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EDITORIAL: Too stupid to teach?

UNLV professor says Republican Party now a haven of slope-browed troglodytes

Back in 2002, a survey by the American Enterprise Institute found America's colleges and universities to be a virtually monochrome refuge of the political left. More than 80 percent of most schools' employees were found to be registered Democrats, despite the almost even split between registered Republicans and Democrats among the public at large.

The AEI report found one consequence of this lack of diversity was that conservative thinkers tend to be isolated and intimidated on American campuses, with the predictable result that they do not fare as well when it comes time to seek tenure.

Thus it was hardly a surprise when two UNLV student groups -- Students for Academic Freedom and the UNLV College Libertarians -- released a report March 12 revealing that the faculty in a number of UNLV departments are more liberal than those at Berkeley.

Authors of the study selected professors from seven UNLV departments: civil engineering, economics, English, history, philosophy, political science and sociology. And the students found no registered Republicans at all in some departments, including history, economics and sociology.

When asked why so few Republicans seem to inhabit the academic environment, Ted Jelen, a UNLV professor of political science, told CityLife: "Liberals are smarter."

"I'm quite serious," Mr. Jelen said. "The Republican Party has taken some outrageous positions on issues like abortion and free speech, and has in effect priced itself out of the intellectual market."

Yes, it's a natural part of human nature to suspect those who haven't adopted our own political philosophy are simply too slow-witted to grasp our arguments.

But consider for a moment how successful the free market has proven in generating wealth, technological progress and high standards of living in the Western world over the past 500 years, and

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how miserably the competing doctrine of socialism worked out in Eastern Europe in the 20th century. Given that reality, the burden is surely on those who still cling to the failed doctrine of mandatory redistribution to prove they're not either intellectually impaired or excessively buffered from the realities of a world where the "needs" of the mendicant class can never be met, no matter how much income of the productive class is seized and thrown into the statist wood-chipper.

And when it comes to "free speech," Mr. Jelen surely knows most of the cases investigated and litigated these days by the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) involve conservative professors or students running afoul of the new "speech codes" erected by the forces of "political correctness" on the left.

No one is yet proposing the "affirmative action" hiring of conservatives, constitutionalists, free marketers and libertarians at UNLV, in search of some arbitrary target of "equity" ... though the prospect would be delicious, in its way.

For if the imbalance stood the other way, does anyone doubt that's precisely the kind of remedy good liberals such as professor Jelen would be demanding?

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