



Letter to John Francis Neylan, July 3, 1950

[Letter, July 3, 1950]

July 3, 1950
John Francis Neylan
Board of Regents
University of California
Berkeley, California
Respected Friend:

The Berkeley Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers) feels impelled to express the serious concern with which it notes the recent action of the Board of Regents of the University of California in prescribing a political test as a condition of employment for its faculty and other personnel.

A tenet basic to democracy and to the dignity of the human spirit is the unquestioned right of every individual to his own beliefs in political and religious matters, to be held, expressed or not expressed, freely and without fear of reprisal. The freedom of the minority to disagree with the majority, and to be protected in this disagreement, is the essence of civil liberty in a democracy. No "crisis" can justify forsaking this right which does not justify the surrendering of democracy itself. We cannot purchase security by the sale of freedom.

The freedom of the teacher to hold opinion, to see the truth without fear, and to speak fearlessly, is an essential base for the education of the people on which democracy must depend for survival. Loyalty to these obligations should be the sole test of competence, and these freedoms cannot be preserved by denying them to particular groups. Political oaths, or hearings which violate the privacy of the individual, are both repugnant to free scholarship and to democratic process. The use of faculty personnel to effectuate the policy seems especially unfortunate.

That any individual or group in a democracy should assume the mantle of infallibility in prescribing what political or religious ideas shall be considered "acceptable" is both surprising and regrettable. The loss of freedom is equally tragic whether it occurs under communism, fascism, or in the name of democracy.

It is the hope of this meeting that the Regents and the President of the University of California may find it possible to reconsider a policy which may well destroy a great center of learning.

BERKELEY SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
Anna E. James, Clerk