

Words Poorly Used #61 — Consensus

Saturday I was so fortunate as to score a seat next to my cousin at the University of Kentucky men's basketball season closer against the Florida Gators. It was a privilege to see the Wildcats put the finishing touches on a 31-0 regular season. But I mention this here to make a point about consensus. There is a traditional cheer in Rupp Arena where the west side of the house voices the opinion that the letter "C" is noteworthy, then the south side retorts with "A." The side where I was, the east, contended strenuously that "T" was paramount, but we were gainsaid by the north who insisted that "S" was the capper. Round and round we went, until the cheering squad encouraged us all to agree on "CATS, CATS, CATS." It was a fearsome noise ... but that is all it was, noise! This kind of ritual, however, is what passes for consensus in our lives — the most noise (aka the squeaky wheel). Our national motto has become a cheer, "USA, USA, USA!" Such high decibel incantation pretty much overwhelms thought, reason, principle. The next time we hear someone trying to claim the high ground of consensus at least we might examine whether that someone is standing on the low ground, cheer misleading.

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