Accuracy group monitors colleges

By Suzanne J. Sander

Local and national college professors are criticizing Accuracy in Academia (AIA) a conservative organization formed last August to monitor university classrooms for leftist bias.

AIA aims to "promote greater balance and accuracy in the classroom" by preventing leftist bias, said Lado Csorba III, executive director of AIA, in the Oct. 3 Boston Globe. The group hopes students will volunteer themselves as monitors in the classrooms, he continued.

Samuel J. Keyser, associate professor for Educational Policy and Programs at MIT, criticized monitors in the classrooms, he students will volunteer themselves as monitors in the classrooms, he continued.

"Any classroom that is worth [his] salt is one in which questioning on the part of students is encouraged. That is not only how the student learns, but also how the teacher learns," he said. Keyser stressed four issues that he felt are important:

- "Too often there is a free flow of discussion back and forth;"
- "Who accredited these monitors?" he asked. "Is there a need for an accuracy in Academia?"
- "I bet you all the complaints come from the small schools;"
- "This notion of AIA is not new."

But others feel that there is a dangerous leftist ideological bias in many college courses. Reed Irvine, founder and chairman of AIA, said in the Oct. 25 New York Times that this bias poses a danger for students, who may accept leftist ideology as truth if they are not exposed to conservative perspectives.

Irvine cited the example of Dr. Mark Reader of Arizona State University, a professor in an introductory political science survey course. According to Irvine, Reader overemphasized such things as "flashes of nuclear war, power and weapons."

Reader received a registered letter from Csorba on Oct. 15 explaining Csorba's complaints about his teaching methods. "You are dedicating most of your class time to anti-nuclear propaganda and the nuclear theme," wrote Csorba. "A student quoted you as saying that the Soviet Union is no threat compared to the United States' imperialist aggressions," he added.

Reader stated that the quote at issue did not represent his position. He doubted that he had said it. But he added, if he had said it, he was entitled to do so.

"If you as saying that the Soviet Union is no threat compared to the United States' imperialist aggressions, you are just mouthing off in class . . . He knows better than that . . . [it] was just a stupid thing to say," Csorba telephoned Porosky in reference to his remarks and said that "we're satisfied with his explanation."

Harvard vice president John Shattuck said in the Globe that he believed AIA's mission "has a disturbingly familiar ring to it -- like the 1950's and the times of Senator Joe McCarthy. Both President [of Harvard Derek] Bok and I have gone on record questioning the tactics this group intends to use and the threat to academic freedom they pose."

Boston-area educators who have been cited by AIA for instilling "leftist biases in student minds" include Boston University.

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