

# You will conform, damn it

*To be nobody-but-[yourself]-- in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else--means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight, and never stop fighting.*

- e. e. cummings.

Mr. cummings wrote that in a letter to a high school newspaper in 1955. Since Cummings has been dead for some 27 years and probably wouldn't have taken my call anyway, I have no way of knowing if he thinks things have gotten any better since he wrote that. But I bet Mr. cummings would not be pleased with the dry 90s.

We live in a world and a time where people jump and beg for anything that someone else happens to covet. Oh, god where can I get me a Bart Simpson T-shirt? I want the one that says *Don't Have a Cow, Man*. Nothing else will do, except maybe that mass produced tie-dye with the *Dick Tracy!* logo on the back.

And speaking of Dick, where is my Dick Tracy watch? I would have bought three of them if they

had come in neon green. That way they would match my neon hub caps and windshield wipers.

And my personal favorite: New Kids on the Block pillow cases?

While I'm on the subject of music (well, I guess the New Kids are considered musicians, kind of) what has happened to people who wanted to say something with a song?

I'm not expecting everyone to sing about peace and political discontent, but no one is even trying anymore. Are the 90s going to be a repeat of the 70s? I thought disco died with that decade. But not even close. I don't want to hear about the difference between dance music and disco. There is none. Pop radio has gotten so bad that I would rather listen to marches and string quartets on WQLN, the local public radio station.

I heard a commercial this morning that made me really ill. A national TV network has teamed up with a national grease burger establishment. They have formed some sort of advertising pact and have introduced a game.

Apparently to win a prize in this game you have to first pick up a game piece at the fast-foodery then go home and watch the television channel until a secret number comes up. If it matches the number on the now famous game piece, you win big bucks.

## YEAH RIGHT

The commercial slogan goes something like: what a great way to spend your day, get a little pre-processed food, then lie back in your easy chair and, while the animal fat hardens in your veins, watch a little prime time wiggling, giggling, and gunfire on television.

Who needs a life when you can have burgers and breasts and a chance at those big bucks? Mr. cummings is, no doubt, upset that he missed out on all the

glamor, excitement, and fabulous prizes.

Yeah, its starting to look like a conspiracy. People not only love to watch commercials, they also love to play commercial games and sing commercial jingles. They are also quite fond of wearing their favorite commercial character.

So what is the big deal? Who cares if Joe Sixpack and his Coca-Cola kids drool over anything they've heard about on TV? Who cares if there are no new ideas? Who cares if America has given away its soul to advertising agencies? Why should anyone care about anything that isn't mass produced and quality controlled until it is

indistinguishable from anything else?

There is no big deal. In fact it is good. People should be spared the temptation of any idea that does not clear the approval of an ad manager. It is enough for people to be pop literate.

YEAH RIGHT.

Oh, by the way, I hope no one confuses this column with *On the Right Track* just because they both run in *The Collegian* and contain the word *Right*.

Although I'm sure Christine Spanos, the author of *Track*, is a fine person, we tend to agree on very little. In fact, a Behrend professor once commented that Spanos and I have nothing in common beyond species identification.

In case you ever have a question about who is who, just remember, I'm the one that doesn't have naturally curly hair.

- R. M. Prindle

*R. M. Prindle is a ninth semester General Arts and Sciences major whose columns have run in The Collegian for three years. His column appears every other week in The Collegian.*

# Where good sense is in the minority

by Mike Royko

You play the jury and decide. Does Mike Welbel discriminate in his hiring practices?

Welbel owns a small business, the Daniel Lamp Co., on Chicago's Southwest Side.

He buys lamp parts that are made elsewhere, and his workers assemble them in his plant. The lamps are shipped to furniture stores.

He has 26 employees. The jobs require little skill or education so the pay is low. But a job is a job. Welbel says that of his 26 workers, 21 are Hispanic and five are black.

At this point, some of you might say: Yes, Welbel discriminates because he doesn't have any non-Hispanic white employees.

Overruled. Welbel's business is in the heart of the Southwest Side's Hispanic community. So most of the people he hires are from the neighborhood. It's doubtful that anyone would want to travel a considerable distance to work in the lamp shop.

But yes, Welbel does discriminate. You might not think so, and I don't think so. That doesn't matter. Federal bureaucrats say he does. And so he's up to his ears in trouble.

It seems that a black woman applied for a job about 18 months ago. She wasn't hired. Welbel says he doesn't know why.

"I didn't interview her. Maybe

the plant supervisor did. He's not here anymore. I don't know why she wasn't hired. Maybe we didn't need anyone. I just don't know."

But he does know that the woman filed a complaint with the Chicago office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency that is supposed to guard against discriminatory hiring practices. She complained that she wasn't hired because she is black.

And one spring day last year, two investigators came to his plant.

"I told them, 'Here's the records. Help yourselves. You can see everything.' What did I have to hide? I figured that if everybody who works for me is Hispanic or black, how could I be discriminating?"

"You see, when I started the business nine years ago, I used to deal with the State Department of Labor or place help-wanted ads.

"Then I got to know these Hispanic organizations -- the Spanish Coalition and Latino Youth in Chicago -- and we could call and say we needed a couple of people, and they'd say 'no problem,' and send someone in.

"So that's how I've done most of my hiring the last few years. When there's an opening, I call them and they refer people and we hire the ones who are best suited for the work."

That's why Welbel wasn't concerned when the federal bureaucrats came snooping. With an all-minority work force, why

should he worry? "I didn't get a lawyer."

Now he knows why he should have worried. "Dealing with those government people is frightening. They do all the talking. They tell how its going



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to be. You just sit and listen. I've never even met the woman who filed the complaint."

The bureaucrats have told him how it is going to be.

First, they say he must pay the woman \$340.01 in wages she lost by not being hired.

Welbel says: "Fine. I'll be glad to pay her that just to get rid of the headache."

But that's just for starters. Sort of a small ante in the pot.

The bureaucrats have also demanded that Welbel pay \$123,991 in back pay.

Back pay to whom? Good question. The money is to be

divvied up by six other blacks who weren't hired and whose names were found in Welbel's files. And by any other blacks who might have applied in 1988 and 1989.

And who are these others? Welbel doesn't know. Nor do the bureaucrats.

So the feds want Welbel to spend about \$10,000 on newspaper advertising to find black people who say they applied and weren't hired. Then they can come in and get their share of the \$123,991.

"They told me that I should have had 8.45 black employees in 1988 and 1989. They said that within a three-mile radius of my plant, companies that have 100 workers or more average 31.3 percent black. So I should have a 31.3 percent black work force. And that's how they came up with what I owe people who didn't work for me."

"And they want me to spend \$10,000 on advertising to find people who didn't work for me so I can pay them \$123,991 for not working for me."

Is Welbel going to do it?

"I can't. I don't have the money. To tell the truth, the whole company isn't worth that much. That's why I came in this neighborhood. I got the building cheap. Nobody wanted it. I have a non-skilled work labor pool nearby.

"No, I can't pay that money. I'll have to close down, go out of business.

"This is incredible. I'm a small operation. I've got 26 minority people working for me. And here's this federal agency on my back with some mathematical formula that I never heard of before."

I called the EEOC for their side of it, but they wouldn't discuss the case. I can understand that. If I did something that loony, I wouldn't want to talk about it either.

So if the EEOC doesn't back off, Welbel might have to go out of business. And that will eliminate 26 jobs held by minorities. They won't have incomes, they won't pay taxes, and maybe some of them will have to go on welfare, which means someone else's taxes will be used to support them.

I wonder: Among all the other things the Japanese have acquired, do you think they might have bought the EEOC?

**Ed. note:** The National Press Club recently voted Mike Royko the 1990 recipient of their prestigious Fourth Estate Award for a lifetime of achievement and devotion to journalism.

Royko is a Chicago-based syndicated columnist who has won the Pulitzer Prize. His column has been appearing in *The Collegian* since last spring.