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4 • Saturday, Oct. 3, 1970

Criticism Unmerited

A recent writer to the TIMES contends that to discontinue the playing of "Dixie," because it has racial connotations makes as much sense as banning "The Stars and Stripes Forever," because it is a war song.

The comparison is strained, we believe, but to the extent that much American folkways and culture, including the pomp and ceremony of martial music, is devoted to the romanticizing and engrandizing of military pursuits, we'll have to go along with the thesis. A good case can be made for the proposition that the world would be a happier place with more peace marches and fewer war marches, John Phillip Sousa notwithstanding. In any event, we have no reservations at all about the impropriety under existing circumstances of a resumption of "Dixie" as a football fight song at the University of Arkansas.

Like the man said, "It ain't WHAT you say, but the WAY that you say it!"

There is nothing wrong with "Dixie" as a colorful, sprightly, historic piece of American music. When it is used, as is the Confederate Flag, as a symbol of white resistance to integration in many parts of the South, however, its implications become inseparable from that cause.

Most Arkansans are proud of the steady and moderate course the University of Arkansas has steered through the last several years of severe challenge to higher education authority across the United States. The University's actions, all along the course of decision on the "Dixie" matter, are a product of an administrative philosophy which has served the state in good stead.

For the record, and for those who still don't seem to get the point, we emphasize the position of new band director Eldon Janzen on this subject. Janzen, a relative newcomer to our friendly clime, has come in for more criticism than he deserves. His stand

comer to our friendly clime, has come in for more criticism than he deserves. His stand is the only conscientious one possible under existing circumstances, we believe.

Explained Janzen, prior to the Marching Razorbacks' first appearance this fall:

"This is a brief review of my thinking regarding the resumption of the use of 'Dixie' in conjunction with University athletic events.

"1. My personal feeling is not entirely in sympathy with those who demand that this particular piece of music will not be heard at University functions.

"2. However, it is my feeling that to resume the use of this song after its termination by the previous Band Director (Richard Worthington) could produce detrimental effects to the reputation of the University, running also a decided risk of conflict on the University campus which could bring about bodily harm to students under my supervision.

"Our University enjoys a great deal of national publicity and the tensions and dissent which would be generated by resuming the playing of this song would be a discredit to this institution.

"Further, I feel that the University Band should not be cast in the role of formulating either political or administrative policy by once again becoming embroiled in this matter. Our job is to conduct such musical activities as would compliment this school and promote school spirit which would serve to unite our student body and our supporters. I interpret the playing of 'Dixie' to be a tool of dissent at this juncture. It is my sincere belief that as time passes, reason will again prevail and 'Dixie' may be again heard as the symbol of the people rather than the race.

"Finally, I must say that I am reluctant to become involved in this issue because of the responsibility that I feel I owe to the parents of each of the men and women who take part in the University Band under my direction. These students contribute far more of their time and efforts that the credit value of any similar course requires. I think the possibility of injury and violence over this issue is real; I would prefer not to expose them to such a possibility on the basis of my decision to play this song."

As an expression of prudence, reason and responsibility we find no fault with Mr. Janzen's position.