

Paymasters of the PC Brigades

By EVAN GAHR

At the University of Iowa, readings for a mandatory freshman rhetoric class have included "Against Ageism" and "Good-bye, Sexist Pig—Say Hello to the New Old Boy."

Such selections may sound politically correct, but they were actually inspired by a mainstay of the American establishment: the \$6 billion Ford Foundation. It provided Iowa with the money used to devise a multicultural reader for its rhetoric class. The University of Iowa is not alone. Everywhere from Nassau (N.Y.) Community College to Princeton University, philanthropic foundations have spearheaded curriculum transformation, women's studies programs, and the rest of the multicultural panoply. While foundations have long been known for their liberal sympathies, the extent to which they have bankrolled political correctness on college campuses has been largely overlooked.

This funding goes unnoticed even though the recipients make their goals quite clear. University of Washington Prof. Johnella Butler, project director for several Ford Foundation grants, finds curriculum transformation daunting. In an essay collection entitled "Transforming the Curriculum: Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies," Prof. Butler and co-editor John Walter write, "We are only beginning to undo the effects of the distortions set in motion 500 years ago when Columbus brought massacre and the most brutal form of slavery known to these shores, all in the interest of spreading 'Western Civilization' with all its long-lasting assumptions of racial cultural and male superiority."

'Cross-Gender Figures'

On the other side of the continent from Prof. Butler, the City University of New York's Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in 1993 launched a three-year fellowship program with \$250,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation. Suggested topics for 1991-95 fellows include "projects on transgender phenomena such as transsexualism or specific cross-gender figures." Rockefeller has also contributed \$160,000 for fellowships at the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis.

Other times, money goes to enclaves headed by PC luminaries. In 1991, Rockefeller plunked down \$160,000 for fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Black Literature and Culture. Its director, Houston Baker, is a former president of the Modern Language Association who has derided literary standards.

In 1990, the Ford Foundation launched its "Campus Diversity Project" with "an

initial allocation of \$1.6 million." A "diversity panel" composed of then University of Pennsylvania President Sheldon Hackney, then University of Wisconsin Chancellor Donna Shalala and other academic leaders solicited proposals to further campus diversity; 19 institutions received grants. By 1992, the grant total was more than \$4 million and Ford promised \$8 million more to be spent over five years.

Not just individual courses are created with foundation money. There are works of scholarship as well. A Rockefeller Foundation-funded essay collection, "The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art," explains that women "as well as men, seek personal transformation through interaction with the landscape; unlike men, they base such transformation on a sense of vulnerability in the approach," write Prof. Vera Norwood of the University of New Mexico and Janice Monk of the University of Arizona.

If that's hard to visualize, perhaps a movie will help: \$100,000 "for a film based on the book" was donated by the Ford Foundation to the University of Arizona.

Outside the ivory tower, many organizations beating the drum for feminist thought receive ample foundation funding. The National Council for Research on Women, which has spearheaded curriculum transformation efforts, received \$35,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1992 and \$300,000 from the Ford Foundation in 1993.

The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, which recently released a much-noticed but highly criticized report that claims to show how American schools "shortchange girls," received from the W.W. Kellogg Foundation a two-year \$478,766 grant in 1993 to "promote educational equity for girls in public schools."

Foundation support for academic feminism dates to the early 1970s. Mariam Chamberlain, a former program officer of the Ford Foundation, estimates that Ford has donated \$24 million to women's studies projects from 1972 to 1992.

These days, efforts to integrate the works of women and minorities into the curriculum is pushed on two fronts. Foundation money goes to individual schools for "curriculum transformation" and to regional institutes where faculty members from area schools collaborate on efforts to "diversify" the curriculum.

In 1991, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education in Boulder, Colo., received a three-year, \$431,000 Ford Foundation grant to expand its "Institute

on Ethnic Diversity, which helps colleges and universities in their efforts to increase campus diversity."

In other curriculum transformation efforts, Ford designates a point woman to dole out the goodies. Myrna Goldenberg, coordinator of women's studies at Montgomery College in Rockville, Md., and project director for a \$280,000 Ford Foundation grant to "mainstream the scholarship of women into the curriculum." She explains that more than individual courses are at stake. It's "not add a woman and stir kind of stuff. We're hoping for a transformation in how people evaluate and perceive subjects."

Ms. Goldenberg, whose class syllabus always includes the quote "I am in the world to change the world," awarded the Ford money to two Indian tribal and 12 community colleges. Nassau Community College in Garden City, N.Y., received the money for a summer 1994 faculty seminar designed to make the study of math, science and technology more attractive to women. "Why do we have to say the virus attacks the cell?" asks Ms. Goldenberg. "That sets up a certain kind of research study. What if we said the cell seduces the virus? We would be looking at it a little bit differently. What if we said it's mutually attractive?" She hopes students who take new mainstreamed courses will demand of future professors, "Where are the women?"

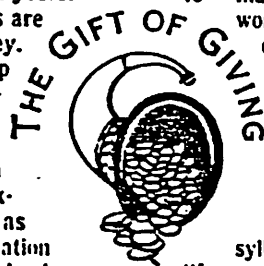
'A New Consciousness'

Ms. Goldenberg's vision fits Ford's. Program officer Edgar Beckham has expounded the group-think mentality behind Ford's diversity initiative: "[R]ecruiting minorities, including minority issues in classes, etc., is not enough. This isn't about numbers. It's about a new consciousness of group identities," he said in 1992, according to the University of Washington's faculty newspaper.

"It's a myth that all Americans share the same culture. What we share are the term of discourse. We should be teaching students how to understand difference and negotiate difference. We do a good job of that on an individual level, but not on a group level.

"The Ford Foundation wants to encourage colleges to use their environments as a laboratory for inquiring into this complex area of life. . . . After all, we've had a multicultural university for almost 800 years; the foundation wants to act as an accelerant in a process that's long overdue."

Mr. Gahr is a reporter for *Insight* magazine in Washington.



Advice to Donors: Don't Die

By MARTIN MOSE WINTER

Suppose you're a person who wants to set up a foundation. It's likely that, if

that the Carnegie Corp. does nothing to support the causes Andrew Carnegie espoused.

James Buchanan Duke, by contrast, had very explicit instructions when the

alism of philanthropy, as far too many program directors and grant officers wrongly believe that their views are more important than those of the founder.