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Moral perspectives

Ethnic quotas become racist

A high school senior recently applied for admission to the University of California in Berkeley. He was asked to fill out an "Ethnic Survey" form in which he indicated his ethnic identity by checking the appropriate box.

He had a wide variety of categories to choose from including, but not limited to, the following: American Indian, black, Afro-American, Chicano-Mexican-American, Japanese-Japanese-American, other Asian-Oriental, white Caucasian, decline to state.

A form letter thanked the student for his application and asked his "help and cooperation in furthering campus student affirmative action." While the student is assured that the information "will not be used in any way to determine your eligibility for admission," he is expected to print his full name on the return card.

WHAT THE ADMISSIONS office did not tell him is that the entire University of California system is expected to obtain a student population by 1980 approximately "the general ethnic, racial and economic composition of recent high school graduates" and is urged "to use non-traditional criteria for admitting up to 15 percent of its students."

Now the "traditional" criteria for admission are Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and the high school record. What the above means is that the student may not get admitted if he qualifies only as a white Caucasian male while, let us say, Chicano-Mexican female may be admitted in his place, despite a lower SAT score and a poorer high school record.

No amount of rationalization can cover up the painful truth that this practice is blatant racism. While this procedure has not been introduced into the admissions offices of Michigan colleges and universities, one notes the degree to which racial, religious and sexual categories affect a stu-



By RABBI IRWIN GRONER
Congregation Shearay Zedek

dent's chances of entering undergraduate and graduate programs.

The above case is illustrative of the increasingly widespread phenomenon, stimulated by government policies, of "affirmative action" which can be termed "quotas by another name."

ONE OF THE MARKS of a free society is the supremacy of performance over ancestry. Racist societies confer status on the basis of heredity or physical characteristics. A democratic society is based on

the principle that individual merit and not group identification is the criterion for recognition, the basis for advancement.

To use "affirmative action" in education or employment without reference to competitive performance or objective standards is a violation of the American system. While it seems to correct the inequities of the past, it is in truth, inimical to the freedom of the individual.

Can we achieve justice by unjust means? Can we provide for a free and open society by establishing preferential treatment for particular groups without expecting their individual members to compete and to qualify?

This tendency, permitted to grow wild, can become a loathsome breeding ground for racism, sexism and inter-group hostility.

IT IS TIME to reaffirm the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, the principle which sustains the American understanding of a just social order.

It declares "No state shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

Let us beware of those who would attack this rule, the foundation of American democracy.

LWV plans debate for U.S. candidates

The League of Women Voters is planning a series of four debates for November's presidential election. Chairman Ruth C. Clusen said May 5 at the League's 20th convention in New York City.

The series would mark the first time since the Kennedy-Nixon "great debates" 15 years ago that Americans will have been exposed to head-on discussion by candidates of major campaign issues.

Americans have signaled their desire to know the substance of the candidates' positions on critical problems," said Mrs. Clusen. "They are tired, too, of having these positions handed to them in neat, candidate-controlled packages."

The 1960 elections saw the highest voter turnout we've had in 16 years," Clusen said, "and I'm sure the great debates were a contributing factor. One way to combat voter apathy is to involve citizens in the election process and a series of 1976 debates will do just that."

Project Director Jim Karayn said the league is optimistic about prospects for the fall debates and national television coverage.

The new interpretation of Section 215 of the Federal Communications Act, which regulates equal time provisions, will allow national coverage of the debates as news events," Karayn said. "Unlike 1960, when congressional action was required to waive the equal time provision of the law, the media will not be inhibited in covering political debates. Now they are legitimate news happenings."

The League of Women Voters plans to mount a national campaign to develop public and media support for the debate series.

"The country is ready for face-to-face discussions of issues," Clusen said. "The public has said it wants the kind of dialogue and candidates themselves have claimed there is a desperate need for full airing of the issues."

Mrs. Clusen pointed to the "Presidential Forum '76" program, a special project of the league's educational fund, as proof of the viability of the debate proposal.

"The forum series was acclaimed as a unique and important contribution to voter understanding of issues and candidates' positions," Clusen said. "The fall debates will be a natural extension of the Forum project."

The League of Women Voters has been active in voter education for 38 years. The presidential forum series marked the first time a non-partisan organization presented

Guides needed

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the candidates to the public on a national scale," Clusen continued.

In the series of five forums, presidential primary candidates are expected to the public and their positions on issues are developed in a format which allows direct questioning by voters and authorities on important issues.

In the primary project, the league had both national and local steering committees comprised of distinguished governors, senators, local political leaders, civic and business leaders and the chairmen of the Democratic and Republican national committees.

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