

The Battle for the Hill

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Edward Everett Oratory Contest

Supreme Court Case Number 82 792, *Grove City College v. Bell*, Secretary of Education. The Court finds in favor of Secretary Bell, thereby requiring that “A refusal by a college receiving federal financial assistance to execute a proper program-specific assurance of compliance with Title IX... warrants termination of federal assistance to the program receiving the assistance” (*Grove City v. Bell*). Case dismissed. With words similar to these, the Supreme Court told Grove City College, Hillsdale College, and every college in the U.S. that all federal aid to students, whether it went directly to a college or went there indirectly as students qualified for Federal aid, required compliance with Federal mandates. As Arlan Gilbert points out in his book, *The Permanent Things*, Hillsdale ultimately refused this aid and any subsequent government intervention, creating the need for more fundraising efforts to supplant \$1 million in federal aid to students (Gilbert 255). Was it really necessary for Hillsdale to refuse this aid? Was it really necessary for them to hold so strictly to idealistic principles of independence that they would disqualify students from federal money, money coming from taxpayers like their parents? Was it really necessary for them to forego the opportunity to make use of the money they pour into government coffers every year? Yes, it was. It was necessary because, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, “The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground” (“To Colonel Carrington” 447). People who live under government live in a constant battle, a battle to defend one’s liberties from government interference and intrusion. By accepting government funding, Hillsdale College would yield the basic principles of the American Founding, its own historic principles of independence, and the education it provides to future leaders of America thus allowing government to gain ground.

The first piece of ground yielded by the acceptance of government funding would

be the fundamental principles of the American Founding. To understand the relationship between Hillsdale and these principles, one must look at the relationship the American Founding first established between education and the federal government by looking at the Constitution. The document is actually very silent on the subject. For instance, in Article 1, section 8, Congress is given many enumerated powers, yet none of these powers even mentions education, let alone gives the Federal government power over it. But why was education excluded? To answer this question we must understand how those who shaped this country originally viewed education. For example, the Annals of Congress record the 1796 speech of Representative John Nicholas of Virginia during a House debate on a National University –one of several attempts to give the federal government power over education.

He believed there was no Federal quality in knowledge, and no Federal aid was necessary to the spreading of it. Every district of [the] country was competent to provide for the education of its own citizens, and he should not give his countenance to the national plan proposed because the expense would be enormous, and because he did not think it would be attended with any good effect but with much evil. (The Annals of Congress 1700)

Local governments can and should take care of education. Hillsdale need not give in to federal control by accepting federal funding, a concession that would allow the Federal Government to gain ground unconstitutionally and, therefore, as Nicholas said, “be attended...with much evil.” Hillsdale must hold this battlefront from governmental intrusion, preserving a bulwark of educational independence that emulates the original principles of the American founding.

The second battlefront Hillsdale upholds by refusing federal aid is that of its historic principles of independence. The 1984 decision of the Supreme Court mandated that Hillsdale issue an “assurance of compliance,” a report on the sex and race of students in order to insure that the college was not discriminating in these areas (Grove City v. Bell). Hillsdale, however, has always upheld a policy of nondiscrimination, as article 4 of the Hillsdale College Articles of Association points out when it says, “The object of this institution is and shall be to furnish to all persons who wish, irrespective of nationality, color or sex, a literary, scientific or theological education...” (Hillsdale College Board of Trustees 85) President Arnn points out, in his book, *Liberty and Learning*, that Hillsdale has held to this principle of nondiscrimination by never, in its 160 year history, asking for or keeping records on the race of applicants (55). The college has therefore chosen to make a level playing field for its applicants, not engaging in ever-popular affirmative action policies. Hillsdale’s historic principles of nondiscrimination have not merely remained a battle strategy; they have been fought out in the College’s engagements with enemies of liberty. Arlan Gilbert, in his book, *The Permanent Things*, reports the story of the Hillsdale’s 1955 football team. The team was invited to play in Orlando’s Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, but officials announced that no black players would be permitted to participate (175-176) This condition was an affront to the principles of the college, and they refused the invitation (176). Hillsdale has, by its own power, fought to preserve its historic principles of independence and nondiscrimination, no matter how those who want to limit liberty have chosen to attack. It must continue to hold this front so that this institution may remain a fortress of liberty.

Finally, by refusing federal assistance, Hillsdale presses forward in the most important offensive, the education of its students. By upholding a nondiscrimination

policy that makes a level playing field for everyone, not even asking for information on race, Hillsdale ensures that all have the same opportunity to work hard, earn good grades in high school, and attend Hillsdale, not giving special privileges based on race. The institution not only provides an opportunity by its policies, it also teaches the timeless lesson of hard work. The College's Board of Trustees proclaimed this lesson when they adopted the Hillsdale "Declaration of Independence" This document stated,

"Whereas, the thousands of young men and young women who have studied here have been taught some fundamental truths; among these is that the freedom guaranteed them as citizens of this great country is the freedom to dream and aspire without limit and the freedom to fulfill their dreams and aspirations without interference; that our country's greatness is the result not of government benevolence but rather of individual initiative and enterprise; that responsibility is the counterpart of independence;..."(Hillsdale College Board of Trustees 99).

They go on to say that a philosophy of what they term, "government paternalism" is opposed to the principles taught at Hillsdale and refuse federal government aid due to that conflict of principles (99-100). By refusing government aid, Hillsdale continues to teach its students the valuable lesson that one must work hard. People do not have the right to have everything provided for them by the government. Rather, they are the government in this republic and should seek to defend and uphold that government by their own hard work and independence.

The battle lines have been drawn. Hillsdale College stands on the side of the American Founding, a founding of educational independence, liberty, and true equality. On the other side, the side of "government paternalism," federal control, and forced non-discrimination, stand those who have surrendered their liberties and desire to further

control the educational system from the federal level. They have given in to the natural progression Thomas Jefferson referred to when he wrote, “The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground” (“To Colonel Carrington” 447). Hillsdale College has fought this natural progression by refusing federal aid, continuing to defend the principles of the American Founding and its own historic principles. It has not merely fought a defensive war, however. It has educated its students in a way that will prepare them to preserve these principles. Its students must then take on the fight. As Thomas Jefferson said, in a letter to James Madison,

“And say, finally, whether peace is best preserved by giving energy to the government, or information to the people. This last is the most certain, and the most legitimate engine of government. Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. Enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve them. And it requires no very high degree of education to convince them of this. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty” (440).

We, as Hillsdale students must take on the task of preserving liberty, as liberty has been preserved for us. As soldiers, we must first open our training manuals, the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, so that we may identify those laws, political candidates and ideas, the insurgents which would seek to expand government and make liberty yield. We must use our knowledge of these manuals to disarm and eradicate the ideas of dependence upon government. Will we fight the day to day battle for liberty by taking responsibility for our education, our jobs, our retirement, and our republic, not depending upon the government for security or blaming others for our own mistakes? Will we train a new army by teaching our children to work hard as enterprising individuals, helping them

to see, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, “that it is in their interest to preserve peace and order.” We have an assignment. We are being trained. We will preserve liberty.

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