



# Spokesperson

November 10, 1998

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“But why keep silent when it’s something truer than truth?” Erasmus

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## ***The Cooper Point Journal* Grieves, Academic Dean Threatens Teaching Team, Arney Grovels!**

by MS-Exchange® System

The following came to *The Spokesperson* (after being rejected for publication by *The Cooper Point Journal*) as a single e-mail. As a service to its readers, *The Spokesperson* has edited these into chronological order so its readers do not have to be backwards in order to understand.

The latest controversy began with this e-mail from Academic Dean John Cushing to Dr. William Ray Arney, putative leader to the “Fictional Sociology” teaching team, with courtesy copies to Sara Rideout, Coordinator, and Charles Pailthorp. (NB: *The Spokesperson* has, despite repeated efforts, been unable to obtain copies of the grievance filed by *The Cooper Point Journal*. Very likely, that means the grievance will be published in *The Cooper Point Journal*.)

Bill,

I advise you not to pour any more gasoline on this particular fire. The students at the CPJ appear pretty pissed off. They filed a formal complaint with Barbara (which is going to land on my desk as your dean-of-group). I have more than enough problems already, and don't relish this one adding to my workload.

If I were you guys I'd be thinking about apologizing if in fact you actually did encourage your students to insert a document into the CPJ, rather than inflaming the situation. They may have a better legal case for interference with first-amendment rights than you think they do...

Arney abruptly replied:

If I'm not mistaken THEY stole OUR paper, not the other way around.  
Your humble group member,  
Bill

But Arney, typical for faculty members, apparently became humbler and humbler as the possible consequence of his program's actions became clear. If we are to judge from the following exchange between Arney and his spokesperson, Dorothy Slovar, it's all over. He's capitulated, buckled, collapsed; he's been pooped; he's finished. This is the e-mail from Dr. Arney to Slovar:

Dear Dorothy:

I really messed this one up. Our students are getting threatening letters from the CPJ. My dean doesn't want another "Arney scandal" if you know what I mean. (Whatever happened to Mark Roth anyway?) Besides, the dean's overworked. Rideout is riding high thinking she's had the last word. Can you help me out here? Besides Rita Pougiales you are the only one who knows me well enough to speak for me. Apologize for me, please, and make it all go away so I can teach and bore some more.

We can get you the going rate—\$24.50 per hour—either from that tightfisted Coordinator Rideout or (here's an irony) from John Cushing, the Budget Dean. (He really should have to pay for his peace.)

I'll start the apology by apologizing to you for speaking for myself. I really shouldn't have responded to Cushing so quickly and accused the CPJ of theft. That will make them feel bad, which is (I know, I know; it will never happen again, Dorothy) the basis for another grievance.

Best to Rey. I know he's a real "presence" in your life. (Ha.)

Bill

Slovar, acting as Dr. Arney's spokesperson in this matter, e-mailed Cushing, Mat Probasco, editor-in-chief of *The Cooper Point Journal*, and members of the "Fictional Sociology" teaching team, the following *apologia*. (The CPJ just blipped it along to us and here it is.)

My name is Dorothy Slovar and, yes, I am intimately related to Rey Slovar, at least on those nights when I can talk him into it. I am handling all Dr. Arney's statements in this matter. I can be reached at [dorothy\\_slovar@hotmail.com](mailto:dorothy_slovar@hotmail.com).

After reflecting carefully on this week's seminar book, *Tale of a Tub*, which, for God's sake, BEGINS with an apology, Dr. Arney hereby, albeit belatedly, issues the following apology for his actions—both those that are true and those "truer than truth" and all others that had effects—in the matter of *The Spokesperson*. Dr. Arney apologizes for:

-speaking for himself, in class and out. He knows better.

-Sara Rideout's insensitivity, which got all this started in the first place. It is not Dr. Arney's usual practice to apologize for the actions of others but after Rideout's lecture on *Tale...* she might be inspired to continue speaking for *herself*, so someone had to do this.

-for being a person of notable sperm count and such outstanding achievements that his donations would be solicited by the Foundation for the Continuity of Mankind, which didn't exactly start *this*, but which did start other things, like his sons John and Sam.

-for responding to *The Cooper Point Journal's* whining requests for submissions. He knows better.

-for accepting Mat Probasco's apology for calling Dr. Arney an "arrogant asshole" and for not telling Mr. Probasco that he does have an asshole but he is not sufficiently identified with it to attribute his own personal characteristics to it; his asshole is one of the many things in his life that Dr. Arney has put behind him.

-speaking of which, he is very sorry for exposing himself to the "Fictional Sociology" class on the very day Rideout brought a camera. (He is not, however, sorry that he purchased the BIG BOY BUNS™ video.) (And speaking for myself I can tell you that his doctor, Group Health physician Julia Sokoloff, was impressed by this video's effects.) (Sokoloff recently performed Dr. Arney's prostate examination, the one he discussed in his recent lecture on Ivan Illich.) (Sokoloff and I talk, in a different voice.)

-for doing the sort of work he is trying to teach the students to do. Dr. Arney, one of whose specialties is education, knows that "Those who can, do; those who can't teach" and since he teaches, he can't, so he really shouldn't try, and won't anymore.

-for whatever part he may have played in encouraging whatever students he may still have to put copies of *The Spokesperson* out in a public place where they could be stolen by members of *The Cooper Point Journal* staff.

-for repeatedly inviting Mat Probasco, editor in chief of *The Cooper Point Journal*, to lecture in "Fictional Sociology." Dr. Arney hereby apologetically retracts that invitation but warrants that should Mr. Probasco stick his head, or any other part of his anatomy, into the classroom, silence will descend and all will listen

to Mr. Probasco because the students really want to know how to get their work into *The Cooper Point Journal*.

-for being a “teacher of young minds” (Mr. Probasco’s characterization of Dr. Arney). Anyone who knows Dr. Arney like I do knows that he teaches “the whole student” (and has not been caught at it once).

-for not acting earlier to stop the College’s slide from being governed by a *Social Contract* to being governed by the Grievance Officer.

-Speaking of which, he is very sorry about his affair with the Grievance Officer, but he feels darned lucky that as *this* affair proceeds he will be able to rest comfortably in his prior, most intimate knowledge of her every move.

-Most especially, Dr. Arney is sorry for accepting the fuel *The Cooper Point Journal* provides and putting it on this fire. Dr. Arney is an Eagle Scout (although he is not proud that the Boy Scouts of America™ have been found by courts in two states to be a heterosexist organization), and he knows how to put out fires. He trusts that his pissing all over everything will take care of everyone. It’s his fondest hope.

Speaking only for myself, Dr. Arney is one very sorry-assed guy (see Rideout’s picture!). I think you should just leave his sorry ass alone and pick on someone like Kirk Thompson or Frederica Bowcutt or Paul Sparks, whose surveys initiated this policy on victims and low self-esteemers in the first place.

Dorothy Slovar, Spokesperson

## Conversation Reveals No Humor on Evergreen State Campus

The following conversation was captured by the Surveillance-CAM™<sup>1</sup> mounted in the southwest corner of the Olympia Food Coop, Westside. *The Spokesperson* has identified the conversants as Sid White, Member of the Faculty Emeritus of The Evergreen State College, and William Ray Arney, Member of the Faculty (Sociology). (The Surveillance-CAM™® Date-Stamp®™ reads 11/03/98 17:30:02.06 and the tape shows William Arney gesticulating with a bunch of organic carrots and Sid White smiling and speaking at the same time.)

**Sid White:** So how are things at the Funny Farm™?

**William Arney:** Still pretty funny, but no one seems to have a sense of humor. It’s a long story, Sid.

**White:** That’s the problem, isn’t it? No one has a sense of humor!

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, this represents our first departure from our announced editorial policy. In a new policy (SPKSP 98-002.101) we have decided to tap into the as yet untapped resource of Olympia area Surveillance-CAMs™® being used by The Evergreen State College to make sure ‘greeners of all stripes (ed. note: sorry, it’s early) behave correctly. Click on, tune in, check to make sure everyone you know is behaving according to *your personal standards*. If anything makes you personally feel uncomfortable, grieve. Remember, grieving is your only choice.

<http://www.evergreen.edu/SurveillingU>

## **Students/Consumers to Become “Guests” on Campuses Beginning Summer, 1999, memo suggests**

**by Spokesperson Staff**

An internal memorandum from the offices of the “Council for the Presidents,” the organization that supports the presidents of the state’s six public institutions of higher education, suggests a strategy for turning those currently thought of as “students” (and who have styled themselves as “consumers” of higher education) into campus “guests.” The memo, which *The Spokesperson* obtained by its usual editorial routes, shows that this strategy is an effort to “cool out” students who, for years, have been demanding something to show for their educations or, as consumers aggressively put it, something to show for their *money*. We could, if we were a regular newspaper, interview people, outline the story for you, summarize, and include lots of innuendo and newspaperly opinion, but we think the document speaks for itself, so here it is, the whole potato for you to consume.

The critical reader will, of course, wonder how we got this document, which is marked “Internal Memorandum/Sensitive Material/Staff Only Please.” The attentive reader knows that all of our material has to be rejected, first, by *The Cooper Point Journal*. We know they are sometimes proud of being late-comers to a story (witness the prideful October 29, 1998, front page time-line that showed they found out about a policeperson drawing a gun weeks after the incident), but we have never known them to toss us the *source material* for a story. But things happen and here we have it.

But is there, one might ask, a documented “chain of custody” by which this document gains the status of “evidence” (for if there wasn’t any evidence, nothing would have happened in which case nothing would rise to the level of “truer than truth” which is all we publish)? The rumors, as best we can construct them, that constitute our “chain of custody” go something like this:

First, on some particular date certain, about which we have been unable to ascertain anything other than its certainty and its particularity, the memo appears on a Formica™-topped table in the “Guest Service Representative” lunch room at the Olympia Target store. Attached to the memo is a Post-It™ on which is scrawled, “Is this true?” (*The Spokesperson* has this Post-It™ locked in a Ziploc™ baggie locked in its office desk.) An unnamed *Cooper Point Journal* staffer, about whom we have been able to ascertain only that he or she is unnamed, who works at Target on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 p.m. until closing sees the memorandum with its Post-It™ still attached, reads it, and says, “This can’t be true ... but if it is true it probably came from a disgruntled staff member at the Council for the Presidents,” and takes it with him or her back to the campus of The Evergreen State College. He or she takes the document, Post-It™ still attached, to the Friday Forum of *The Cooper Point Journal* where someone says, “Great story. Page one.” This was uttered with such conviction that people around the table felt uncomfortable, intimidated, and stifled from having a lively editorial discussion, so, as we hear it, *The Cooper Point Journal* dished it to us. And there you have it.

**Council for the Presidents**  
**504 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street Room 101**  
**Olympia, Washington 98101**

November 1, 1998

**Internal**  
**Memorandum**

**Sensitive Material**  
**Staff Only Please**

To: Jane Jervis, President, The Evergreen State College  
Steve Jordon, President, Eastern Washington University  
Dick McCormick, President, University of Washington  
Karen Morris, President, Western Washington University  
Ivory Nelson, President, Central Washington University  
Sam Smith, President, Washington State University

From: Steve Hickey, Senior Staff for Agenda Setting

Re: Agenda Item 4, "Consumer or Guest?"

As we discussed at the previous meeting, there is an unfortunate and potentially bureaucratically, if not legally, threatening development in higher education circles. I am referring to the trend for students to identify themselves as "consumers" and the tendency for institutions of higher education to treat them as such.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, if students get the idea they are consumers, they will consume us. And that will be that. I think we've got to stop this pernicious idea of "consumerism" before it gets much farther. To that end, I'm proposing that our institutions undertake a *sotto voce*<sup>3</sup> campaign to counter consumerism on our campuses<sup>4</sup> right now.

**Strategy:** First, it is clear that we cannot go back to the old idiom of "students." The movement away from "student" and toward "consumer" was started by them, the students, and then, as usual, we followed. (Our research shows that we caught onto their trend only 2.4 years

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<sup>2</sup> Some institutions have even gone public with the fact that we have turned our institutions into "businesses" that have to "market" ourselves carefully and strategically in a "buyer's market." I'm attaching the recent article from Indiana University's Alumni magazine, *The College*, Vol. 22, no. 1, Fall, 1998, pp. 6-7. The article by Anne Kibbler is titled "Student Recruiting: Selling IU in a Buyer's Market." One of the call-outs shadow-boxed on the first page reads, "Students have become better consumers..." At least none of your institutions has so blatantly revealed our strategies in such a public forum. And, between us, it would be better if you did not reveal the fact that our contract with Hayes & Associates, Marketing Consultants, has reached into the high six figures. (See minutes of May, 1998, meeting for details of that discussion.)

<sup>3</sup> *American Heritage Dictionary*: **sotto voce** **1.** In soft tones, as not to be overheard; in an undertone... **2.** *Music.* In very soft tones. Used chiefly as direction. (Au. note: I am using this in that last sense.)

<sup>4</sup> *AHD*: **alliteration** *n.* The repetition of the same consonant sounds or of different vowel sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables, as in "on scrolls of silver snowy sentences" (Hart Crane)

after the “consumer” idiom took hold among students on campuses,<sup>5</sup> for which some megakudos,<sup>6</sup> folks.) Consumers are not attracted to products, like ours, that hearken back to what some of us think of as a “golden age.” Therefore, our campaign must be forward looking, positive, and warm and fuzzy couldn’t hurt. Second, we have to draw on an aspect of their culture with which they are intimately familiar but about which they don’t know anything. (Example: Until students in higher education started using it as a point of resistance to the growing service sector and its demand that its would-be employees have one of our products, i.e., a B.A. degree, to work there, “You want fries with that,” was one such below-the-level-of-consciousness part of our culture that affected everyone but no one knew about. It’s from that level of consciousness that we have to draw for our campaign to be strategically effective.)

Enough intellectual jibberish. Let me tell you about visiting Target.

Some of you probably know that six years ago Target changed its “customer service” department to the “department of consumer relations.”<sup>7</sup> This was good for a while.<sup>8</sup> What you probably don’t know—and this is the genius of the whole thing because almost no one, not even college presidents, noticed—is that three years ago they switched again. They went from “consumer relations” to—get this; it’s great—“GUEST SERVICES.” They hired a hack from the old Ford account and came up with “At Target, Guest Service is Job One,” but, oh well, you can’t expect Target to be perfect, can you? But how about that, huh? GUEST SERVICES. So my suggestion—a very strong suggestion—is that we take our cue from them: GUEST SERVICES. We orchestrate a shift in campus language so that students/consumers come to think of themselves as guests on our campuses. If our staff can sell you on this and get you all on board, we’ll send a follow-up memo outlining the steps of the State of Washington’s move away from “consumer relations” to “GUEST SERVICES.” For now, consider the advantages:

- Consumers think they should get something—you know, something to consume—whenever they spend money. Guests don’t expect anything; they take what is offered. The problem with this whole “consumer” thing is that students (sorry, you know I’m of the “old school”<sup>9</sup>) think, “I’m paying a lot of money for this education and I ought to have something to show for it, just like when I go out and buy a toaster.” Then they go through graduation exercises and they find out that all they have at the end of the day is a diploma *folder* and they have to show up at offices of registration and records and get their records checked and pay an “exit

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<sup>5</sup> See Council for the Presidents, Research Memorandum #87, “How Far Behind Are We? A Study of How Long It Takes College and University Presidents to Notice Trends in Popular Culture,” section 4.43, “The ‘Consumer’ Fad: This Too Shall Pass,” pp. 14-15, November 14, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> *AHD*: **kudos** *n.* Acclaim or praise for exceptional achievement. Also see, Al Franken, *Rush Limbaugh Is A Big Fat Idiot and Other Observations*, New York, N.Y.: Island Books, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Some of the following is taken from Alain Antoine, “The Discourse of Guestification: Target as a Nexus of a Pseudo-Communitarian Symbol System Shift,” *Southern Sociological Review* 98 (1997): 204-216.

<sup>8</sup> Four years after Target took the step to “consumer relations” institutions of higher education took that step too. It started in Iowa with Coe College being the first on what would become a very full bandwagon. A year later, a staffer at the UW noticed and, well, you know the rest of this history. The Evergreen State College was, again (c’mon, Jane), the last to get on board, but they finally hired an Assistant Vice President of Consumer Relations this past year. (We are hearing good things about Slovar, by the way. Mega-kudos for that hire, JJ.) (See fn. 5.)

<sup>9</sup> Ha.

fee”<sup>10</sup> to get the real diploma. And then they go out and employers tell them it’s not worth much.... I don’t have to go over this for you folks. You know.

- Consumers think they have choice. So, for example, a consumer who doesn’t find what he’s looking for in one store can choose to go to another store. Guests feel obligated to stay.<sup>11</sup> Target’s marketing studies show that since the switch from “consumers” to “guests” the percentage of “guests” who can’t find what they want but buy something anyway has gone from 32% to 45%. If calling students “guests” gets them to hang around even a little longer, this could increase our retention rates. Don’t you think?
- “Consumers” think they can speak up about things they’re concerned about. For example, one might say something like, “This toaster only warms my bread; it doesn’t toast it.” And they expect the “department of consumer relations” to respond and, like, find a toaster that toasts. We know where this leads: to incivility on campuses. We were able to beat back the Student Movement’s “irrelevancy” claims in the 1960s (I told you I was “old school”) because they forgot to say what college should be relevant for. But today’s consumers are more sophisticated, not to mention angry. They say things like, “Gosh darn it, I can’t get no jobs with this piece of ... paper.” (It’s that pause that frightens me, frankly. You can see where a guy like that is going.) Anyway, we’ve been waging this fight against “incivility” on campus for a couple of years now and we’ve had some successes.<sup>12</sup> But, think about it, do “Guests” ever get upset and actually tell you what they think? No. They keep quiet. Which would go a long way toward improving civility on the campuses. (Are you following me here?)
- I have got to take you back to Target for this one. Target didn’t make the shift from “consumers” to “guests” just to get shoppers (sorry, “old school” again, and patron mostly of K-Mart) to buy more and be more quiet, etc. They made the shift as part of a concerted multi-faceted “shopper squeeze.” They upped their prices, with big effects on margins, they shortened all warranties, increased the interest rates on their internal credit to over 20% (rates that hadn’t been around since Carter<sup>13</sup> was president and that in another time were grounds for charges of usury), and flooded the work floor with policies, policies, and more policies. With lots of policies in place, workers didn’t have to think about their jobs anymore. “Guest Services Representatives” only had to be trained to repeat the phrase, “If it would make you feel more comfortable, I can give you our written policy on that,” albeit under some harrowing conditions. And Guests, of course, go for it. How can they not? They’re being treated as, that’s right, GUESTS. Genius, no? Anyway, you know we’ve been in a big

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<sup>10</sup> This was a good one, folks, for which mega-mega-kudos. See “We Reaped, Now We’ve Got To Glean: Increasing Revenues in a Time of Decreases in the Acceleration of Tuition Rates,” CFTP Research Memorandum # 42, May, 1994. Recent data show that revenue from student fees has increased from 1.2% of institutional budgets in the pre-# 42 years to 14.4% post-#42. Get your staffs to pat you on your backs!

<sup>11</sup> **Thanksgiving Day n. 1.** The fourth Thursday of November, observed as a legal holiday in the United States to commemorate the feast held at Plymouth in 1621 by the Pilgrim colonists and members of the Wampanoag people and marked by the giving of thanks to God for harvest and health.

<sup>12</sup> See “The Threat of Incivility: Too Many Words Lead To Some Actual Thoughts,” CFTP Research Memorandum #112, June, 1997, section 7.86, “Threaten Them With Therapy” and the follow up, CFTP Research Memorandum #210, June, 1998, “The Effects of the Incivility Campaign on the Demand for Counseling Services on Campuses.”

<sup>13</sup> **AHD: Carter, James Earl, Jr.,** Known as “Jimmy.” Born 1924. The 39<sup>th</sup> President of the United States (1977-1981). (Au. note: Certificate of Deposit rates paid by banks were as high as 12%. Carter’s spokesperson said, “The President learned from the Israelis, just as he was concluding the Camp David Accords, that inflation means there is more money for people to spend. He thought that was a good idea.”)

policy implementation phase<sup>14</sup> for the last several years trying to squeeze more work from the faculty, more money from students, more work from fewer secretaries, etc., etc. You know. If we don't do something, we'll all be at risk of something like the "Western Washington Wobble"<sup>15</sup> where the whole damn campus almost collapsed after someone noticed that the administration was actually thinking through the policies that were cutting back on teaching, reducing salaries, cutting staff, increasing tuition, blah, blah, blah. So to cushion the blow of all this policy implementation, I think we have got to go the "GUEST SERVICES" route.

**Recommendation: That the Presidents of Washington's Public Institutions of Higher Education accept the proposal to initiate a move away from "students as 'consumers'" and toward "consumers as 'guests'" and that the Staff of The Council for the Presidents Room 101 be instructed to draw up all policy particulars with an eye toward implementation summer, 1999.<sup>16</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> One more plea, folks. I have to tell you that Affirmative Action has been our "wedge issue." That was the greatest policy ploy. Affirmative Action is where we get all our policy implementation legitimacy from. If I-200 passes, AA addicts are going to have to have 12, maybe even 24, steps just to stop their heads from spinning. If we haven't got Affirmative Action, which we train all our faculty and students to love, we haven't got much to make them think they need all these administrators. What can we tell them we're doing, implementing health care policy? No, I've told you folks that that's a whole 'nother agency all together. So get out the vote. No on 200.

<sup>15</sup> Sorry to bring this up again, President Morris, and I know it didn't happen on your watch, but this one has lessons for all of us. CFTP Research Memorandum #11, April, 1993, "When Faculty Listen to Students: The Socio-Political Dynamics of A Campus Governance Meltdown," begins, "Professor of Biology Irwin Childs, tenured, listened to third-year student Jennifer Pleagers's complaints about increasing tuition and cutbacks in service *and thought she made sense...*" (italics mine, you know the rest).

<sup>16</sup> While students (sorry, "old school") are away, of course.



## ***Legal Department***

Marianne Goforth, MD, MBA  
Institute for the Protection  
of Young Minds  
1342 G Court, Suite 530  
New York, NY 14225

To William Arney, Charles Pailthorp, &  
Sara Rideout:

The Institute for the Protection of Young Minds (IPYM) recently received a call from Sara Stewart<sup>1</sup>, one of the first year students in Fictional Sociology, the all-level program that you are teaching at The Evergreen State College. This correspondence is to alert you to the possibility that Ms. Stewart will be pursuing legal action against the three of you, based on her perception that you have forced her to think and do things that she would have, otherwise, found unthinkable and undoable; and that you have limited her ability to do other things that she might enjoy, like writing poetry. At this point in time, the Institute is acting as a Spokesperson for Ms. Stewart, and our relationship with your teaching team is meant to warn and inform rather than to issue a formal threat. We are, of course, willing to assume a more formal stance in this matter if we are not satisfied by your response and, more particularly, by the sincerity of your attempts to make reparations to Ms. Stewart.

***We understand the narrative facts, as follows:***

10/29/98:

During seminar, a student asked Ms. Rideout about the stylistic range and genres of the written work she would

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Stewart is a pseudonym, used to protect this student from the very real threat of retaliation. This also is the name that this student adopted during the course of the Spokesperson controversy in order to protect herself from legal action by the *Cooper Point Journal*. She is currently in hiding from Mat Probosco and Sara Rideout.

accept as fulfilling the program assignments. Ms. Rideout replied: "I can't think of anything I couldn't deal with except poetry. I don't know how to deal with poetry. I mean, there is no standard. Let's put it this way, don't turn in poetry."

Another student asked, "What if we did hand in poetry?" Ms. Rideout stated, "I just told you: I don't want to read any of your poetry. I have nothing to say about your poetry. Write anything but poetry."

Another student asked, "But let's just say that I wrote some poetry and handed it in. What would you do with it?" Ms. Rideout responded, "I would write on your poetry, "This is fucking poetry. I have nothing to say about your poetry."

Ms. Rideout was making these statements after she had collected a set of papers from the students in her seminar. Ms Stewart's paper was one of those papers. And her paper was poetry.

***We understand the psychological events, as follows:***

Ms. Stewart (remember, a first year student) left the seminar that afternoon in an agitated state of mind, worried, in fact, that she would have her paper returned with "This is fucking poetry" written across it by the scornful hand of her seminar leader. She was distressed and worried about the possibility of being humiliated and, in the long run, of losing credit.

***We understand the outcome, as follows:***

Terrified and anguished, Ms. Stewart began stuffing and otherwise inappropriately inserting copies of the *Spokesperson*<sup>2</sup> into copies of the

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<sup>2</sup> *The Spokesperson* is material originating from the Fictional Sociology Program--a kind of newspaper that appeared mysteriously and which was distributed via the interstitial space in the fold of the college newspaper, *The Cooper Point Journal* as an illegitimate insert. How

**Cooper Point Journal.** We deduce that she performed the inserting under the passive influence<sup>3</sup> of her faculty (Sara Rideout) whose vociferous and obscene denouncement of poetry left Ms. Stewart in a particularly vulnerable psychological state. She felt her only recourse was to please her faculty in the hopes of making recompense for her poetry. In Constitutional terms, this = forced speech, which is bad for Ms. Stewart. Perhaps more importantly, Ms. Stewart's actions = defacement of the **Cooper Point Journal**, which = at best, a violation of the Student Conduct Code, at worst, a violation of The Law.<sup>4</sup>

The Institute argues that none of this alleged Constitutional law breaking was the fault of Sara Stewart, who was, during the time of these insertions, temporarily insane with worry. Our argument is bolstered by the fact that Ms. Stewart was not alone. In fact, Chad Kaufman (another first year student), who was also caught inappropriately inserting, had also previously written

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and why **The spokeperson** was produced, the organizational apparatus by which it was distributed--these are questions still under investigation. The Institute is in close communication with the Academic Deans who have launched an inquiry.

<sup>3</sup> Ms. Rideout's Spokesperson issued the following statement. "I [Ms. Rideout] have never felt I have an influence over students. They come late to class and when they do arrive sit slumped over their desks; they hand in papers late; they write disrepectful diatribes against me and my colleagues; they use my image to make false and degrading pictures of me. They move so slowly from one activity to the next that I have actually been forced to hit, push and kick them into action. The idea that I might either passively or actively influence them is patently absurd. Come on, give me a break."

<sup>4</sup> See letter, Nov 2, 1998, to Barbara Smith from Mat Probosco, Editor in Chief, et al., **The Cooper Point Journal**. We are indebted to Probosco for his precise legal arguments, especially his introduction of the "=" sign which has helped to shorten and clarify our own presentation of the matters at hand.

poetry for Ms. Rideout. He too was driven to stuffing and inserting by an uncontrollable desire to appease his faculty. Again, forced speech = stuffing/inserting = defacement = Violation of some body of law.

The Institute understands and sympathizes with **The Cooper Point Journal's** intense sensitivity to these Constitutional issues. Unfortunately, the **Journal** has not been far reaching enough in its condemnation of faculty conduct in this case. For, in addition to engaging in "forced speech" a serious matter in and of itself--the faculty also are guilty of limiting speech by not allowing students to submit poetry for their written assignments. By suppressing poetry, we argue that, beyond the legal implications, students will be psychologically harmed, impaired or inhibited. In our estimation, poetry is no less than a symptom that can provide important insight into a student-poetry-writer's sense of self. To suppress poetry is as dangerous as ignoring a broken leg or bleeding eyeballs.

We are not simply talking about concrete injury, here, because the legal equation we have described (above) has a mounting institutional effect that poisons the whole academic endeavor. We are speaking now of the instance in which a young woman who looked like<sup>5</sup> the so-called Sara Stewart was accosted and questioned by a **CPJ** staffer who thought he was hot on the trail of evidence leading to the source of the inserting/stuffing activities. But the young woman he confronted was not Sara Stewart, nor had she had any previous involvement in the events for which she was now being blamed. In short, the suppression of poetry and the forcing of speech exist at a dangerous nexus of institutional

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<sup>5</sup> There was a superficial resemblance between the two young women, both of whom have short hair and stylish glasses. Given this crude standard of recognition, the CPJ staffers may well have to question 45% of the female students on campus, which is not a productive use of a young journalist's mind or time.

corruption which will produce a college campus that is dislocated by projective material and illegal actions, all of which result in the ultimate undermining of the Young Minds that the academy was supposed to encourage and develop.

The IPYM's primary mission is to establish poetry as the proper receptacle for all potentially anti-social and psychologically deviant thought-processes and behaviors in college students. There is no safer place than poetry to put these things and no better diagnostic or therapeutic mechanism for managing them. There is no medium as perfectly devoid of objective standards which will provide a meeting place between teachers, students, and college administrators. Poetry is the stuff of reconciliation between these contesting factions. Poetry is not only stuff, but stuff of perfectly indeterminate meaning which can play out endlessly in the mediative processes that ultimately result in a therapeutic union of policy and psychology in institutional settings where the inner life so often is overshadowed by the bothersome practicalities of journalism and the law. The Institute strives for the truth where that entity of validity is valued as a function of meta-truths generated during self-counseling and projects of self-care and during student/teacher conferences in which self-esteem is the primary academic goal.

On the other hand, the IPYM condemns any academic program that sacrifices student self-validation through a process of teaching where students are coerced or forced into acting contrary to their most naturalistic tendencies. Most particularly, we work against situations in which academics (actively or passively) exact stuffing or inserting behaviors from students who have written poetry or who might have written poetry but who were inhibited from doing so. It is our well-researched belief that stuffing/inserting behaviors become more creatively expressed in the process of rhyming, versifying, metaphorizing, etc., and that students who are allowed to engage in

these composing activities will have a higher retention rate than those who are discouraged or, otherwise, commanded to write prose.

The IPYM runs a series of workshops on college campuses (we have been to over 45 campuses and military institutions in as many states) that help teachers learn to respond to student poetry. We offer concrete advice that accrues to a greater awareness of how students perceive their own poetic potential and its significance in real-world situations. Teachers attending these workshops attest to their effectiveness in raising awareness of student feelings. For hard to reach groups, such as male faculty, we offer a more intensive workshop, "Beyond Awareness," that actively trains the more resistant academics in how to comment appropriately on sensitive and psychologically significant student work.

Please feel free to contact us to arrange for a session. You owe it to the guests at your college<sup>6</sup>. Most especially, you need to take definitive action in order to ameliorate the problems that have surfaced in Fictional Sociology as a result of your failure to acknowledge and encourage those students who would write verse.

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<sup>6</sup> The IPYM has evidence that older faculty, but especially older male faculty, have trouble making the transition from thinking of students as consumers to thinking of students as guests.