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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

October 26, 2003



Commentary

Dumb and Dumber

Perhaps you have not been following the continuing war of words between the Chairman of the UC Board of Regents and the Chancellor of The University of California at Berkeley. It is worthy of your notice.

Through the Initiative process, California voters have demanded that our State Universities, of which the University of California at Berkeley is the most prominent, stop the discrimination represented by giving quotas to people based on skin color.

The Chancellor of Berkeley is annoyed, nay, livid, that the Chairman of the Regents has written a confidential letter to his fellow Regents that discloses this incredible fact: The great California university has admitted 400 students with SAT scores between 600 and 1,000. The AVERAGE of the incoming class was 1,337.

An SAT score of 600 would not earn a candidate entry into any legitimate university, much less the crown jewel of the California system. Not that Berkeley did not have an opportunity to admit students with higher scores, much higher scores – incredibly higher scores! In fact, Berkeley passed over 600 students with scores above 1,500 (out of a possible 1,600) and 3,200 candidates with SAT scores above 1,400.

The Chancellor, Robert Berdahl, is not embarrassed – he is angry. Angry that the Chairman of the Board of Regents, John Moores, discovered the dirty little secret, and worse, that Moores sent a letter describing the situation to his fellow Regents!

The letter leaked to the public, and the Chancellor said that the leak undermined the public trust, apparently not understanding that it is the policy and not the leak that has indeed undermined the public trust.

The Chancellor determined that the students admitted with the lowest possible scores were admitted because they had overcome “disadvantages.” Apparently, academics were one of the “disadvantages” that could be overcome by selection to Berkeley.

John Moores, the Chairman of the Board of Regents, is no stranger to being disadvantaged...he is the multi-billionaire owner of the hapless San Diego Padres. If anyone needs a “hand up” it is the Padres, who narrowly missed losing 100 games this year. If the Commissioner of Baseball would just adopt the policies of the Chancellor, perhaps the Padres could look forward to being selected to play in the World Series next year, based entirely on their lack of baseball prowess.

Perhaps the Chancellor is just now taking to heart the infamous remark by former U.S. Senator Roman Hruska, who, defending Nixon’s appointment of the unqualified Judge Carswell to the U.S. Supreme Court, said, “Mediocre people need representation, too.”

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