

The P C Era

by

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, Fellow Sacrificial Lamb, and Members of the Athenaeum: in the past, I have presented some papers that were informative, some that were attempts at humor, and some that were just plain pot-boiling boring. This evening, I propose to share with you priceless advice gleaned from my vast experience which will enable you to survive, yea, to overcome, in the society of the present millennium. We live in the PC Era. PC could stand for Personal Computer, or, more likely, for Puritan Culture or Picky Censorship, or even Publicam Civilis, but actually it stands for Politically Correct. Ours has not proven to be a time that abides differences of opinion with grace or gusto.

Perhaps the reason for our herd-like toleration for that which is "politically correct," even when it makes no sense at all or is even contradictory. is partly the result of our possession of the means of instant communication that makes us a global community instead of an infinite number of relatively small, unrelated cohesive social groups. Then again, perhaps the anomolies of "political correctness" become important because we have a generation which has never matured and lacks the self-confidence to be different. Since this is the case, and the society in which we live is extremely intolerant of any deviation on the part of the majority, I propose to lay out a few insights to help the unsuspecting fogies among you navigate the treacherous shoals of a litigious society.

In order to be politically correct, which, incidentally, for those of you familiar with the Athenaeum Constitution, has nothing to do with politics but everything to do with social attitude, we have to start with the necessity of using terminology that reflects sensitivity to the needs of others. The most basic principle of the modern society is to be very sensitive to and to overcompensate for any debilitating condition among any kind of minority. People who were formerly ignorant are now intellectually-challenged. People who were formerly short are now height-challenged. People who were formerly dirt-poor are now financially-challenged. Got it? You are now well on your way to the kind of social sensitivity that is the essence of political correctness. You may even be able to deal with the correct ethnic terminology, without being accused of being a Neanderthal-Archie Bunker bigot. We no longer make jokes about wops or kikes or polacks lest we be haled into court for harassment. We can, however, make jokes about wasps or honkies or anglos, since everyone knows these people deserve what they get, and they are not a minority. Perhaps the most sensitive as well as the most numerous group are the brethren of the Afro-American heritage. I do not dare even mention what these poor innocents were callously referred to in baser circles in my youth. Then we progressed to colored, then to black (as in beautiful), then to Afro-American. While it seems to me it would be safer not to refer to them as a separate group at all, simply calling them Americans, this might deprive them of their pride in their heritage, and is thus inadmissible. I had to deal with this dilemma once when



we were offering classes at Fort Campbell. Lexington wanted to know how many black students were enrolled. However, we were not permitted to have an indication of ethnic background on the enrollment forms lest we discriminate. I do not really have an easy solution. When I asked Lexington how many they needed, they took great umbrage. I would suggest sensitively solving this problem in terminology by calling them justice-challenged.

Now that we are sensitive to ethnic sensibilities and, one can assume, those of age, sex, national origin, etc. and all our advertisements will include a disclaimer of any kind of discrimination (which is another word for judgment, which is another word for decision), there is a politically correct exception to this. You don't have to worry about the feelings of the obese. Just call them fat. "Fatty, fatty two by four can't get through the bathroom door." You can do this with impunity because of matters I will now discuss.

In a word: DIET. All loyal Americans are either on a diet, off a diet, or thinking about a diet. Three-fifths of the population are obese, two-fifths were obese, and the rest will be obese. Since this makes them a majority rather than a minority, sensitivity toward them is not required. In fact, it is evidence you are out of the loop. While we are on the subject of diet, political correctness requires one to follow the latest research or suffer the dire consequences of horrible diseases of all sorts and even death. Eggs were bad. Now eggs are good. Good and bad cholesterol wage eternal civil war that can only be assuaged by drinking red wine. Nuts fight cancer but promote strokes. It's the color,



stupid, and meat kills except on the protein diet, in which it promotes health and weight loss. Pasta causes weight loss and weight gain. It is politically correct to take a diuretic, lose five pounds of water, and then write a book about your marvelous weight loss system. Everybody is doing it.

Along with the proper diet has to go exercise. Now exercise doesn't count unless it fulfills the following three criteria: It must take place in the proper location, i.e. your home or health club; you must wear the proper clothing; and you must use expensive equipment. Without these three items, all your exercise merely increases your appetite. It is a well known fact that one may take up the great game of golf after telling all and sundry it is for the exercise, but it is equally well known that the exercise element is futile unless one uses a golf cart. It is equally well known that mowing the yard, vacuuming the house, cleaning out gutters, raking leaves, and all these activities, not requiring special exercise equipment, are futile. Besides, in these activities, there is little opportunity to wear spandex, which is absolutely essential for proper exercise, or else we would have fat, out of shape individuals claiming to exercise healthfully.

Diet, exercise, and denunciation of fat are all part of our politically correct aversion to death, and it must be admitted that so far, all of us have succeeded in averting that evidence of mortality, so we must be doing something right.

Now please pay attention to this section and it may save you the expense of a lawsuit. We politically correct people do not sexually harass. Sexual harassment includes all touching, staring, smiling, and possibly even thinking. The rules of one prominent college campus indicate that kissing someone of the opposite (or, presumably, the same) sex may be regarded as harassment if permission is not requested and received, preferably in writing, beforehand. Sexual harassment is demeaning and includes any job discrimination at all. This principle, of course, requires the granting of maternal leave to women and paternal leave to men. It has nothing to do with the marriage ceremony. That would be judgmental and socially debilitating. It might lead one to be hesitant about hiring a man with the proclivities and equipment of Solomon. And (I do not wish to be squeamish here) one must assume leave for men during their "period" as well as the "change." And, to the purist, there may be an inherent bias in using two terms, such as maternal and paternal. Separate but equal is a principal the courts denounced long ago. Maybe we could call the takers of both types of leave simply "work-challenged."

This brings us to the politically correct principle that the "user" is never at fault, but rather the "maker" or producer. This stems from the heritage left over from the '60s and early '70s when we learned that capitalism, free-enterprise, and the whole governmental and business ball of wax was shot through with evil by the very nature of things. Since blame for society's ills must land somewhere, this provides a very convenient dumping place, in addition to

relieving the individual from any responsibility for his/her actions--a very convenient principle, especially since few individuals have the deep pockets of the government or very large corporations. Therefore the blame for massive health costs related to tobacco rests solely on those who manufacture and sell the filthy weed leaving the user as innocent as a lamb. Who could have known tobacco was dangerous? We older folk thought it was nourishing. If not spinach, then tobacco. One of my favorite mottos for plug chewing tobacco was "Chew Star Navy and Spit Ham Gravy." Of course, in our ignorance, thousands of us yokels thought ham gravy was nourishing! Cigarettes were commonly referred to generations ago as "coffin nails," but nails surely represent that which holds the disparate parts together. We were deceived by the rascally, legally culpable big tobacco companies. We thought Buck Duke was a philanthropist, and had perfect confidence that he neither knew or cared what nicotine is. Therefore we sue---and collect. Tobacco is the arch-fiend of a generation that can still remember the debacle of prohibition and therefore has to leave alcohol alone. If we are not at fault, something has to be. That is a cardinal principle of political correctness. It is this principle that justifies a farmer applying for, taking, and spending money extorted from big tobacco because they may not buy as much from him in future years. Where would our society be if it were not for the charitable, public-minded brethren of the law whose pro bono work has brought the scoundrels to taw. And now the government, under the noble leadership of the current administration (excuse me, that may be political.



Make it under the leadership of the Attorney-General: that can't possibly be political) is bringing suit against companies for selling licensed and taxed products bearing, at governmental behest, dire warnings as to possible health hazards contained therein. There are those silly enough to suppose that those who choose to use such products knowing full well the dangers in so doing might themselves be the culpable party, but not us!

Everything said about tobacco, and much that, in the name of moderation, has been left unsaid, applies to guns. We moderns know that people don't kill, guns do. It might be a bit tacky to point out that, legally speaking, having milked the tobacco cow about dry, the gun cow looks mighty fresh. You probably have thought, up to now, that most political correctness tends to lean leftward. Not so. We lean neither rightward nor leftward. We lean other-ward. When I was a stripling in the seventh grade, the other boys in my class particularly enjoyed embarrassing a young female substitute teacher by emitting loud surreptitious evidences of almost terminal flatulence. The common procedure after such an attack was for the guilty party to point the finger either to the right or to the left, depending on which seat was occupied by another boy. We were guilty of blatant sexual discrimination, but not of being biased to the right or to the left. Let us now, therefore, turn the criminal free and sue the gun manufacturer on the same principle that we sue the aircraft manufacturer when one of their products crashes or the automobile manufacturer when we get drunk, drive 100 miles an hour into a truck and, surprisingly, get hurt

because of material defects in the product. That, my friends, is political correctness at its most profound.

Now I know, since it was read to us in the immediate past meeting, the Constitution of the Athenaeum prohibits the discussion of not only politics but also religion, a provision with which I agree heartily and which, incidentally, I believe reflects the glorious Constitution of this sacred nation. The politically correct position that the Ten Commandments should not, cannot, and by the grace of God must not, be placed on the schoolroom supported by public funds, guarantees the separation of church and state, a felicitous position that has served us well, since in the two hundred plus years of the nation's existence we have not had a single pogrom, auto-da-fe, or inquisition. I feel pretty sure about that statement, since I have read it in the literature of the Ku Klux Klan, the transcript of the McCarthy hearings, and the New York riots of the Know Nothing era. When the issue of the commandments in the classroom became particularly hot, I searched the halls and walls of the church I love and have attended all my life to verify their nature (the commands, not the walls and halls). . . Lo and behold, I could not find them. How, in heaven's name, did we manage to teach religion without them? We got them out of the closet (at my instigation), hung them on the wall, and have been religious ever since. Praise the Lord, or Allah, or Siva, or Buddha, or Confucious, or Woden, or whatever. I have to add that because the county put some gravel on our driveway and parking area. I recently read that one school system, enjoined from placing the Ten Commandments but

required to teach morality, drew up a list of commonly accepted principles, but our boys are going to bring suit against them for trying such a blatant end run. One of their commandments, er-principles, was "Trust God." When challenged that it was plainly religious, therefore unacceptable, they lamely pointed out that the coinage of the realm contains the motto, "In God We Trust." The dummies probably believe that, and are therefore NOT politically correct and are certainly intelligence-challenged. We'd better not catch them gluing any pennies on the wall.

Now we come to the number one problem of the nation in these perilous times, after tobacco, rap music, and spot cards on riverboats: marijuana! To suggest it should be legalized, even for medicinal purposes, is not politically correct. It will get you Gatewooded. The PC POSITION is build ever more jails and bury the suckers under them without hope of redemption or parole. True, this hasn't and doesn't work, but since when has morality and correctness been determined by success or pragmatism? Besides, this is a drug and, more than that, a drug that is smoked. It may even lead to nicotine if it is actually inhaled, which, according to the testimony that is generally made public by our leadership, is seldom if ever done. The only thing about this deal that really bothers the politically correct is that we have not figured a way to tax marijuana as well as jail its users and purveyors. If the Politically Correct doctrine seems to lean toward tolerance for the drug, it is only because of the suspicion that the users may still be in a minority.



Last, but certainly not least, we come to the issue of sexual preference gender-wise, and the Politically Correct stand on what, by a quirk of fate, bears the oxymoronic taxonomy of "gay." Some condescending pseudo-scientific types consider sexual preference imprinted in the genes and some vituperative Biblical troglodytes consider same sex liaisons as horribly sinful. Those of us with both feet firmly planted in the PC Era consider it neither, since both positions are judgmental and might offend the sensibilities of a definite minority. In fact, we expect to see added soon to all advertisements which now specify no discrimination on account of race, sex, age, or ethnic origin the term "sexual preference." Several of our more progressive cities have passed laws guaranteeing no discrimination in this area, and the mayoral candidates of that bastion of family morality, San Francisco, are vying with each other as to who is more favorable to this particular minority. After all, Lesbia was a Greek poet of the Golden Age and some of the most prominent thinkers of that magnificent era boasted of same-sex liaisons. They also consulted animal viscera to discover the future, but that is another issue.

Now, my friends, I have given you, at absolutely no cost except a brief amount of time, a "how-to" manual for sensitive social adaptation as we begin a new year. Please try to contain your excited appreciation. I would suggest that you name the new addition to the stadium area after me, but that implies competition, and competition is not Politically Correct.