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Data on Dissenters

To the Editor:

On April 17 you correctly reported that Haverford College has refused to supply the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with certain information as a condition for our students receiving state scholarships or loans.

But your story unfortunately misses the main reason for our action. The new amendments to Pennsylvania's otherwise excellent aid program requires that we supply the state with information on dismissals or court convictions of all Pennsylvanians among our students before any Pennsylvanian can get aid.

We can understand the state asking a would-be recipient directly if he has been dismissed from a college for disruptive activities. What we cannot accept is the idea that the college itself is put in the position of being the reporting agency. Still more serious is the idea that our reports would have to cover even those students who seek no aid from the state.

We view these amendments with alarm. They could force us to violate our explicit agreements with students; that would undermine the trust that has stood us in good stead during some of higher education's toughest years. They would threaten academic freedom and, equally important, academic responsibility.

We think President Nixon right when he said in his recent education message that such restrictions attached to aid programs won't work and "if they did work they would in that very process destroy what they nominally seek to preserve."

Public concern over campus disorders is certainly legitimate. What is at stake here is the way that concern is expressed.

JOHN R. COLEMAN
President, Haverford College
Haverford, Pa., April 20, 1970