

Date: Thu, 21 May 1998 16:01:14 -0500
To: cattcomm@iastate.edu
From: Virginia Allen <vallen@iastate.edu>
Subject: Let's move forward.

I applaud Lynn's effort on the minutes and her analysis of our committee's present problem. I agree that if we are to move forward, we must get out of the WHO IS RIGHT? vs WHO IS WRONG? structure and into something else. I would like to ask two questions in complete and absolute seriousness:

1. Are you--as an individual--committed to producing a report (and I think that is the best we can hope to do) addressed to the university community that can point the way to closure?
2. What do you think is required to make that happen?

EXAMPLES:

- * Do you need information? If so, about what?
the naming process?
historical information?
a better understanding of the 9/29 position?
- * Do you need capitulation and humiliation of the opposing side?
- * What claims/beliefs/opinions are you NOT willing to concede?
- * What claims/beliefs/opinions of the opposition MUST be conceded before you can be personally comfortable in moving toward resolution?

MY ANSWERS:

1. Yes.
2. Jane Cox and I have an irreconcilable philosophical difference of view: My understanding of her position is that you do whatever it takes to accomplish worthwhile goals in the real world. My view is that establishing and maintaining common PRINCIPLES offers the best hope of achieving a livable world. She is a realist; I'm an idealist. And both of us, if my guess is right, will act against (be inconsistent with) our philosophical positions under extreme circumstances. Therein lies our hope for resolution.

Jane asked me what do I do when I have to make an appeal to a bad DEO? There's the rub. MY own best bet is to argue the principle at issue. If I were more feminine and socially appealing and "compliant," I might try flattery and cajolery and a bit of ass-kissing ... but I'm just no good at it. You can say that I have been FORCED to always argue from principle because of my un-winning ways. (As an aside: for the long haul, which world do you want to live in--the one dominated by superior ass kissers or

one based on a set of principles protecting the rights of individuals?)

What I require to put the Catt debate behind me is the RECOGNITION and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT that real live human beings have been harmed--wittingly or not--by the handling of this whole long-drawn-out debacle. I would be most pleased if we, as a group, came up with the primary claim that the prolonged lack of resolution can be laid squarely on the doorstep of the ISU's administrative incompetence but I don't insist on that.

Leadership is hard work. My own view is that the mess arose because of a FAILURE of leadership. This university doesn't get what it pays for in the leadership department. When Blue Maas and Phyllis Harris asked to have their bricks removed, a leader worth his salt would have had it done IMMEDIATELY with a letter of apology for any misunderstanding and then--on his own initiative--he would have replaced the bricks with black granite to allow protestors to bear witness.

If we don't get our committee's act together pretty quick, we're going to be just another blot on the record of this unfortunate and institutionally embarrassing incident. If everyone waits for someone else to make the first gesture of conciliation, you know perfectly well what is going to happen. Nothing.

What are we waiting for? Are we going to do this or not? If not, let's bail now instead of wasting the summer and making ourselves look like idiots in the fall with four unplanned, free-for-all, open-discussion forums that repeat the same old claims without any understanding of the presumptions behind them or what it would take to rebut any of them.

Virginia Allen

515/294-3510

<vallen@iastate.edu>