

m e m o

To: Cornell Colleagues

From: Richard Baer

Date: October 11, 1999

Subject: Diversity at Cornell

A. Summary

The lack of faculty and curricular diversity in a number of departments at Cornell may contribute to strained relations among Cornellians. Some departments seem to be making little effort to make sure students are exposed to different points of view on controversial topics. The political correctness and censorship by omission that characterizes these departments may have the undesirable result of pushing contrary points of view underground. The university should deliberately encourage departments with minimal diversity to hire faculty with unrepresented points of view, especially conservative secular and religious point of view. Statutory colleges at Cornell have a special responsibility to take such remedial action, for these colleges have a prima facie obligation not to use public tax monies to indoctrinate students and foster partisan viewpoints.

B. Introduction

Faculty have been invited to comment on the Provost's Task Force on the Future of the Social Sciences at Cornell, and we have also been asked to do some hard thinking about the need for greater diversity among students and faculty at the university. This memo is a response to both the Task Force report and to the concern about diversity.

To date, our discussions of diversity at Cornell have focused on race, ethnic background, sex, and sexual orientation. But we have said very little about diversity of ideas, a consideration that I believe is even more critical for the future of the university.

On the positive side, Cornell, as a land grant institution, has a good deal more diversity than other Ivy League Schools in terms of what can be studied and the range of research we do. The presence of colleges like engineering and agriculture add a note of practicality to public policy discussions and to such a discipline as environmental ethics, my own field of study.

Nevertheless, in particular disciplines Cornell lacks significant diversity of ideas. Indeed, it seems to me that various departments within the university practice what might fairly be labeled censorship by omission.

Let's look at some of the evidence for this claim. I shall review several departments but will focus especially on the Department of Family Development and Human Studies in the College of Human Ecology.

C. The Department of Human Development and Family Studies

In September of 1992 a group of undergraduate students from the department of Human Development and Family Studies and what was then the department of Human Service Studies asked me to help them think through what they perceived as widespread discrimination against them based on their conservative religious and political views.

After meeting several times, the students and I asked to meet with the dean and associate dean of the College of Human Ecology and with the chairs from these two departments. Students claimed that their own views were typically either caricatured or largely ignored in various courses, and they asked the deans and chairs to make a serious effort to hire new faculty who would be academically competent to expose students to a greater diversity of ideas. The students and I went out of our way to make clear that we did not want to engage in any kind of censorship or to question any faculty member's academic freedom.

The meetings turned out to be singularly unproductive, and the dean, the associate dean, and the two department chairs rejected our request that the college seek to hire a more diverse faculty. They claimed that the curriculum and faculty were already diverse, and that what was needed was perhaps a little more sensitivity on the part of faculty already in Human Ecology.

The situation today may be slightly better than six years ago when I last took a close look at the Human Development and Family Studies curriculum, but it is still my strong impression that students in this department are being exposed to a fairly narrow range of mostly liberal to left-wing ideas. Faculty comfort themselves with the claim that they are only doing science, but even a cursory examination of the syllabi and lectures in some of the large introductory courses (I have not looked at graduate courses or small undergraduate courses) shows that the subject matters studied, the particular approaches taken, the articles and books assigned, and the main thrust of lectures are in many cases highly partisan, ideological, and one-sided. Conservative secular political views and conservative or orthodox religious views (Conservative Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish) about the family and related institutions are notable by their absence, which is not altogether surprising considering the fact that few faculty in Human Ecology actually share such views. It appears that such views are seldom presented to students in a sophisticated, sympathetic, and comprehensive manner, even though they are widely held among Americans and are at least as credible and academically respectable as the more liberal views that dominate the curriculum in HDFFS (Human Service Studies no longer exists as a separate department).

The lack of diversity in Human Development and Family Studies has serious consequences for students and their education.

1. Students graduate with a one-sided view of many current social/political issues of considerable importance to our nation: the nature of the family, abortion, human sexuality, marriage and divorce, women at home vs. women in the work force, the role of government as over against private sector initiatives in terms of resolving various social problems, the important role of religion in the lives of a majority of Americans, etc. Most students are not exposed to the best thinking of conservative secular and religious scholars on issues like these, and as a result they graduate with a highly distorted view of what people in America really are like and what they think.
2. Many students and faculty in HDFFS uncritically accept moral subjectivism or moral relativism as the standard way of thinking about ethics and the moral dimensions of many social issues. The majority of students appear never to have been exposed to the ideas of first-rate philosophers, theologians, and moralists, many, perhaps most, of whom are not subjectivists or relativists.
3. Most students appear to have little accurate understanding of the role religion plays in our society, and they are poorly equipped to help resolve family problems of those families and individuals who understand themselves mainly from within a religious context. Many students graduate with pronounced biases against religious groups, and they remain largely ignorant of how religion functions in the lives of individuals and communities. How many students know, for instance, that most religion-based drug rehabilitation programs are far more effective and far less costly than most secular programs?

4. Discussions of the role of sex education in K-12 schools in HDFS often show little appreciation for the beliefs and values of the majority of Americans. Most parents, for instance, do not want their children indoctrinated in the normalcy/desirability of homosexual sex or of pre-marital heterosexual sex. The majority of secular sex educators in America today espouse beliefs and values that are far removed from those of most Americans, and, even worse, they have little hesitancy about imposing these values on others.

5. The lack of diversity among faculty in HDFS can also be seen in factual distortions and the one-sidedness of social science data presented to students. For instance, as recently as 1992, faculty in Human Ecology were still claiming that 10% of Americans are homosexual, whereas the best data available at that time and since indicates that the actual rate is probably between 1 and 4% (I do not know what faculty are saying on this issue today). Students are presented with very one-sided views of sexual abstinence, school choice, the influence of divorce on children, and the value of children being raised by their actual parents. Many of the lectures and assigned readings simply assume that intelligent women will want to have careers outside of the home and, if they have children, utilize surrogates to care for them. They assume that most social problems are best addressed by government rather than by private sector actors, that homosexuality is just as normal and desirable a sexual orientation as heterosexuality, etc. Seldom are such beliefs reasonably defended. They tend to be assumed as what every intelligent, unbiased, socially concerned person will believe.

6. As a result of the lack of diversity in the curriculum, many HDFS students show a decided lack of skill and knowledge in discussing pressing social problems our society currently faces. They typically embrace one-sided and distorted views of issues like abortion, divorce, school choice, welfare reform, homemaking as a career, affirmative action, etc.

Note: Throughout this report, I frequently refer to conservative, orthodox, or traditional religion. I do this deliberately, for, as various sociologists and others have pointed out, liberal or modernist religion in America today typically is theologically, socially, and morally closer to secular liberalism than it is to more traditional Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. This may also be true of Islam, but I do not know enough about Islam in America to say one way or another. To add liberal religious input to Cornell's curriculum would in many cases only add marginally to diversity, particularly in respect to issues having to do with family, human sexuality, marriage, divorce, abortion, affirmative action, the role of government in resolving problems of poverty, etc.

D. Cornell's Government Department

A second example of a one-sided faculty, which I shall discuss only briefly, is Cornell's government department. This department has 33 faculty, only one of whom--Jeremy Rabkin--is what I would call a political conservative. This is not because outstanding conservative scholars in government and political science do not exist--many can be found in various think tanks and elsewhere across the country--but because Cornell appears to have made little effort to attract them. The department has four professors who do political philosophy, but no courses in ancient or medieval thought. By contrast, many courses are offered on feminist and oppression studies. Likewise, although the department offers courses on various influences or factors in politics (economic, ethnic, military, etc.) it offers no courses on the influence of religion in politics. This is particularly noteworthy considering the tremendous influence of religion on politics not only in the U.S. but throughout much of the world today. I have no reason to believe that the department would be opposed to such a course, but it's not clear that they currently have anyone competent to teach such material.

It does not seem unfair to conclude that if our government department wants to educate rather than

indoctrinate students it needs to hire a more diverse faculty. The striking lack of conservative political values and ideas held by faculty in our government department causes more than a little skepticism about the claim that we want diversity at Cornell. To be sure, most of our faculty at Cornell, whether in government or in other departments, try hard to be fair to ideas they do not themselves accept. But to have more faculty who were actually conservative in their own interests and commitments would add to the intellectual vitality of our government department and would also make it easier for conservative students to find mentors and role models.

E. Women's Studies Program

Although I do not claim any detailed understanding of the program, my strong impression is that the Women's Studies Program at Cornell also is seriously deficient in terms of genuine diversity of ideas. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to rename women's studies "The Program in Liberal and Left-Wing Views on Women and Feminist Issues." Cornell's 1999-2000 Courses of Study lists a profusion of courses and a very substantial investment of faculty effort in this program. I find this noteworthy, especially considering the following: (1) the paucity of course offerings once thought important for a liberal education in so many other parts of the university; (2) the program offers 107 courses this year but only one (not offered in 1999-2000) that focuses on biology, even though research on biologically-based sex differences is a major area of research in the world of serious science, and there have been many important new findings over the past decade or so (for instance in neurology) that have enormous significance for understanding differences and similarities between men and women; (3) the program description comes as close to a statement of creedal orthodoxy as anything I have seen at Cornell (e.g.: "Definitions of gender--including those that privilege exclusive heterosexuality--are not natural or universal but are instead social constructions that vary across time and place . . .", etc.; (4) the program appears implicitly to accept the formula "women's studies = feminist advocacy studies."

Is such a program consistent with the larger goals of Cornell University and our long-standing tradition of welcoming dissent and discouraging indoctrination? Can one possibly believe that students are being well-educated in what appears to be a narrow, ideological environment? Have serious efforts been made to welcome divergent points of view on these important issues, or is political correctness the basic principle guiding this program? Where are the faculty that might be able and willing to offer differing perspectives (especially conservative secular and religious perspectives) on the broad range of important and controversial issues dealt with in this program? With respect to the salaries of those faculty in the program who are based in one or another of Cornell's statutory colleges, is this ideological, partisan orientation of women's studies an appropriate use of public monies?

Important questions these, and any adequate critique of the Provost's Task Force on the Future of the Social Sciences at Cornell ought to address them.

F. Teaching Ethics and Religion at Cornell

The way ethics and religion are taught at Cornell also raises serious problems about fairness and diversity. The view of many academics that secular reason is epistemologically privileged over against religious reason appears to me to be insupportable (I make this argument in detail in several of the journal articles I list at the end of this memo). If Cornell continues to have secular philosophers teaching and doing *normative* ethics (as over against *descriptive* ethics), they should also hire scholars who do ethics from within religious frameworks, notably Christianity, but also Judaism and Islam, for these are the traditions that inform the thinking of the majority of Americans. (By "doing normative ethics" I mean actually trying to find or develop answers to questions of the good and/or the right and to questions concerning character, the virtues, etc., rather than simply describing and analyzing the ethical views of various cultures, groups, and individuals,

which is what I mean by "descriptive ethics.") To have Christian theologians like Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University or Gilbert Meilaender of Oberlin College doing ethics at Cornell is just as justifiable as to have nontheists doing ethics from a utilitarian, neo-Kantian, or social contract perspective, and such an arrangement would immeasurably enliven the level of academic discussion and debate at the university.

Furthermore, if the claim that secular reason is epistemologically privileged can no longer be accepted at face value, there remain no good reasons why a university with Cornell's motto--"I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study"--ought not to have theologians teaching theology as a part of the regular curriculum. At the very least, the hegemony of the comparative religion method for studying religion (religionsgeschichtliche Methode) ought to be questioned. I can think of no good reasons why Cornell sees no problems in going beyond Enlightenment rationalism (especially through various post-modernist approaches) in our English department, in Women's Studies, and in various courses in Science and Technology Studies but balks at a similar broadening of the study of religion. The presence of first-rate theologians on the Cornell campus would stimulate discussion of a broad range of moral, philosophical, and existential issues of concern to students.

One argument that is often heard against including theologians and theological ethics at Cornell has to do with the so-called constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. But the Arts College is an endowed, private institution, and as such can do what it chooses in this matter. But even in the statutory colleges at Cornell, as I argue in several of the pieces I list at the end of this memo, there are no sound arguments against including normative religion in the curriculum. Indeed, I believe our present practice of giving establishment status to secular ethics and ideologies at the university is what is really offensive to the underlying spirit of the constitution (Cf., esp. my piece entitled "Why a Functional Definition of Religion is Necessary if Justice is to Be Achieved in Public Education."

G. Important Considerations

1. The fact that Cornell today is a more diverse university than 25 years ago in terms of sex, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation has in some respects worked against a diversity of ideas at the university, for many faculty hired under affirmative action tend to be even more liberal on a variety of social/political/moral issues than the faculty in general. For the most part, I have favored diversity in terms of race, sex, and ethnic background, but to make the unqualified claim that Cornell is more diverse today than 25 years ago is misleading --at least in terms of what universities are about, namely ideas.

2. For political and religious conservatives not to have their views fairly represented in the curriculum of a world-class university is a far more serious state of affairs than is open opposition to their views. When you disagree with someone or openly reject their views, you nonetheless honor the person by recognizing his or her presence. But when you treat the person's moral, religious, and political views as beyond the pale or as if they did not exist at all, you dishonor that person. Disagreement, perhaps even hate, is sometimes less destructive than indifference and being ignored. These latter attitudes convey the message that one is a nonperson, someone not even worthy of being recognized. It was that kind of treatment of blacks and other minorities throughout much of our history that provoked alienation and justifiable anger.

The irony of such treatment of Cornellians who hold conservative secular views and/or religious views is that Americans are fairly evenly divided among liberals and conservatives, and we are also a highly religious nation where most people do a good deal of their moral reflection and wrestling with the meaning and purpose of life within various theistic frameworks. By censoring conservative secular ideas and treating normative religion as essentially private and nonrational, Cornell does a great injustice to many of its students and faculty. Such discriminatory treatment sends exactly the wrong message to students as we try to educate them for participation in a democratic and pluralistic society. In plain words, it is uncivil behavior

of a very serious kind.

I am not in any way recommending that the university privilege religious reason over against secular reason in the way that was typical of most higher education in the 19th century. But what we are doing today, that is privileging secular reason and excluding normative religious reason, is no more justifiable than what happened in the 19th century, at least, not if we continue to claim to be a nonsectarian institution.

In saying this, I do not mean to reject the model of an essentially secular university. For private universities that do not draw heavily on government monies that is a legitimate option, just as is a university that is grounded strongly in religious beliefs. But tax-supported colleges such as Human Ecology, Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Industrial and Labor Relations have a special obligation to be fair minded, and they should not grant establishment status to one set of ideas or to one set of moral, political, and metaphysical commitments.

3. If colleges and universities do not address these questions of political and educational justice, concerned citizens will have little choice but to work at the political level to defund or even disestablish such institutions. Newt Gingrich was severely criticized for allegedly (he was later cleared by the IRS) using a 501-C-3 organization to fund a course on American history and political institutions because it was considered too conservative. But Gingrich, even if the charges against him had stuck, was a strict amateur in comparison with what is routinely practiced by way of political and social indoctrination in colleges and universities across America, including Cornell. Such indoctrination is especially troublesome in Cornell's statutory, tax- supported colleges, and I find it quite indefensible (Further material on the lack of diversity in Human Ecology can be found in the attached memo of March 8, 1995, which I originally addressed to my colleagues on the Faculty Council of Representatives).

H. Censorship by Omission, Unequal Disciplining of Students, and Attitudes towards Minorities on Campus

I cannot prove this claim, but it is my guess that when our curriculum at Cornell suppresses ideas and values held by many religious and politically conservative students on campus, this may well heighten campus tensions by forcing politically incorrect ideas to go underground. Thoughtful students know that they are being indoctrinated. They know that the ideas and interests of various minorities, of political liberals, and of secular thinkers are being privileged by the university but that their own are being suppressed through widespread censorship by omission. This state of affairs produces anger in some students. Such anger in no way justifies the inequitable or unjust treatment of various minorities on campus, but it may at least help explain it.

Although the issue is only in part curricular, I want to add that when the Cornell police and the Cornell administration treat animal rights protestors in the harsh manner that we witnessed last spring, this looks very much like a double standard and does not promote harmony on campus. In the past black and Hispanic students have been treated much more gently, even when their offenses were more serious. Similarly, when the Cornell Senate refused to accept a moderate and fair resolution for dealing with the conflicts of conscience experienced by animal rights students regarding dissecting animals in required introductory biology classes, I believe it was not our finest hour. I largely disagree with the beliefs and values of the animal rights movement, and believe that they should not be allowed to disrupt campus life and faculty research, but I also believe that liberal institutions ought to respect the consciences of dissenters when doing so does not paralyze or seriously weaken our ordinary university operations.

Or to take another issue related to the marketplace of ideas at Cornell, the weak and half-hearted response of the Cornell administration to the theft of conservative student newspapers on campus likely produced backlash feelings among those students whose rights were being trampled on.

I. What Can Be Done to Remedy these Problems?

1. First, let me be clear that I in no way want to challenge any professor's academic freedom to teach what he or she considers to be true and relevant, nor do I want to engage in any kind of censorship.
2. The faculty and administration at Cornell should make it a high priority to bring more diversity of ideas to campus. Specifically, we need to hire faculty who are competent to introduce students to conservative secular and religious views on the kinds of issues mentioned in this memo. It is my conviction that such scholars, many of whom presently are working in think tanks across the country, could be persuaded to come to Cornell if we actively pursued them.
3. It would be best if faculty would themselves take the initiative to achieve greater diversity of ideas in their various departments, but if they do not accept this challenge, then the provost, with the help of the deans of the various colleges, should encourage them to do so, providing proper incentives when needed. We have successfully used such an approach in the past in hiring women, blacks, and Hispanics.
4. I have mentioned only a few departments in this memo. Other departments also appear to me to be one-sided--for instance the new department of Policy Analysis and Management in Human Ecology--but I do not have sufficient current data to make a convincing case for this claim. It is likewise my impression that the College of Industrial and Labor Relations is not providing students with a balanced and politically fair education, and this seems to me to be the case also in the English department.
5. At the very least, the issues I raise in this memo ought to be discussed and debated by Cornell faculty, students, and administrators, and perhaps even by the board of trustees. My claim that Cornell is not offering students a balanced education in some fields is a serious claim, and, if true, means that we ought to make some substantial changes in how we carry on our affairs. If my complaints are accurate, then we are not just miseducating students. At least in our statutory colleges, we are also irresponsibly violating ordinary concepts of political fairness applicable to a pluralistic, democratic society.
6. Five years ago faculty in Human Ecology objected that to hire people to bring about the kind of diversity for which I was arguing would be to discriminate on the basis of an individual's religious, moral, and political beliefs. But this need not be the case. It would be sufficient to hire individuals who were competent to introduce the kind of diversity I recommend even though they did not personally believe the truth of the views they taught and researched. At the very least, however, such prospective faculty would need to believe that the views they presented were culturally important and worth studying. And in most cases it is likely that such individuals would also be personally committed to such beliefs and values. To take a parallel case, most scholars who become experts in utilitarian ethics or who specialize in Shakespeare actually believe that utilitarianism is a good, perhaps the best, moral view to hold, or that Shakespeare is worth reading and not a third-rate playwright whose work we could with little loss safely ignore. Similarly, most theologians who would be competent to teach and do research in Christian ethics--in a *normative* and not just a descriptive modality--would likely believe that such ethics are true and relevant to modern society. Scholars who would be competent to present more conservative views of the family, marriage, political institutions, etc.--like Robert Wuthnow at Princeton, Mary Ann Glendon at Harvard Law School, Stanley Hauerwas at Duke, Charles Glenn at Boston University, James Hunter at the University of Virginia, James Skillen at the Center for Public Justice, or Jean Bethke Elshtain at the University of Chicago--are likely to be committed to these ideas, just like scholars competent to teach Russian literature tend personally to value Russian literature.

At the very least, scholars brought onto the faculty would be expected to be both knowledgeable and fair, and, it might be hoped, even sympathetic, to the views they were teaching. We accept far less stringent

standards for women's studies and black studies. We do not staff women's studies mainly with men or black studies mainly with whites and Asians.

J. Conclusion

1. Cornell claims to be a "nonsectarian" university, but in some respects it is a highly sectarian institution, for it unjustifiably privileges particular points of view and discriminates against others. What is particularly ironic, perhaps even hypocritical, is that it does this precisely in the name of "nonsectarianism."

2. As a world-class university, Cornell claims to be liberal (in the classical sense of the term), diverse, and nonsectarian, and in many departments it clearly exemplifies what it claims to be. But not in all departments. By staffing various departments almost entirely with faculty who are liberal (in the current social/political sense of the term) to left wing, and who largely ignore the important role that religion plays in American life, Cornell is not living up to the requirements of a liberal institution. Rather, it lacks appropriate diversity and has become in important respects a sectarian institution that is unable to provide students with a balanced and fair education.

3. I am puzzled by what appears to be Cornell's double standard for different disciplines: Normative religion and religiously grounded ethics are excluded from the curriculum because they are--so it is claimed, "based on faith"--but a program like women's studies, whose basic assumptions appear to be just as clearly faith-based (one might also use the term "ideological"), is included in the curriculum. Similarly, I have been told repeatedly, that we at Cornell would never want to hire faculty for our government department based, even in part, on their political persuasions. Nor in Human Development and Family Studies would it be appropriate to seek out faculty who were committed to traditional or orthodox Jewish or Christian religious views of the family, abortion, divorce, child nurture, etc. But apparently such objections disappear entirely when it comes to our Program in Women's Studies at Cornell. I should add that it is my impression that Black Studies at Cornell is similarly ideological, but because I know relatively little about this program, I have not discussed it in this memo. Suffice it to say that conservative black scholars like Shelby Steele and Glenn Loury are notable by their absence from Cornell's black studies.

Actually, my own view is that all faculty start with particular assumptions about the nature of reality, who or what human beings are, what nature is, etc.--call them faith commitments, if you will--and that those who deny this fact are either deceiving themselves or are acting in bad faith. All Cornell faculty ought to be first-rate scholars, but pretending that any of us can be totally objective is mistaken. Thus I am not opposed in principle to having faculty in Women's Studies with strong ideological commitments, as long as they are doing first-rate scholarship and welcome criticism of their work, and as long as students are also able to hear differing points of view. My objections are rather that (1) Quite different standards are being inconsistently applied when it comes to hiring faculty with conservative political or religious views, and (2) In a pluralistic society such as our own, particularly in those cases where colleges or universities are supported mainly by public monies, universities ought to make honest efforts to achieve a balance among competing points of view. Excluding women and men with conservative secular and religious views from departments or programs like those I have discussed in this memo is to make Cornell an instrument of indoctrination rather than education.

4. The objection is often heard that if we offer courses in, say, Christian theology or in normative Christian ethics, then we would in fairness have to offer courses in all religions. This objection, however, is not sound. The university typically expends far more effort on American history or on American and English literature than it does, say, on the history of Thailand or on the literature of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe and Thailand have had only very limited influence on our culture, whereas Christianity, Judaism, and to some extent Islam have influenced us profoundly, and it is not possible to understand our culture without understanding these

religions. Also, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are the dominant religions in America today in terms of the number of their adherents.

5. Cornell has the opportunity to take the lead among its peer institutions towards becoming an institution hospitable to a genuine diversity of ideas, beliefs, and values. Like Cornell, our peer institutions profess to be liberal institutions, but they do not honor their profession very well in actual practice. If Cornell is not willing to practice what it preaches then we need more truth in advertising. The university should openly inform students that it intends to continue to censor out various politically incorrect ideas and values, notably conservative and more traditional secular and religious ideas and values.

6. Statutory colleges at Cornell such as Human Ecology, insofar as they are largely supported by tax dollars, have a prima facie obligation to be even-handed in terms of exposing students to a variety of ideas from different perspectives. The lack of even-handedness in many HDFS courses suggests that Cornell is violating the public trust by offering students a narrow-gauge education that in significant respects seems closer to partisan indoctrination than genuine education. Insofar as this is so, the curriculum is academically problematic and politically unjust.

7. My argument for greater diversity of ideas does not mean that the university would need to welcome any beliefs and ideas current in contemporary culture. University faculty and administrators will always need to exercise the function of gatekeepers. We need not feel bad about not hiring astrologers, phrenologists, adherents of flat earth theories, or promoters of young earth creation science to fill faculty slots. My argument presupposes that rational criteria exist and are widely accepted by virtually all faculty for making judgments about these matters. Indeed, in some areas of women's studies and in some postmodernist work being done in English departments I believe we have stretched the boundaries rather too far already. But this makes all the more evident that the exclusion of conservative political and religious views from Cornell, including normative ethics that is religiously grounded, is mainly a matter of bias and discrimination against these particular viewpoints rather than a matter of maintaining high academic standards, for the high academic standards of many conservative and secular religious scholars are evident to anyone but the most close-minded. Some years ago, a Cornell faculty member from the Arts College in all seriousness told me that Cornell would be justified in discriminating against theistic candidates for faculty positions, because it was evident that anyone who believed in God was not particularly bright. I sincerely hope that such views are not widespread!

8. Dean John Ford addressed the Cornell Senate on February 10, 1999. He speaks of diversity in the curriculum at Cornell as having a positive impact on attitudes towards racial issues. This is not surprising. But there is good reason to believe that the diversity that the university so far has encouraged is largely of the politically correct sort. My belief is that one of the best ways to defuse tensions on campus is to welcome more diversity of the kinds I refer to in this memo. When the university discourages or even suppresses open and honest discussion of issues like affirmative action, homosexual rights, abortion, school choice, etc.--by not hiring faculty who take politically incorrect views on these issues or, to take another example, by excluding religious student groups from Student Assembly Finance Commission funding--it makes it more, not less likely, that relations among students will be strained. And such censorship will also make our claim to being a liberal institution sound increasingly hollow.

K. Caveat

I am a Cornell Senator from the Department of Natural Resources, but the views expressed in this memo are my own, not those of my department.

L. References

The following articles of mine discuss some of the issues dealt with in this memo in considerably more detail. I would be glad to send reprints to any faculty who request them.

- a. [R. A. Baer, Jr., "Diversity and Curricular Homogeneity at Cornell," a 1995 memo to the old Faculty Council of Representatives \(included on the Senate website with this memo\).](#)
- b. R. A. Baer, Jr., "The Supreme Court's Discriminatory Use of the Term 'Sectarian'," The Journal of Law and Politics, Vol. VI, No. 3 (Spring 1990), 449-468.
- c. R. A. Baer, Jr., "Why a Functional Definition of Religion is Necessary if Justice is to Be Achieved in Public Education, chap. 7 in James T. Sears, editor, Curriculum, Religion, and Public Education: Conversations for Enlarging the Public Square, New York: Teachers College Press, 1998.
- d. R. A. Baer, Jr., "Agricultural Ethics at State Universities: Why No Input from the Theologians?," Agriculture and Human Values, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Fall 1985): 41-46.
- e. Michael Eldridge, "Theology and Agricultural Ethics in the State University: A Reply to Richard Baer," Ibid.: 47-53.
- f. "Theology and Agricultural Ethics at State Universities: A Rejoinder," Agriculture and Human Values, Vol. VI. No. 3 (Summer 1989), 99-104).