

"A PROBLEM-ORIENTED COURSE. POVERTY IS CONSIDERED IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT SOCIAL & ECONOMIC CONTEXTS TO ESTABLISH THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF THE CULTURES OF POVERTY, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO IDEAS OF SOCIAL PROGRESS. STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO DISCUSS PROGRAMS FOR ALLEVIATING POVERTY."
DIG IT!!



In itself this is an extremely sensible statement. 'Problem' people might fiercely resent being

"Sociologists, by a tour de force, have succeeded in taking out the political sting from their doctrines, which is equivalent to sanctifying the status quo."

-- DANIEL COHN-BENDIT

stared at in person, but it's perfectly all right to conduct a peep show in an isolated classroom in the suburbs.

As an alternative, Davis should have suggested that his middle class students volunteer for work in some of the day care centres or self-help projects which operate downtown, run for and by the 'poor',

if they were interested in learning about themselves and their culture.

However, this sort of thing cannot be controlled. 'Problem' people might start challenging his students' values.

To be fair, Davis is in favor of work-study programs for his students "under close supervision from expert faculty."

Presumably, such a program would not infect students with emotionalism as contact with the 'poor' could be carefully controlled.

Moreover, the very nature of almost all work-study programs is one of collusion with bourgeois social reforms and not any sort of direct societal challenge or confrontation.

Davis was wary of defining the nature of emotionalism, but from what I could gather it was equated with demonstrative political action, and especially with politics that he didn't agree with.

"An emotional reaction is the kind of person who says let's stop the war in Vietnam so that we can spend so many billion dollars on a negative income tax or something," he said.

The other side of this attack on emotional involvement is the glorification of the social engineer — the omniscient expert who solves social problems with his reams of reports and his middle class biases.

Whereas you and I — mere humans — may react emotionally when we see Indians freezing in tents on Hudson Bay, the expert will react in a 'meaningful way.'

If we are to rely on history, this 'way' will have plenty of meaning for everyone except the Indian, who will still be stuck freezing in his tent.

"I have this bias that eventually the technicians are going to solve most problems," Davis says.

So what is the most important lesson to be learned in Social Science 176?

You guessed it — keep your cool and do sweet nothing. The experts will solve the problem, its only a matter of time.

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