students... from contemplating an academic career” (Canada).



“My evaluations are often ‘barbelled’. Students who like to study and work hard and don’t mind the math give me rave reviews and students who resent being asked to turn things in on time, have their grammar and spelling checked, etc. are not happy campers” (Finance, Connecticut).



John Damron’s material on what student ratings do and do not measure is now more readily accessible at [http://vax1.mankato.msus.edu/~pkbrandon/Damron\\_politics.html](http://vax1.mankato.msus.edu/~pkbrandon/Damron_politics.html).

Student evaluations of teachers are seen as infringing on academic freedom and featuring in recent attacks on tenure:

<http://olam.ed.asu.edu/epaa/v5n6.html>

### America and the World

“I had to give a little pep talk to explain... why the standard was reasonable and why they should strive to meet it.... Afterward a student... from Hong Kong... asked in a puzzled tone whether I really thought my exam was ‘difficult’” (Mathematics, California, leading research university).

### Truth in jest

“Who discovered the Mississippi River?”

“Plymouth!”

“Sorry, Johnny... it was De Soto.”

“Ooo, ow!... my self-esteem...”

“There, there, Johnny... since they are both Chrysler products... I’m giving you an ‘A’”

...**outcome based education!**

BC by Johnny Hart, Sunday 8xii96



Student to college professor in class:

“Could you repeat that last idea in a form more appropriate for those of us who were raised on sound bites?”

Cartoon, Mischa Richter & Harald Bakken  
*Chronicle of Higher Education* 27ix96, p.B4

### Administrators and Politicians are part of the problem

The holder of an Endowed Chair shared this:

Declining performance in his sophomore mathematics courses caused him to experiment with teaching modes. He found that forcing students **to be intellectually active during class** – e.g. by working problems, having small-group sessions – improved the students’ performance on the final exam.

However, the students **hate** it, and their evaluations of the instructor have sunk low.

The University’s President has put all Chair-holders on notice that half of their annual pay-increase will be based on how well they teach undergraduates. It is known that the President regards student evaluations as a valid measure of teaching performance.

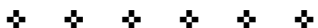
Dilemma: Should the professor continue to cause the students to learn and thereby receive lower pay-raises himself? Or should he strive to please the students, inflate grades, and get higher pay-raises?



“What will greatly exacerbate the problem of grade inflation is a policy to make the first two years of college ‘universal’ in terms of tax credits to the students or parents, etc.... what student might refrain

from asking the teacher for a 'break' if it means going to college or not because a tax credit might not be had without a grade of B or better... [as] was proposed during the presidential campaign" (Connecticut).

That sort of worry, among others, is addressed by a group for the "Separation of School and State", see <http://www.sepschool.org>



"my dept. head... conveyed the 'concern' the VP has over the 'high'... failure/drop-out rate in general chemistry.... in an effort to 'do something' about this 'problem', I will be teaching one section rather than the two I had been originally scheduled to teach...

Of course, along with... suggested changes comes the administrative mantra 'we don't want you to lower standards'" (Chemistry, South Dakota).



"Local political correctness forbids us from ever criticizing the students, who are invariably described as top of the list and everything is done to accommodate them... Congratulations on speaking out" (Physics, Texas).



"the reaction of our dean was pretty much exactly the typical administrator reaction you described in your paper...

The ONLY way we are evaluated here on our teaching is by student ratings;

Since I forwarded your paper to our dean... he has changed his entire attitude towards me (Arts & Sciences, Oklahoma).



In a previous *VS*<sup>10</sup> we commented on the thoughtless promulgation of grade distributions, which implicitly encourages students to choose the easiest, most grade-inflated courses. Not content with making grade distributions available on-line, the Provost's Office at Va. Tech has now approved their publication in booklet form!<sup>11</sup>

How ignorant many students are about these matters is illustrated by the comment of SGA (Student Government Association) President Jay Hulings, that "In the long run, it may persuade faculty to use the bell curve in grading distributions"<sup>11</sup>. What Hulings apparently doesn't know is that (1) in introductory courses most instructors **do** use the "bell curve" centered at an average grade of "C" **in order to increase the proportion of students who**

**are given passing grades;** and (2) if such curving to a mean of "C" were used in upper-level courses, **the average grades would decrease** to a "C" from their present level which is more like a "B" than a "C".

Yet we in Virginia have it relatively good (so far!), compared at least to Texas A&M, where not only grade distributions but also **student evaluations of instructors** are made available in printed as well as on-line form<sup>12</sup>.



"I am pessimistic that any meaningful change will occur... In high school... the overriding concern is to follow state/local guidelines for teaching, and especially for building construction. Emphasis on real learning is either ignored or considered threatening to the status quo.... not until there is some dramatic event which causes real national pain, and which will clearly indicate our educational shortcomings will any real effort be made to remedy the sad state of current educational affairs" (retired high-school teacher, Pennsylvania).

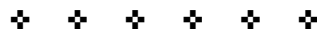
**The Education Establishment is part of the problem**

I think it's kind of amazing that I'm graduating, because I haven't studied in five years at Virginia Tech

***an education major***<sup>13</sup>



"We just got a mailout from our 'teaching enhancement' guru explaining to us the need to be mindful of the self-esteem of the students and other such stuff" (Sociology/Anthropology, Canada).



"folks in the professional schools of education... have a... bias. Not... measurement of actual student achievement, but... measurement of direct teacher 'performance'. Any teaching technique that doesn't immediately yield learning results in real time (i.e. IN THE CLASSROOM) is dismissed as ineffective.... [which is] why so little attention appears to be paid to homework.

One of the great ironies of math education reform is that one of its implicit goals is to help us build a 'nation of independent learners'. Apparently this nation will somehow rise like the Phoenix from the ashes of students who don't do homework" (Mathematics, Tennessee).



"A poll of 1,000 public high-school students... found

that while 96 percent... wanted to excel, half thought their classes did not challenge them to do their best. Most said cheating, tardiness and doing the minimum required to get by are the major problems at their school, and 71 percent said they would learn 'a lot more' if disruptive students were kicked out of class"<sup>14</sup>.

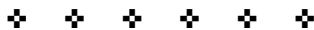


"I was told that a measure of teaching effectiveness is how many students one can draw to class. When I showed evidence that students of mine performed well on national exams, I was told that that did not matter because my student evaluations were not at 'acceptable' levels" (Chemistry, Utah).



"Other con-jobs being perpetrated these days include bringing 'multi media technology' into the classrooms. This is the new tool being employed by administrators... simply because they continue to find excuses to place blame on teachers.... the lack of attention span is not due to the student's inability to concentrate but rather a boring lecturer who speaks in a monotone voice...

'collaborative learning and instruction' are... [additional] buzz words used to explain the lack of rigor and discipline in today's student" (Chemistry, District of Columbia).



"The trend in high school now is to tailor instruction to the individual's 'learning style'.... it is the teacher's fault and not the student's if the student fails to learn.... I would have 126 individual lesson plans....

Different subjects demand different learning styles – students need to adapt to the particular courses, not the other way around. Are we going to have to tailor our jobs to meet the 'working styles' of employees...? We do students a great disservice by perpetuating the idea that everything and everyone in life is going to bend to accommodate their particular 'styles' or whims. I alternately laughed and wept when I read the anecdotes in your paper about experiences with students. These would have been unbelievable ten years ago – to people who have been out of education it probably is still unbelievable.

I have a student...who is doing horribly... not only... not paying attention, he seemed to be mumbling to himself. I thought perhaps he had some mental disorder.... I called his mother.... Her reply

was 'Oh, he likes to rap'...I guess if I were a good 'education school' type teacher I would devise rap lectures for him in Chemistry to meet his individual learning style...

I'm sure the educational establishment may not like your assertions, but they... certainly [have the] ring of truth to those of us who are in the classroom every day" (high-school Chemistry, Virginia).



Perhaps no more demonstration is needed, that "experts" in "Education" are part of the problem, than the following<sup>15</sup> from Terry Wildman, Professor of Education and Director of a Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching:

there seems to be a persistent notion that the students coming to us are less rather than more prepared to succeed.... a *U. S. News & World Report*<sup>16</sup> article... cited a national survey... and Virginia Tech professors to confirm a downward trend in motivation, class attendance, and academic aptitude....students [were proclaimed] to be increasingly inattentive and inarticulate....

On this campus, despite the continuing overall high quality of our student body with respect to conventional measures, one can hear an undercurrent of complaints about short attention spans, inability to engage with and learn difficult concepts, and poor class behavior....

We need an explanation that can help us avoid the tendency to blame the students first when academic failures occur.

One thing we must do is let go of a 'common sense' theory of learning that has historically undergirded teachers' personal conceptions of instruction... that classroom success and learning are dependent on two things: students' ability and the effort **they** are willing to expend on academic tasks... [For] with this perception our susceptibility to handwringing about student quality is heightened.

Fortunately, several recent decades of research on learning and teaching provide us with some attractive alternatives to the older common sense theories. Specifically, the now well-established cognitive-mediational models... very clearly show that learning depends... on the quality of students' cognitive and affective engagement with the material and tasks at hand. Moreover, the cognitive activities most relevant to learning and remembering can themselves be learned, especially when teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in facilitating this kind of growth.

The news article mentioned earlier cited one professor as lamenting that no students at all showed up for one of his classes. While we have little context... it does seem prudent to include among the various interpretations that the students in this case may have been doing exactly the right thing. In other words, much as children gravitate toward good food choices

when given an unlimited buffet, students will eventually gravitate toward good academic experiences...

As teachers, our job is to find ways to reduce the impact of students' entering characteristics on their ultimate performance....

Perhaps the best thing to do is listen and watch carefully for these signs of boredom, distrust, and disengagement, and then examine our own behavior.

Now perhaps this is not quite as egregious as it struck me when I read it. Perhaps I was too dumb-founded, too unreasonably shocked by the suggestion that students might have been "doing exactly the right thing" by not attending class. Perhaps I found that comment so sickening because *U. S. News & World Report* had picked up this example from my citation of a published account<sup>18</sup>, and I happen to know who that professor was: he had taught at Virginia Tech for more than 30 years without ever before having such an experience. He was universally acknowledged to be as devoted a teacher as one will find anywhere, let alone at a "research" university. He was endlessly patient with and courteous to students (and others). His subject having been philosophy, however, of course he had to insist that his students try to think, and fewer and fewer of our students prefer that to a nice Friday afternoon outside in the sun.

But as my temper cooled, I realized that I had fallen into a clever trap. It's obvious that Wildman cannot mean what he wrote. This piece is a *test of the readers*, to see whether they're being thoughtful about what is being said. The conspicuous clue, of course, is the assertion that "children gravitate toward good food choices when given an unlimited buffet" – as though, given that unlimited choice, children would run past the greasy hamburgers and French fries doused in ketchup to feast instead on uncooked vegetables and low-fat meats; and eschew candies and sticky cakes in favor of fruit salads!

Bravo, Mr. Wildman! Well done! Most clever!

1 What's the worst thing about the endemic troubles with big-time intercollegiate athletics?  
*Chronicle of Higher Education* 17i97, p.A43

2 Wayne R. Anderson, "What constitutes scientific evidence?", *Skeptical Inquirer*, September/October 1996, 59-60

3 Gretchen Vogel, "Asia and Europe top in world, but reasons are hard to find", *Science* 274 (22x96) 1236. The full reports are available at <http://www.csteep.bc.edu/>

4 Joel Turner, "The End of the Road for the 'B' Team", *Times* 17i97, p.B4

5 Roanoke TV Channel 12

6 Jack ...  
 Athletic Director, and Coach

7

8 "The system fails pupils, teachers", by David P. Buchanan, University of Oklahoma student newspaper, Thursday, Feb. 20, 1997; available on-line at: <http://www.daily.ou.edu/issues/spring1997/feb-20/system.html>

9 Debra Viadero, "Teen culture seem impeding school reform", *Education week* XV #37, 5vi96, pp.1,10. The book referred to is *Beyond the Classroom* by Laurence Steinberg, Bradford Brown & Sanford M. Dornbusch (Simon & Schuster)

10 *POTPOURRI* – Choosing courses, *Virginia Scholar* #9 (ix 1996) 13-14

11 Sarah Santer, "SGA posts grade distribution data", *Collegiate Times* (VPI&SU) 1xi96, p.A1

12 "Point of View" in Web site of Society for a Return to Academic Standards, <http://http.tamu.edu:8000/~crumble/highered.html>

13 Richard Perry, cited in Eric Randall, "Tech awards record number of degrees", *Roanoke Times & World-News* 14vi87, p.C1

14 "The quality of prayers and schools" (editorial), *Roanoke Times* 15ii97, p.A7

15 *The Pedagogical Challenge*, newsletter of the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (VPI&SU), 4, issue 1

16 John Leo, "No Books, Please; We're Students...", *U. S. News & World Report*, 16ix1996

17 Geoff Seamans, "Successful football programs don't always win", *Roanoke Times* 26i97, HORIZON3

18 Harlan Miller, "Spring of discontent", *Spectrum* (VPI&SU) 6v93, pp.3,6,7

27xi96, pp.B1,6, Star defender hobbles on practice field , 26xi96, pp.B1,7

8 "The system fails pupils, teachers", by David P. Buchanan, University of Oklahoma student newspaper, Thursday, Feb. 20, 1997; available on-line at: <http://www.daily.ou.edu/issues/spring1997/feb-20/system.html>

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## P O T P O U R R I

*POTPOURRI is compiled by Henry Bauer*

### Time for Some GOOD NEWS

“Gov. George Allen has approved a settlement with five male Virginia Commonwealth University professors who sued the school over pay raises to female faculty members.... One of the plaintiffs, Ted Smith... [said] ‘We’re delighted... and... feel completely vindicated’”<sup>1</sup>

### Good News & Bad News

“Student Confidence Growing”, was the topic of one of those perennial bumf-sheets<sup>2</sup>. Fewer students report that they will need “a lot” or “a medium amount” of help expressing ideas in writing (only 29% in 1996), though a larger number (40% in 1996) will need a lot or medium amount of help learning to make better use of the library.

The bad news, not of course mentioned in the bumf, is

- the wasted paper and time distributing such **useless** stuff;
- that the AAP (Academic Assessment Program) and QIA (Quality in Action) don’t realize that such surveys are **use-less**;
- that at a university whose entrance standards are classed as highly selective, at a university that has no remedial courses for students who shouldn’t have been admitted, 30% of entering students **do** need help in expressing their ideas in writing

and 40% lack confidence that they can use the library!

These very same students who cannot properly use a library or express their ideas in writing are nevertheless invited to “evaluate” their instructors... But then to make those evaluations, they just have to pencil-black little circles, and **that** they did learn in school, or maybe even in kindergarten – connect the dots and color the spots.

### Re-writing History — But to What End?

Some may have imagined it a fantasy of George Orwell, to describe in *1984* how the governing powers **changed history, altered what had happened**, simply by re-writing accounts and causing some documents to disappear.

Historians know, on the other hand, that precisely that actually happened in the Soviet Union: the content of official encyclopedias changed periodically according to whatever view was then “correct”.

Many people would be sure that no such thing could happen in the United States. They would have reckoned without the power of political correctness:

Eight portraits of former deans now being displayed in the University of Virginia’s School of Law have drawn criticism from students who wonder why no minorities or women have been represented...

‘When I first did see them, it was a shock,’ said... a 23-year-old black law student... ‘I respect their

decision to put up the portraits, but where are the representations of minorities and women? In light of that absence, it’s offensive to me.’

No other solution to this dilemma than the Orwell-USSR one would seem to be feasible: either change the hue of some of the skins in the portraits or insert some suitable portraits even though they were not deans...

But pause before leaping to this attractive solution: If the historical portrait gallery were to show a fine, “correct”, “non-offensive”, mix of races and sexes, what would happen to the evidence that the United States, Virginia, and UVa were once oppressive enclaves run by White Males? Would there not then be the danger that future generations might not properly pander to the wishes of groups claiming to have previously been discriminated against?

The actually proposed solution<sup>3</sup> will move the portraits to a less conspicuous place and “incorporate the school’s diversity into its new setting... [with] portraits of Elizabeth Tompkins, who became the school’s first female enrollee in 1925, and John Merchant, the first black to earn a law degree at UVa”.

Having noted this silliness, let us however pay respect to Dean Robert Scott for his sensible – and thereby, in this PC-happy Wonderland, courageous – comment

<sup>1</sup> “VCU professors’ settlement is final”, *Roanoke Times* 29ix96, p. B4

<sup>2</sup> “Student Confidence Growing”, *QUALITY IMPROVEMENT in ACTION*, Reports from the Academic Assessment Program, ix 1996

<sup>3</sup> “Debate surrounds portraits”, *Roanoke Times* 9ii97, p.B1

on the complaints:

it is stereotyping to suggest that these people, just because they are white and male, just like all the presidents of the United States have been, just like all the presidents of the university have been, are not people of whom we should be proud

### The Cutting Edge

Some years ago I started a list of the various enterprises that try for instant status by calling themselves “science”. I found among others: cognitive science, defense science, ecosystem science, exercise science, forensic science, health sciences, information science, kitchen science, learning sciences, leisure science, management science, phonetic sciences, sports science. But only quite recently did I encounter the **human sciences** which appear to encompass “applied behavioral and social research, psychology, and thanatology”<sup>4</sup>.

As so often when a new cutting edge appears, it quickly metastasizes all over. No sooner had I seen that than I came upon a flier listing sponsors that included the George Washington University (GWU) Program in Human Sciences. The flier advertises an International (of course), Interdisciplinary (also of course) Conference (no better way to spend money<sup>5</sup>) on **Cultural Violence**, “to explore the ways in which ‘culture’ can act as a violent force both to construct and to marginalize difference and to constrain

individual expression... to address... the unspoken ways in which ‘culture’... fosters violence among individuals and groups. Through the conference, it is hoped that dialogue will be established concerning the ways in which culture structures lived daily existence [*What could be clearer?*] and imposes limitations on subject positions and that this dialogue can serve as the basis upon which to found strategies of liberatory resistance”.

Where, I asked myself, is Hermann Goering now that we need him?<sup>6</sup>

Do not these people understand the implications of treating such a thing as “culture” as an active agent that “constructs” and “structures” and “constrains” and “imposes”, as though we human beings had nothing to do with it and were helpless against it? That is, I suppose, the final victory of the ideology of victimology – **all** human beings are helpless victims of their societies; even – or perhaps primarily – **those who talk like this** (it would clearly be invalid to say, “think” like this).

### More Cutting Edges

Tech’s assistant coordinator of sexual assault [sic?] for... [the] equal opportunity and affirmative action office fears “people assume men are not af-

fected by cases of sexual assault on women”.

HUH?? Where does he get **that** notion from? **Which** people?

“He showed a picture... of a dark, nearly naked black male with a word ‘racist’ written on him, being restrained by a fully clothed white male.... from a recent publication from an Ivy League school. He said this picture reflects the views of many people today”.

And what basis does he have for **that** slanderous statement? **Which** “many people”?

Under the guise of diversifying and sensitivity-inducing, well meaning and good-hearted but naive and under-educated ignoramuses parrot generalizations that they learned from other well meaning and good-hearted but naive and under-educated ignoramuses. These are then described as “specialists” and “experts” in race relations and sensitivity training.

Apart from spreading baseless, incendiary propaganda of the above sort, they also set such practical examples of how to make the world a better place as “he has refused to answer phone calls that ask for the man of the house, and he refuses to have himself and his wife referred to as Mr. and Mrs....”

For about the same money, instead of an assistant coordinator of sexual assault (presumably there’s a chief coordinator if there’s an assistant?) we might have an assistant **professor** of some academic subject, possibly making it easier for students to get the courses they need to graduate on time.

“**S**imply because you have a female-dominated home, people assume it is not necessarily

<sup>4</sup> “A Masterful Career Move”, advertisement for Hood College Graduate School (Frederick MD), *Washington Post Education Review* 27x96, p.30

<sup>5</sup> Whose money? GWU programs in Human Sciences, American Studies, Women’s Studies, English, Anthropology, Sociology; George Mason program in Cultural Studies; Washington Consortium of universities

<sup>6</sup> “Whenever I hear the word culture, I reach for my revolver” – attributed to Hermann Goering (1893-1946), German Nazi leader. According to the *Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, the only recorded reference to this remark is in the play *Schlageter* (1933) by Hanns Johst (1890-1978), Nazi playwright and president of the Reich Chamber of Literature, spoken by a stormtrooper in act 1, sc. 1: “Wenn ich Kultur höre . . . entsichere ich meinen Browning” (literally, “I cock my Browning”)

<sup>7</sup> Christie Walker, “Coalition addresses sexism”, *Collegiate Times* (VPI&SU) 11x96, pp. A1,6

a patriarchal home”

was one of the stunning insights shared with students by ***bell hooks*** [sic<sup>8</sup>].

Another is that “society has implanted in people’s heads that it is good for men to be violent when necessary, and they have the power to choose when it is necessary”. We sure hope there was a good representation from the Athletic Department present to hear those words.

### **BIG Brothers** **(or should it be Mothers?)**

Apparatchiks at Virginia Commonwealth University decided that “it is necessary to create guidelines for the use of electronic information systems” because “Accessing and transmitting electronic information have become very important methods of communicating. Office technology is supported by complex and costly University equipment”<sup>9</sup>.

Who could disagree?

Those who read further in that memorandum, that’s who:

All messages transmitted by fax, e-mail or the Internet will be treated as business messages. Managers/supervisors may review, copy, and/or delete such messages and may disclose them to other university personnel as is necessary.

Well, let’s look on the bright side. Next time a student asks why you didn’t respond to his e-mail message about a class absence or a question about the course, just say that some manager/supervisor must have deleted that “business” message.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Laatz, “hooks speaks to full house”, *Collegiate Times* (VPI&SU) 11x96, pp. A1,3

<sup>9</sup> “Guidelines for using electronic information systems and office equipment”, Virginia Commonwealth University, from Human Resources Division, ii 1996

### **Hoist With His Own Petard**

Here’s another of those phrases I must have used dozens of times without bothering about its exact derivation. Turns out that a petard is “a small bell-shaped bomb used to breach a gate or wall”, the danger being that the engineer who placed it might get blown up himself. It comes from the Old French *peter*, Latin *pedere*, “to break wind”.

On both grounds, I’m happy to apply the expression to that increasing number of multi-culti gurus who discover that they themselves are incapable of being properly sensitive and multi-culti. Thus Henry Louis Gates, Jr., didn’t realize that his use of the phrase “voodoo methodology’... is grossly insensitive... It debases the religious beliefs and practices of millions of individuals of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic. That such Eurocentric coinage... comes from a black scholar... is ironic and doubly regrettable”; “Voodoo is an important religion... to use... ‘voodoo’ with... negative implications... or... ‘voodoo economics’ casts doubts on Gates’s entire argument”<sup>10</sup>.

I’m sure there would be nothing wrong, though, with being snooty about “alchemy”, say, because that’s a ***European*** superseded belief-system, and nothing European need be paid respect or treated with sensitivity when it happens to be just plain wrong.

### **Academic Calendars**

Virginia Tech’s Fall Semester has students return to 1½ weeks of class followed by final examinations ***after a***

<sup>10</sup> “Scholar criticized for religious slur”, *Chronicle of Higher Education* 6xii96, p.B9; letters respectively from Michel-Rolph Trouillot et al. and from Bob Corbett

### ***Thanksgiving break of 9 days***

(one full week plus 2 weekends). Faculty (if not administrators) know that many students leave on the Friday or Thursday or even Wednesday preceding the official break. Numerous attempts by a few faculty over decades have not been able to change this ludicrously dysfunctional arrangement, perhaps because a few students are always so vociferously against any change. I suppose this is another instance of “students gravitating to what’s good for them” (p.17). Still, everyone who teaches, knows there’s no useful class work done after that break.

How do students spend their break? One senior who writes for the student newspaper – he’s ***not*** a football player himself – “had a nice relaxing week at home to prepare for the much anticipated UVa game”<sup>11</sup>.

As we prepare to spend \$500,000 through a Committee for Student Success, as we support Centers for Excellence in Teaching, etc., etc., is it too much to ask that we arrange the academic calendar so that it makes sense in terms of ***learning?***

Purely a rhetorical question.

<sup>11</sup> Leon R. Saffelle III, “10 wins send Hokies to Alliance berth”, *Collegiate Times* (VPI&SU) 3xii96, p.C3

## RESPONSES & FOLLOW-UPS

*compiled by the editor*

### Massive Resistance

“Do circumstance alter cases?”, we asked<sup>1</sup>. Massive resistance to desegregation of schools and universities was morally bad; is massive resistance against desegregating scholarships and admission practices also morally bad?

Not to the American Council of Education or the Education Department, we noted. Nor, of course, to affirmative-action “experts”. When UVa “changed a privately funded scholarship program for black students to allow awards to other minorities and to poor whites” –

“It wasn’t my choice to open them up, I was instructed to open them up” said the university’s director of minority recruitment. The school “buckled under”, said the dean of the university’s office of African-American Affairs<sup>2</sup>.

Texas A&M held a conference<sup>3</sup> to plot a strategy for responding to the court’s decision.

Lawyers, state legislators, and college officials...offered plenty of suggestions for challenging the court’s ruling...

One idea was to enact a state law to indemnify from court-imposed penalties any college officials who are found to have violated the ban on racial preferences

That’s a really **great** idea. Let’s also pay all the penalties that athletes might incur as a result of breaking laws of the land. Let’s change tenure codes so that breaking the law is no longer grounds for dismissing tenured faculty. In time, perhaps everyone associated with universities will

be able to feel protected from the consequences of illegal actions... Now **that** will be academic freedom with a vengeance.

But I’m wrong, this is **different**. As one enthusiast asked, “Why don’t you do what’s morally right, regardless of what the law says?”

A state legislator agreed: “No one should be penalized for doing the right thing”.

Others are clearer yet that it’s not a matter of right or wrong but of power, “to make [Chancellor of U.C.Berkeley Chang-Lin] Tien more afraid of the students than of the regents”<sup>4</sup>.

### The Costs of Excellence

In the last issue of *V.S.* (#10, at p.5) we commented on the giving of fixed-sum cash-prizes to academic departments pronounced “exemplary” for something like advising (in one year’s competition), attention to introductory subjects (in another year), and so on.

Another cost of this program was revealed on a letter we received from a colleague: a department, having received such an award, promptly had its stationary re-designed to include as part of the letterhead

#### **A University Exemplary Department**

Question: Will that designation on the letterhead remain there year after year irrespective of how non-exemplary the department might become in the future?

After all, faculty need to be carefully evaluated annually, because – as is well known to legislators and administrators, if to none else – a star one year may be unsatisfactory the next, as well as *vice versa*.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

**E**xcellence costs a lot **administratively**, too. (What does not?) Va. Tech prides itself on having no remedial courses, but it **does** have a *Center for Academic Enrichment and Excellence* that employs such people as a *Coordinator of Reading and Academic Assistance*<sup>5</sup>.

And the Student Success Program introduced in the last *V.S.* (#10, pp.5-6,13) is getting off to a flying start by hiring a Coordinator at a salary of \$30,000-\$35,000<sup>6</sup>. As one department head pointed out, were it not earmarked for paper-shuffling that could pay for 12 courses taught by instructors, who represent an old-fashioned but still effective way of improving “student success”.

### Raising Money

Nutty ideas spread like wildfire, especially among people who have trouble thinking for themselves. Applying a “business” approach to colleges and schools is the *reductio ad absurdum* down-side or dark side of Reaganomics and Thatcherism. In the UK:

Despite failing key parts of... exams... students have been given degree certificates...

Critics say new funding systems,

where money is taken back from universities if students drop out, have also made tutors reluctant to fail students<sup>7</sup>

Who could have foreseen that?!

But any way of getting more money or spending less money is good, isn't it?

Schools have been given the go-ahead to sell space for advertising aimed at children on playground and corridor walls...The government has approved a commercial enterprise which would pay schools and colleges thousands of pounds<sup>8</sup>

### What's in a Name?

The hard sciences is where we turn for good answers and certain guidance. So too with resistance:

We are pleased to announce that the American Chemical Society Scholars Program (formerly known as Minority Scholars Program) is ready to receive applications...

"Aha!", the unwary reader might conclude: the American Chemical Society (ACS) has abandoned the obnoxious practice of restricting scholarships by race or ethnicity.

### **WRONG!**

"To qualify, candidates must be... African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian or Alaskan Native"<sup>9</sup>.

Sniffing the breeze, bureaucrats at ACS no doubt realized they had better play down in public these institutional "affirmative-action" projects that are based directly on discriminating by race or ethnicity; but they are not about to stop actually **doing** it.

Reminds me of the time, just arrived at a new university, that I got a phone call inviting me to donate to the "Student Financial Aid Fund". I asked for the criteria for awarding aid from this fund: it

funds athletic scholarships...

ACS, like that university, no doubt hopes no-one will look beyond the dishonest, misleading, new name of their program.

It's sad to see an apparently similar attitude at the United Negro College Fund. After sterling work over many years, its letterhead now reads

### ***The College Fund/UNCF***

***A mind is a terrible thing to waste***

### AIDS

That the Establishment view of AIDS cannot be correct<sup>10</sup> is further demonstrated by data from the World Health Organization and the Population Council<sup>11</sup>: infection rates peaked in the US between 1990 and 1992 and leveled off in Europe at about the same time. There has not been the explosion of the epidemic into the general population predicted on the basis of the received view of a sexually transmitted disease for which everyone is equally at risk.

### Big-Time STUDENT-Athletics

The University Athletics Association, in Division III of the NCAA, had seven of its nine universities in the *U. S. News & World Report* top 30, "a performance exceeded only by the Ivy League, which managed all eight of its members"<sup>12</sup>. (The University Athletics Association includes Brandeis, Carnegie Mellon, Case Western Reserve, Emory, Johns Hopkins, New York, and Washington Universities and the Universities of Chicago and Rochester.)

"Critics correctly point out that 'big time' athletics has led many universities far astray from some of their fundamental purposes... the solution...lies in... demanding that it [athletics] not become the tail that wags the dog... More than 80 per cent of Division I-A athletics programs operate in the red"<sup>13</sup>.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> See *Do circumstance alter cases?* Virginia Scholar #6 (x 1995) p.16

<sup>2</sup> "UVA alters minority awards", *Roanoke Times* 11x96, pp. C1,4

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Lederman, "Educators and lawmakers in Texas seek new ways to help minority students", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 22xi96, p.A27f

<sup>4</sup> Peter Schmidt, "Political and legal maneuvering follows California vote to ban racial preferences", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 22xi96, p.A28

<sup>5</sup> Advertisement, *Spectrum* (VPI&SU) 12xii96, p.7

<sup>6</sup> Advertisement, *Spectrum* (VPI&SU), 5xii96, p.B7

<sup>7</sup> Cathy Scott-Clark, "Students with 0% can still get degree", *Sunday Times* (UK) 7vii96, NEWS7

<sup>8</sup> "In Today's Other Papers", *Sunday Times* (UK) 7vii96, NEWS7.

The Seattle (WA) School Board is starting a similar venture, according to **60 Minutes** of Sunday 9ii97

<sup>9</sup> Membership Division, Scholars Program, Dorothy P. Rodmann, letter dated 1xi96 with enclosures

<sup>10</sup> See book reviews in *V.S.* #7 (i 1996) & #8 (iv 1996)

<sup>11</sup> Constance Holden, "Random Samples — Scourge of Africa", *Science* 274, 8xi96, p.923

<sup>12</sup> "Sidelines", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 25x 6, p.A45

<sup>13</sup> William E. Kirwan (president, University of Maryland at College Park), "Point of View — Protecting college athletes from unscrupulous agents", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 20ix96, p.A60

**THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS**

believes that rational discourse is a necessary foundation of academic life and of a democratic society. So we seek to foster and protect

- the free exchange of ideas;
- academic freedom: *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*;
- the substance and integrity of scholarship and learning;
- respect for our intellectual heritage;
- rigorous standards of excellence in teaching, learning, and research;
- the evaluation of students strictly on the merit of their individual performance;

and we aim to

- create forums in which university life can be rationally discussed;
- provide informed comment on immediate and on perennial issues in higher education;

and we urge academic leaders to

- recognize learning and scholarship as the pre-eminent and primary purpose for which colleges and universities exist;
- behave responsibly in pursuit of that purpose;
- practice honesty with the public, with students and parents, with faculty, and with everyone else.

Further, we shall resist

- attempts to subsume academe under political goals;
- ideological corruption of teaching and scholarship;
- intimidation of students or faculty who voice unfashionable views;
- treatment of students, faculty, and others as ciphers or symbols of groups instead of as individuals worthy of individual consideration.

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1. The National Association of Scholars, which includes a subscription to the quarterly *Academic Questions* and automatic membership in the Virginia Association for those who reside or work in the Commonwealth of Virginia:

**National Association of Scholars**, 575 Ewing Street, Princeton, NJ 08540; <http://www.nas.org>  
(current dues are \$38, graduate students and emeriti \$20);

or

2. The **Virginia Association of Scholars**: President Michael I. Krauss (mkrauss@vms1.gmu.edu)  
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**Blacksburg VA 24060-5623**

**Virginia Association of Scholars**

***FOR REASONED SCHOLARSHIP IN A FREE SOCIETY***

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