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87501

27 February 1969

Mr. Jack G. Roof, Editor  
Lone Star Sierran  
3522 Grennoch Lane  
Houston, Texas 77025

The Editor:

Considering that the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra club has requested candidates for election to the Board of Directors not to campaign in Texas, and considering the memorandum of February 13, 1969 from Aubrey Wendling, Chairman of the Sierra Club Council to Editors of Chapter Publications on the subject of Guidelines for Fair Play in Electioneering, I feel that you have failed, in your statement of the issues of the forthcoming election in the February Lone Star Sierran, to abide by recognized principles of objective reporting.

Having foreclosed discussion of the issues by the candidates, which was perfectly proper in itself but not in the light of what has followed, the Executive Committee approved publication of parallel statements purporting to express the views of both sides, but written by you who openly supports one side. Under these circumstances the probability that the views of the side not supported by you or the Executive Committee would be fairly presented is vanishingly small. The situation is much as though a Jew were appointed to write objective comparative briefs in favor of Fascism which he execrates, and Zionism which he felicitates. Statements under these circumstances could not be equally unprejudiced.

I now cite a few examples of obvious bias from your editorial. Commenting on Harold C. Bradley's letter you end by saying, "It is this attempt at censorship that Harold Bradley is concerned with in his letter." You apparently accept uncritically Bradley's equating of warnings against libel with the imposition of censorship. Now this is certainly a revolutionary concept in logic. Unthinking readers may well swallow this argument hook, line, and sinker.

Another case of distortion occurs in the column under the heading Conservation: On the School A side you imply that the Club members voted overwhelmingly for a Diablo Canyon plant in exchange for none at Nipomo Dunes. The vote was indeed decisive, but what it meant was not. Whether the members voted to support the Board or for the exchange is far from clear. Many members expressed doubt later as to the meaning of the question. On the School B side you erroneously impute to the School A advocates blind opposition to progress. Both "blind" and "progress" are emotionally loaded words as used in the School B slogan.

Under the Publications heading you say that School A supporters advocate putting all the Club's resources, both manpower and financial, towards expanding the publications program. This is

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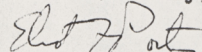
an absolute falsehood; no director or candidate has advocated any such measures. Furthermore all directors agree that the Club is experiencing financial difficulties owing in part to the publications program. They differ on the resolution of these difficulties.

Under the heading Club Management you again misstate the view of the School A group. They do not hold that the Board of Directors' function is merely to rubber-stamp the actions of the staff, nor on the contrary do they believe that the Board should concern itself with administrative details of the Club, which are duties properly assigned to the professional staff. Whenever boards attempt to take over administrative functions for which they are unqualified, utter confusion reigns. The province of the Board of Directors is to establish the overall policy of the Club and to set guidelines for the management of Club affairs. Adopting a budget, necessarily in cooperation with the staff, is an obligation that falls within these categories. The controversy that divides the Board is not over administrative matters but over policy.

And finally, in your remarks about the Executive Director you imply that his stated intention to resign, should a board antagonistic to his program be elected, is a threat of some kind. But what could be more reasonable than his decision to remove himself from the scene should the program in which he believes no longer be supported?

I should like to say in closing that your editorial is so full of biased inferences and pejorative innuendoes that it belies your claim of impartiality. In a court of law a wise judge would order such loaded comments as yours, if challenged, stricken from the record.

Yours sincerely,

  
Eliot F. Porter