

## RIC BURNS' "THE WAY WEST" AS PC PROPAGANDA

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1 As everybody knows, there's no place in public-school classrooms for old films whose message is "There's no good Indian but a dead Indian." In a higher-education class on propaganda analysis, such films are useful, as is PBS' six-hour "The Way West" I saw these past two evenings. But since P(ublic) C(orrectness) has captured American higher education, PC propaganda such as this avowed docuhistory is not yet being used for propaganda analysis: it's not being seen as propaganda, for the same reason a fish can't see water. Yet. So for at least a short time to come, it will be used to (mis)educate our children--unless the public-school establishment becomes quickly sophisticated enough to notice that "The Way West" is propaganda. Unlikely: that establishment has PC-infatuated higher education as its parent and ally.

2 Having direct experience of Martin Luther King, Jr., during "the Movement" days, I remember the parodies of "If you're white, all right! If you're black, stand back." May America always remember with shame the original use of that ditty. PC's "multiculturalism" has reversed the message to something like "If you're *anti*-white, all right! If you're white, *not* right." Ric Burns is white trying to be right. Furthermore, he's a man trying to be feminist: his chief continuity-commentator is a non-white non-man, Charlotte Black Elk....Ric Burns is a--gulp!--whiteman, PC's lowest class of human beings. And he is, for my take, in the lowest subclass, the grovelers who are in denial (I am not white! I am not a man!). His alleged docuhistory could not do a better job of denigrating the whiteman (or of elevating the redman)....As for "multiculturalism," it's an unwitting euphemism for multisub-culturalism, for a mood & method that rejoices in the "diversity" of America's subcultures at the expense of the "Eurocentric" or "EurAmerican" or "EurAtlantic" culture that produced the Constitution under which we Americans more or less live,

3 ....including the Indians (a.k.a. Amerinds, Indamers, Native Americans, aboriginals, or [the latest I've heard] primals). In 1924 they all automatically were granted full citizen-rights under the Constitution, though you'd never guess it from Rick Burns' six-hour propaganda blast. Charlotte Black Elk, a highly advantaged U.S. citizen, looks at, and hates, those whitemen carved into Mt. Rushmore--& can't wait till her people repossess the Black Hills so (her mood says) they can blast those pale-faces to smithereens. Her attitude provoked in me the memory of the Okla. City Apr.19 anti-USA bombing, & President Clinton's responsive preaching against the teaching of hate.

4 But is it fair to put "The Way West" in the category of the teaching of hate? Surely, while that's not its purpose, the film has that inference. It invites whites to self-hate & non-whites to white-hate. Or, if you think "hate" too strong, **alienation**, in a time when we Americans are desperate to find occasions of unity while recognizing & celebrating diversity.

5 As a biblical scholar, I'm appalled at the film's biblical ignorance. Time & again it kicks the Bible unfairly, e.g. claiming that the Bible commands that the desert bloom: it so prophesies (Isaiah 35:1), it never so commands. But I'm not surprised:

6 ....the film is, as anti-Christian, anti-biblical. Time & again the Christian faith is presented as evil, finally as the whiteman's scheme to destroy the last thing the Indians had undestroyed, viz. their inner life. Burns heroizes Black Elk, but you'd never guess that he was a Christian, & for many decades a Sunday-school teacher (catechist). I worked in the Black Hills with a successor of his, shaman-minister Robt. Fox, a clergyman of the United Church of Christ. The Christian Lakotas whom I knew face to face would have nothing to do with the tribalistic nostalgia of that Charlotte who uses, in her own, Black Elk's name! B.E.'s nephew, Chief Noble Red Man, told me that he, as did his uncle, syncretizes Christianity with the Native American spiritual heritage.

7 Once Burns uses the word "tragedy" to describe the clash of the two cultures. Let's not, as he does, propagandize it into crime--as though the whites should have stayed East, or--better--in Europe.