

Mike Harris Essay Questions 5/5/96 #1

The editor's of the New Republic, suggested the following questions; Will such behavior affect performance on the job? For example, the book makes references to drunken legislators conducting the nations business on the floor three sheets to the wind. In this case, the good senators judgment would obviously be somewhat impaired. Therefore he would not be performing the job that he was appointed to do. The public, in my opinion has the right to know.

Next, the editors asked if public disclosure was warranted if the law broken? In my opinion, if the law, any law, was broken by an elected official, then the American public has a right to know. For example, in the case of former Washington DC Mayor, Marion Barry If it had not been for the press, who knows how long, or the extent to which a cover up would have gone on. If the public is being lied to seems to also be a criteria for which I would advocate public disclosure. When the news hit the fan about the Iran-contra controversy, and that Olli North lied before the judiciary committee, the press was absolutely justified in printing the information it had attained. Again, who knows how long the cover-up would have lasted.

Lastly, if the office makes special demands, then a certain right to know coincides with it. I believe that a president should act like a president. The public has expectations of its elected officials, and they have a duty to meet them. I feel that it isn't possible to separate public morality from private, because in a way, they are both the same thing. In a democracy, the private person elects the public official. Society must have standards, and those standards must be dictated from that society. Not from any one man or elected body. However if it were possible to separate the two, I think it would be a noteworthy step. But I don't see that happening any time soon in our culture. Our morality is our safety net, and I think we like it right where it is...in the hands of the majority. I think that it would affect someone's conduct as a public official if they were not truthful. Public official or not, not telling a lie may be the stuff of morals in childhood fables, but I recently recall where an incident where a high level executive of a major, international company told a lie while under oath and cost his company over eight million dollars in fines.

Also I would like to see a code of morals of some sort in any elected official. I know that's a little vague, but not having some kind of common sense, basic, know the difference between right and wrong, type of element would definitely constitute a character defect in my opinion. Lastly, not having a vision of some sort, a passion if you will, for what they do would also make up a character flaw. Public office is an important job, it should be treated as such. I feel that unfortunately a lot of politicians are just "burnt out."

#2

If there were no affirmative action programs, I believe that the merit system, as applied in hiring, promotions, and school admissions would not be applied, however, I wouldn't quite describe it as injustice "rampanant". Maybe more along the lines of extensive and abstruse. I agree with the observance made by the dean of faculty at Amherst College as mentioned in the text; "...I have become aware of pervasive residues of racism and sexism, even among those whose intentions and conscious beliefs are non-discriminatory...I believe that most of us are afflicted with such residues." It would be these "residues" that would hinder any such merit system. People may have good intentions, however when we speak of the undertones of racism, we're touching upon the things that you and I do every day without ever knowing it. For example, the Michael Harrington article on "The New American Poverty" mentions how suburbanization is removing the middle class from daily contact with the poor. As proponents of Affirmative Action programs will no doubt tell you, our very neighborhoods are designed to keep the poor out. With that in mind we can now ask ourselves "who are the poor?" The blacks. The Hispanics. The single women. The very people Affirmative Action speaks of.

Therefore, if the merit system can't really be applied to "truths we hold to be self-evident", (the virtue and integrity we hold in our social structure), then how are we to have faith in it when it applies to things that aren't as morally clear?

To obtain a greater "fairness" in competitive opportunity, our society needs to enact laws that would allow for fair and just employment policy making, such as affirmative action. I feel that job quotas need to be filled. The work place contains the residuals of racism carried over from its history. For example, in the recent press there where claims of discrimination against Denny's Restaurant chains of promoting managers based on race.

Also, school systems should mandate multi-cultural curriculum to help eliminate ignorance and undue stereotypes. I think that the text books could be written more appropriately, without wearing their "political correctness" on their selves.

Lastly, and most importantly, we need to reflect upon the break down of our family value systems. I feel that it is the root of most of the problems we face today. Why aren't parents teaching their children about the ugliness of racism. We need to build these values in our children.

#3

Government, business, and the individual all have a role when it comes to the welfare of the poor. All three should not be held responsible as caretaker, parent, or guardian, but as a member of the humane race. I believe that there is a certain standard which we must be held accountable for. In so far as I can tell, we're not there yet.

On the governmental level, there is a responsibility to do all that is in the scope of its power. Some answers may lie in tax breaks for low income families, programs that would build jobs opportunity, instead of reduce it. Certainly a balanced budget would help free up funds that would be spent on paying off debt to be allotted towards revamping the Federal welfare system.

Business might look at whether or not its putting back into the community what its taking out. Again, possible funds might be freed up to help reform the system. Business leaders might ask themselves whether or not they're doing enough to provide jobs. Does productivity outweigh moral responsibility?

Most importantly, the individual needs to ask themselves this question; "When is enough, enough?" Why do so few people hold so much of the resources? When will it end? We need to make sure that we never forget that every hand helps.

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