



Editorials

Forum:

Is Affirmative Action A Mixed Blessing?

This week the Guilfordian presents Forum, a regular discussion of topics among the student body. Future sections on capital punishment, abortion, prayer in the public schools, and defense policy are planned. If you have an interest in writing about one of these topics or have a theme to suggest, please contact us at Box 17717. Response to all Forum articles is welcome.

By John K. Cox

Affirmative Action is a necessary burden in today's America. I believe it is, despite its drawbacks, an important step towards racial equality in this country. Now of course I will not be one to tell you that life can be made into a bed of roses; utopia is not on the game-plan. But if you accept that there is persistent injustice in American society, then as a human being you must accept as well the challenge of overcoming it.

In the past twenty years we have made great improvements in our social system. I speak here of Civil Rights Acts, increased voter registration, and integrated school systems. But we still have a long way to go. And Affirmative Action--that is, the preferential hiring of members of minorities according to quotas--is an important part of our battle against racial oppression.

It is critical that all areas of our society heretofore closed to minorities be opened to them. Affirmative Action strikes at the symptoms of our racial problems by equalizing whites and minorities in an occupational sense. Instituted by itself it would be useless; its importance lies in altering the

"real" world to the extent that minorities can play real roles in it and thus become exposed to what they are being integrated to do.

Affirmative Action is essentially unfair to non-minorities. But when the arm of a pendulum has swung very far in one direction, it must again cross the center point and ascend in the opposite direction before it can reach a balance. I personally would not relish being an Alan Bakke, wedged out of med school because of some numerical hocus-pocus. But the focus here is not individual sacrifice but a general societal commitment to achieving racial justice. And I am personally willing to participate in such an effort.

Even as part of a plan Affirmative Action is far from ideal. It requires sometimes uneconomical compromises from employers and it creates bureaucracy, it could also lull us into a false sense of accomplishment if we concentrate on it and ignore the correction of the causes of racial problems. But it is justified, and it will be effective. It is worth the effort.

By Bill Wilder

There is plenty of controversy surrounding affirmative action. It has been perceived alternately as a panacea for America's racial problems and as a euphemism both with open-minded progressiveness and with unrealistic liberalism. I submit that it is neither.

It is an attempt and a worthy one, I believe, to advance the cause of minorities in this country. Unfortunately the very act of singling out a particular group and giving them special legislative rights often

causes even more discrimination, a discrimination springing not from prejudice but from a reluctance to be so close to court. Let me clarify myself.

In many business contracts, both parties desire the right to be able to terminate the relationship in the event that things do not work out. Just as an employee would be reluctant to accept a job from which he or she could not escape, so an employer is oftentimes reluctant to hire someone from which he or she cannot at least initially, escape. Unfortunately, this is just where the whole affirmative action mentality steps in. Many employers do not feel free to hire someone they do not feel free to fire, and if this someone is a minority then they will have a harder time finding a job. It is simply safer to hire the average white male if at all possible. No court case is likely at all then. What the affirmative action mentality does is make a employer feel that they cannot safely give a minority a chance. So they do not and everyone ends up losing.

Then what is to be done? Obviously something needs to be done and it is also asinine to act as if no real discrimination exists. But it is also asinine to assume that affirmative action and the mentality surrounding it solve all the problems. Our destination should be the equal acceptance of every race in society; that much is self-evident. No matter what anyone says, affirmative action is not the yellow brick road to equality yet those who claim no road is needed are indeed living in the Land of Oz.

Letters To The Editor

Lake Litter

To the Editor:

Many times in past weeks I have walked to the Guilford College lake. It is a saddening sight to see the wanton destruction of the lake environment. Garbage, especially aluminum cans and glass bottles, are strewn about as numerous as blades of grass not only on land but floating in the water as well! Protecting the environment is perhaps the most important duty that we, as inhabitants of the earth can perform, especially in these days of lack of concern for preserving our precious natural resources in their natural states.

I would like to propose that Guilford students join forces and spend some time cleaning up the lake and the surrounding area. Let's transmute the lake from a garbage dump into a natural area which can be admired and enjoyed for its beauty. Guilford needs concerned students to come forth and stop the slow and painful death of the Guilford College lake. I would appreciate any interested person turning his name with any comment into the Guilfordian office so that a cleanup group can be organized as soon as possible.

Andrew Stuart

store in a box mounted there. Such a ladder is manufactured but as yet the supplier has not been found. We considered not marking the window as an exit until the ladder was in place, but decided that, in an emergency, a two-story drop is better than a fire.

The carrel desks have been removed from in front of the exit windows. Student workers have been re-reminded via individual notes about the procedures to follow in case the alarm goes off. More flashlights have been purchased, and we are considering buying a small, battery-operated bullhorn. All of these measures are, as you suggest, overdue and inadequate. The renovated and expanded Library will certainly have an improved fire-detection and alarm system, probably including a public address system, lighted exit signs, and smoke/heat detectors throughout the building. In the meantime students and others who use the building should be aware of exit locations, stay awake, and not tamper with fire detection equipment.

Sincerely your friend,
Damon D. Hickey
Associate Library Director

Freshman Care

As a freshman, I wish to say something positive about the class of 1988. In spite of the editorials in the September 26 issue of The Guilfordian, and in spite of condensation from various sources, I hope to point out some very good aspects of the freshman class.

Clayton J. Tyson tried to justify the apathy which was somewhat obvious at the Distinguished Visitor Lecture. I see no reason to justify our actions. There was a bit of distraction, but very much caring, very much involvement. Several students took notes, several others sat intrigued by the lecture. We are just as concerned about human suffering and broad political issues as upper classmen. We wish more upper classmen had attended the lecture and we invite them to participate in the Campus Network for Amnesty International which was begun by none other than freshmen. We had hoped to see more upper classmen at the Amnesty International meeting which was open to everyone. I do not mean to insinuate that upper classmen are apathetic; I only want to emphasize the extent to which freshmen are indeed exhibiting concern. Let's work together.

Library's Reply

To the Editor:

Thank you for Tracey Clark's recent article and your editorial about the fire-detection equipment recently installed in the library. It was the editor of The Guilfordian who, as a student library worker this summer, raised the issues that led to the installation of the present system. I appreciate your concern for the safety of those who use the Library.

I was upset to discover that the large, red and white "Emergency Exit" sign by the window on the second floor of the stacks had been torn down. (The small, hand-lettered sign pictured in the editorial was put up a few days before the large signs arrived, and had not been removed.) As your editorial recommends, I have put up a large, temporary sign until another permanent one is installed. I am angry that anyone would remove an emergency sign. Tampering with fire equipment at Guilford is an offense for which the penalty is automatic suspension from the college.

The Maintenance Department has been seeking a chain ladder that will attach to the wall inside the building below the exit window on the second floor, and will



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