

Educating the elite at Harvard

Jan. 10, 1985

Editor:

About Richard Reeves' recent article: "Educating the elite is still the main role of 'good' universities." Many parents who spend \$20,000 a year and much more to educate their offspring at Harvard might well wish sooner or later they had chosen some less prestigious college.

Dr. Theodore Levitt, a Chicago business consultant, delivered an address at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Harvard School of Business Administration (1938). His title was: "Are advertising and marketing corrupting society? It's not your worry."

In the course of his lengthy address Levitt made clear: The businessman has no responsibility whatever but to make a profit. NONE! "If what is offered can be sold at a profit (not even necessarily a long-term profit), then it is legitimate. The point is this: The businessman exists for only one purpose, to create and deliver value satisfactions at a profit to himself." This theme was driven home determinedly.

The honorable (?) doctor's address was then honored by reproduction in the (prestigious?) Harvard Business Review, so that elitist readers all over the U.S. might learn the standards to which the business school was addressing itself, and the standards being taught to *America's forthcoming business leaders*, if Reeves is right.

The thoroughly responsible and ethical publishers of Advertising Age in Chicago reprinted the address, much as a laboratory might exhibit cancerous tissue. And they printed a full response from me in which I pointed out that in Levitt's view, the highly successful business men in Chicago who had been arrested for dispensing orange marmalade made from hotel and institution garbage were not at fault and deserving of punishment. They just had bad luck. Those peddling drugs to high school kids were delivering quid pro quo value, according to Levitt, and were thus honorable.

If elitist education interests you further, hear this. Shortly after his nihilistic Harvard address and publication, Dr. Levitt renounced consultation and was moved from Chicago to a full-time job where he could teach his standards of ethics and morality to elitist students nine months a year — at Harvard.

A phone call I made this morning informs me he is still there.

Is it any wonder that business morals in this country are at their lowest ever ebb? Is it any wonder that an enormous and costly bureaucracy has been set up to attempt to regulate commerce? And think of the price America's elite must pay to learn corruption and dishonesty at "good" universities.

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