

'Bigot' Attacks Threaten Values

A PHILOSOPHER once observed that people tend to criticize most readily faults they see in others but which they are reluctant to admit may exist in themselves.

Lately, the practice of calling those with differing opinions "bigots" has been revived. It is a means of ridiculing a belief by deriding the believer.

In Des Moines, a supporter of "gay liberation" smacked a pie into the face of a lady who is noted for upholding morality and respectability. The pie thrower explained: "Now we have another bigot with a sticky face!"

In Oklahoma City, a prominent physician called a board of more than 50 religious leaders "bigoted buffoons" because he disagreed with a policy they adopted.

Dictionaries say that a bigot is a person who is blindly attached to any religious creed, opinion, practice, party or system. Buffoons are clowns.

In his "Devil's Dictionary," published in 1906, Ambrose Bierce defined a bigot as "one who is obstinately and zealously attached to an opinion that you do not entertain."

Strictly applied, that would make all of us bigots in the eyes of everyone who disagreed with us, which would include practically everybody in some way. In turn, we would see all others as bigots, because their opinions differ from ours.

Only an undiscerning person could argue that there is no validity to any opinion other than his own. Even the devil is said to quote certain truths to lend the appearance of authenticity to his lies.

The ability to see another's point of view should not deprive a person of the free privilege of standing firmly for things he believes to be right, for what he regards as the truth and for what he considers to be the best course of action.

Without such standards and leadership, backed by faith and courage, we would have no morality, no religion, no statesmanship, no law and little civilization.

Traditional American values are targets of attack by reformers who advocate untried courses or who favor reversion to customs that have destroyed nations throughout history.

The famous editor, Horace Greeley, wrote: "There is no bigotry like that of free thought run to seed."

True Americans do not deny the right of dissent, and it has been granted to the extent that established institutions may be in danger. Among those who claim the right of dissent are some who would destroy this right.

In any case, it is a weak argument for a cause, whether right or wrong, when adherents must resort to name-calling and ridicule of their opponents to "prove" their points.