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Professor Rasmusen Meets Political Correctness

Professor Eric B. Rasmusen is not a likely figure of controversy. A professor of business economics at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business, Professor Rasmusen's list of published articles includes fascinating titles like "An Income-Satiation Model of Efficiency Wages," "The Observed Choice Problem in Estimating the Cost of Policies," and "Buyer-Option Contracts, Renegotiation, and the Hold-Up Problem." If those articles are controversial, it would take another economist to know it.

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Nevertheless, Professor Rasmusen now finds himself on the front pages of the local newspaper and the subject of a full-length article in The Chronicle of Higher Education. Why? The issue is not Professor Rasmusen's published articles or classroom lectures, but his web log. And the specific issue of controversy is not economics, but homosexuality. The case of Professor Rasmusen offers fascinating, yet tragic insights into the moral confusion of the postmodern academy.

Indiana University, like most major academic institutions, communicates with its students largely over the Internet. Individual professors have web pages on which they post syllabi, course requirements, and other academic information. In addition to this, Indiana University encourages faculty members to use the institutions server to post personal information. Professor Rasmusen offers a web log on his university website, through which he offers commentary on current issues of interest—and identifies himself as evangelical Christian.

Responding to a question posted on another website, Professor Rasmusen offered a rationale for why a homosexual man should not serve as a schoolteacher. "Male homosexuals, at least, like boys and are generally promiscuous," he argued. "They should not be given the opportunity to satisfy their desires." In summary, homosexuals should not be hired as school teachers because "it puts the fox into the chicken coop."

In a another entry, Professor Rasmusen went on to argue, "a large part of my belief relies on the idea that men are more tempted by children than women are. Women are attracted to older men, and are also less aggressive and more faithful to their spouses, if they have them."

Furthermore, Professor Rasmusen argued that homosexual men are likely to be sexually attracted to a "16-year-old beardless boy" than others in the population, and pointed to the existence of the North American Man/Boy Love Association [NAMBLA] as evidence of the continued problem of pederasty. As he concluded, "we must decide whether to allow homosexuals to be priest, scout leaders, and school teachers without good regression studies of whether they are more likely than heterosexuals to go after the youngsters under their care." Common sense, he argues, should prevail in these questions.

The undeniable fact is that the vast majority of Americans are in absolute agreement with Professor Rasmusen's arguments. The Boy Scouts do not allow homosexual scout leaders for the same reason that the Girl Scouts do not allow men to go on camping trips. But what is taken as common sense among most of the American public is considered an outrage on the campus of Indiana University.

Professor Rasmusen's web entries were brought to the attention of the university administration. Barry Magee, Assistant Director of Diversity Education at the university, said that he felt "violated" by the entry. As he recounted, "I was ashamed that a faculty member, somebody that we try to teach students they should respect, would say these things." Mark Brostoff, Associate Director of Undergraduate Services, asked: "what is going to happen to the closeted gay students in the business school?"

Shortly thereafter, Chancellor Sharon S. Brehm addressed the issue before the Bloomington Faculty Council. With Mr. Rasmusen, a member of the council, present at the session, the Chancellor blasted his comments as "deeply offensive, hurtful, and very harmful stereotyping." Furthermore, she argued, that such speech is incompatible with the university's "commitment to inclusion and respect for diversity." Diversity of what? Clearly, she was not referring to diversity of opinion.

Others were even more outraged, even calling for the professor's firing. Student Aja Romano wants Mr. Rasmusen removed from the university's faculty: "Has he demonstrated his unfitness to teach business? I absolutely think so. I don't believe it's possible to be a successful business teacher in one of the most noted business schools in the country when you've demonstrated that you yourself do not believe in fair treatment of all employees." Senior Melissa Taylor submitted a letter to the student newspaper arguing that Professor Rasmusen "can never be looked at as non-biased" in the future because of his stated opinions. Presumably, Ms. Taylor assumes that the rest of the faculty is non-biased.

Mr. Brostoff asserts: "Hate words don't deserve space on a university server paid for with tax dollars. You can't say you're a tolerant campus and allow this level of hatred to be attached to the school." Further, Mr. Brostoff has "a hard time understanding how someone who possesses this level of ignorance on human sexuality can have this on the server."

Shortly after the entries were posted, Professor Rasmusen was asked by the dean of the business school to remove his web log from the University's server. Mr. Rasmusen complied, but the web log was placed back on the server after university attorneys determined that there was no violation of policy.

Looking back at the controversy, Professor Rasmusen commented: "I did not know it was so controversial to provide arguments for why homosexuals should not be employed as school teachers, but it seems that people at universities get excited about opinions that are common, perhaps even the norm, elsewhere in the United States."

The case of Professor Rasmusen raises issues ranging from free speech to political correctness and academic freedom. At the very least, this controversy shows once again that, according to the academic left, free speech rights go only one way—hard left. The dominant academic establishment—very much in control at Indiana University—is possessed by a mono-mind that considers liberal opinions to be the only acceptable discourse on the university campus.

The students and administrators who are howling with outrage at Professor Rasmusen's moral arguments would fight to the death for the right of a liberal professor to state virtually any opinion from the left—ranging from anarchy to anti-Americanism—without restriction or restraint.

Dr. Rasmusen is an evangelical Christian. According to the biographical material available on the university's website, he and his wife are members of Evangelical Community Church in Bloomington. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the Rasmusens have three young children and are expecting a fourth. Presumably, the moral convictions represented in Professor Rasmusen's web log entries are held by his congregation. What about Professor Rasmusen's religious liberty rights? Are evangelical Christians to be banned from the university's life and faculty?

If Professor Rasmusen's opponents win the argument, this would represent a massive imposition of tyranny against Christians. According to the logic of political correctness, it is now unacceptable to hold moral positions clearly taught in the Bible. This is yet another example of the totalitarian temptation at work.

Those pushing the homosexual agenda are now in control of America's premier institutions and the culture-forming sectors of our society. They will allow free speech only for those who accept their arguments. They are doing everything possible to eradicate all opposition to homosexuality from the public square and political argument. They will not rest until Professor Rasmusen, and all those who refuse to surrender to the homosexual agenda, are removed from America's universities and silenced in the public square.

As of now, professor Rasmusen continues to teach at Indiana University. Given the legal stakes, the university wisely backed off from its request that Professor Rasmusen's web log be removed from the university's server. Nevertheless, the comments made by Chancellor Brehm and other members of the university's administration indicate what the university could do and almost surely would do, if it did not fear legal action.

Professor Rasmusen got in hot water by arguing that putting a homosexual man in a classroom with children was like putting the fox in the chicken coop. That sentence put Professor Rasmusen, not so much in a chicken coop as in a lion's den. Before long, he will find himself in good company--joined by all who refuse to surrender to the spirit of the age.

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