

Panel Discussion Reveals Ideas on Discrimination

by Sue Davidson

The basement of the Phi Lambda Theta house, where a distinguished panel of administrators and faculty sat, was the scene on March 2 for the climax of the discrimination issue here at Bucknell. Because of the overflow of interested students and faculty, part of the audience was seated upstairs with a loudspeaker system to hear the proceedings.

Marvin Kahan of Phi Lambda Theta led the panel, composed of David E. Horlacher, assistant professor of economics; Ralph Spielman, professor of sociology; John Zeller, III, vice president of business and finance, and Fitz R. Walling, director of admissions.

The first question put to the panel was whether they personally felt that there was an issue of discrimination at Bucknell. Mr. Zeller, speaking as an individual, felt that there was an issue. Defining this issue, however, was another matter. He stated that Bucknell University was not deliberately preventing the admission of Negro students. However, the issue might be defined in terms of the extent to which the University should go to encourage more Negroes to apply.

Bigoted Accuse Bigotry

Mr. Spielman then gave his impression of the issues. He first made it clear that inadequate statements and indiscriminate accusations were only the bigoted accusing bigotry. Mr. Spielman next gave the sociological definition of discrimination: sorting people into categories and treating them differently, as groups, with regard to membership in such organizations as universities or fraternities. Generalized group characteristics outweigh individual qualifications. He added that there was discrimination for, as well as against. There is discrimination at Bucknell in regard to how one should act in respect to goals and means to goals. The students are guilty in little and big issues. Because some are for and some are against discrimination in the fraternity system, there is an issue. Since there is contention in and among the members of the administration, there is an issue. The faculty has narrow vote margins on discussions of the topic, so there is an issue there too.

Speaking for the admissions of-

vice, Mr. Walling said that there was no discrimination in admission to Bucknell.

Next, Mr. Horlacher, representing himself, repeated the opinion expressed by Mr. Spielman that unfounded accusations are bad. Then he went on to say that there were several issues at Bucknell. The students within fraternities are discriminating and penalizing other students because of race and religion. There is no evidence, however, that the administration is actively discriminating. There is a strong minority in the faculty that is discriminating, but they are not penalizing in the classroom or in regard to other academic affairs.

Representative Student Body

Mr. Horlacher continued by discussing the question of whether or not Bucknell has a representative student body. Since Bucknell students have a higher IQ than the national average, come from families with above average incomes, make their homes in Northeastern United States and lack the same religious or racial composition as the nation, it cannot be said that they have a representative student body.

Such a representation would be more desirable, as association is necessary to cope with problems that arise over situations involving race and religion. In order to encourage these minority groups to come to Bucknell, scholarships would have to be more plentiful and tuition would consequently have to be raised. There would also be a lowering of standards for Negro applicants and for students from California. In other words there would have to be discrimination FOR these people, and the majority group would be discriminated against.

Mr. Zeller picked up Mr. Horlacher's words by commenting that the question at Bucknell is: How far out of the way should we go for the Negroes? He added that religion is a similar issue. Is religion completely irrelevant? Some say that it is irrelevant, while others believe that this is a Christian institution and should be maintained as such.

Now, Mr. Walling expressed the opinion that the aim of the University was to take the best possible students. Lowering the standards would be discrimination for, which is just as evil as any other discrimination.

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Lowering Standards

An excellent point was brought out by Mr. Spielman when he said that the lowering of standards was absolutely out of the question. Such a thing would mean taking a paternalistic attitude toward the Negroes. **Negro qua Negro** is less able to overcome low economic status than the white. This is only a basis for furthering discrimination. Special laws and special treatment means his negative privileging would continue. This way cheats both the qualified and unqualified Negro. When a Negro commits a crime against another Negro, he is punished more lightly because he's not considered capable of responsibility. Such a situation is parallel to admitting a Negro to Bucknell on lower standards. He must suffer because we don't know how to aid him.

Both Mr. Zeller and Mr. Spielman expressed the opinion that the formation of a Student Union at Bucknell could help alleviate some of the social pressures caused by the fraternity and sorority systems.

At this point in the discussion, Marvin Kahan interrupted the speakers in order to allow the audience an opportunity to ask questions and voice their own opinions. Everyone was eager to have his say and the questions ranged from the position of the Board of Trustees on such matters as discrimination, to the possibilities of encouraging Negro applicants.

All those who attended the discussion will agree that the time was well spent. The panel was interested in the topic and their views were thought-provoking to all concerned students.