

Sunbury Daily Item

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Clean Bill Given To Bucknell On Racial Question

'Bucknellian,' Which Raised Issue, Admits Discrimination Charges Are Unfounded.

The question of whether Bucknell University is guilty of discrimination in its admission policies currently is one of the main topics of discussion among faculty and students on the Lewisburg Campus according to news content and editorial comment carried in the columns of the university student publication, "The Bucknellian."

The controversy began Feb. 3 with the publication of an editorial in which the student newspaper editors questioned whether the university was guilty of such action in its admission procedures.

The editorial almost immediately brought a steady stream of letters to the editor in which students, faculty and administration squared off either to defend or condemn the university and its alleged discriminatory actions.

University vice-president John F. Zeller led off with a condemnatory letter to the editor on the Feb. 3 editorial. He criticized the "phony liberals and fake intellectuals whose narrow minds perpetuate the kind of half truth the editorial represented."

Zeller pointed out in his communication that there is no university policy of discrimination against Negroes. "Negroes have been and I assume they will continue to be admitted on the same basis as whites, subject to the same admission standards and other requirements," Zeller said.

The college vice-president cited two reasons why there are fewer Negro students at Bucknell this year than at some times in the past.

The first, he said was the economic reason.

"As the costs at Bucknell go up, we price ourselves out of the range of many students from homes of average income or less. Many Negro families are in this group." Wealthy Negro families, he pointed out, can afford Harvard, Yale or other colleges and these colleges are anxious to have Negro students. "Obviously," Zeller wrote, "the competition for the academically qualified and financially able Negro students is equally as great as for the white student and there aren't enough financially able negroes to go around."

and the academic requirements are too stiff for many good athletes, both Negro and white.

Zeller also cited the social reason in which he said the climate of student opinion at Bucknell is not sympathetic to Negroes as it should be. He cited instances of a cross being burned in front of one fraternity which had a Negro president and treatment accorded one Negro girl who came to Bucknell several years ago.

Student letter writers particularly referred to the portion of the application for admission to the college containing the portion wherein an applicant must state his religious preference and provide a picture.

Several also made reference to discrimination policies in the fraternity system at Bucknell. Zeller had suggested in his letter the possibility of removing discriminatory clauses from the constitutions of local fraternity groups. This possibility has been considered by the student government group.

Two Negroes Enrolled

At the present time, there are two Negro students enrolled at Bucknell.

Last Spring, the discrimination issue caused a furor on the campus when one of the Negro students was allegedly refused admittance to Evans Tavern, located along Route 14 at East Lewisburg, because of his race. The incident provoked a demonstration through the business section of Lewisburg and resulted in several students boycotting the tavern.

Fitz R. Walling, director of admissions at the university, reported that eight Negro students applied for admission to Bucknell last September.

Of this number, Walling said, six were refused admission because they did not qualify scholastically. Admission was offered to the other two Negro applicants but they did not accept the offer and consequently were not enrolled.

Paul Pearson said that none of the 13 fraternities on the Bucknell campus are any longer restricted or prevented by constitutional provisions from accepting anyone into their group that they may choose.

In some cases, Pearson said, this action was initiated only after extreme pressure and coercion was applied on a national scale. Pearson pointed out, however, that this does not guarantee that there will no longer be any discrimination as to race, religion or color by fraternities in the selection of their membership.

Faculty Speaks Out

Latest group to enter the discussion was the faculty of the university, which, through Dr. C. Willard Smith, submitted a letter to "The Bucknellian" in which it said the position taken by the faculty on these matters expresses

concerning religious and racial discrimination: "We, the faculty of Bucknell University are committed to the following propositions concerning religious and racial discrimination:

A. Article VI, section I, of the charter of Bucknell University unequivocally declares itself against discrimination because of a religious belief.

"No religious sentiments are to be accounted a disability to hinder the election of an individual to an office among the teachers of the institution or to debar persons from admittance as pupils or in any manner to abridge their privileges or immunities as students in any department of the university."

We take this statement to mean that neither in the employing of teachers nor in the selecting of students ought the administration or the faculty to consider religious belief or church affiliation as a relevant qualification or disqualification."

B. "Further, we believe it to be a correct extension of the provision of the charter quoted above, and certainly consistent with the intention of this provision, that along with religious beliefs, national and racial origins should be looked on as irrelevant in the selection of students and faculty. Diversity of religious views and national and racial backgrounds is to be welcomed; indeed, should be considered essential, in an institution of higher learning whose aim is to seek the truth wherever it may be found."

C. "Finally, we hold that the university should be directly concerned both to prevent discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin from entering any part of its life and to protect its students, its faculty, its staff, and its guests from discrimination while they are associated with the university."

II. That the faculty recommend to the committee on admissions that no application blank contain a request for a photograph or for the religious affiliation of the applicant and that both a photograph and any information about religious affiliation be obtained only after the applicant has been accepted by the university.

III. That the faculty approve the intent of house bill 430 and house bill 273, currently before the Pennsylvania State Legislature, which make unfair educational practices illegal and furthermore that they suggest that the committee on state government, the state senator and the representative from Union County be informed by the secretary of the faculty of this action."

"Clarification"

In its March 3 issue, out on Friday, the Bucknellian stated editorially that it wished to clarify its stand on discrimination.

that the charge is completely unfounded."

Continuing, the editorial said: "A clarification of these statements (on a scholarship for a Negro girl and the reported application of a Negro athlete for admittance to Bucknell) by no means closes the issue; if anything, it should make us more aware of the problems at stake."

To encourage more Negroes to enroll at Bucknell, the paper's editorial continued, the picture now requested on the application should be eliminated and more qualified Negroes should be sought as prospective students. The paper also urged that the social climate at Bucknell be made more amenable to Negro students.