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Larry Summers, sacrificial beast

On the (former) president of Harvard.

Here's the message flashed to the world by the Harvard Corporation, that tiny politically correct squad that sits upon a \$26 billion endowment and controls Harvard University: no one with courage or in the habit of independent judgment need apply to be president. When Harvard regurgitated Larry Summers, its embattled president, last month, it was front-page news, and rightly so. Harvard's action let us all know that the penalty for challenging the PC establishment was the oubliette. We've had occasion to mention Mr. Summers in this space before. There was his laudable calling to task of the preposterous Cornel West, the political sermonizer and hip-hop artiste masquerading as a political philosopher, followed instantly by Summers's abject apology when the black lobby at his university rose up to swat him for his impertinence in daring to criticize a brother. Then there was Summers's girl trouble last year, when he had the temerity to suggest that one possible explanation for the relative paucity of women in the higher reaches of science might—might, mind you—have to do with biological differences between men and women. Oh, the wailing and gnashing of teeth that statement provoked! One MIT prof on the distaff side had to leave the room lest she faint, poor dear. And how Mr. Summers abased himself after his inadvertent utterance of that home truth! That was the story of Larry Summers: good instincts undergirded by a habit of capitulation and abasement.

We doubt that he could have survived the rage of his politically correct faculty since his board was itself a quivering jelly of conventional opinion. But had he stood up to the mendacious PC establishment, his ritual sacrifice might have possessed a certain tragic dignity. As it was, his departure from the presidency of Harvard was just another grubby chapter in the annals of academic degradation.

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