



Letter to Earl Cranston from Joel H. Hildebrand, March 16, 1950

[Letter, March 16, 1950]

March 16, 1950
Dean Earl Cranston
School of Religion
University of Southern California
Los Angeles 7, California
Dear Dean Cranston:

The story of the Loyalty Oath at this university has been a long and involved one with many hidden ramifications. The Loyalty Oath was originally devised as a counter-measure to certain Tenney proposals at Sacramento but it was adopted suddenly without consultation with the faculty and its form proved to be highly offensive. The Regents were not originally impressed with it as a means of detecting or eliminating communists but have retained it with several successive modifications largely as a club to force the faculty to take an unequivocal stand on communism.

As matters now stand the Academic Senate has flatly rejected any oath other than the one prescribed in the State Constitution. We are now voting upon two propositions, copies of which I enclose. I have great hope that a large affirmative vote on proposition 2 will be accepted by the Regents as an adequate basis for rescinding their special oath.

I personally am strongly opposed to the policy regarding communists adopted by the AAUP Committee in 1948 for reasons which I set forth in an article which I published in the Pacific Spectator, a reprint of which I enclose. While I am, of course, opposed to handling any individual case in such a way as to deny justice to an accused person, I think that the AAUP is completely unrealistic in maintaining that the Communist Party is just another political party. The fine logical distinctions which academic men like to make do not impress the ordinary citizen today, who does not see why a teacher in a university should be blameless who joins and contributes to a party whose leaders are convicted of treason and whose philosophy calls for the destruction of academic as well as civic freedom. The position taken by the Committee seems to me logically like maintaining that a painted woman in a house of prostitution should not be regarded with the slightest suspicion because she might simply be there collecting for the Red Cross.

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I wrote to the editor of the Bulletin asking whether he would care to consider publishing a paper such as the one I wrote. I received no reply to this or to a subsequent inquiry, a copy of which I sent to the president of the Association. Because of this discourtesy together with my opposition to the official policy, I have now resigned from the Association. I am strongly in favor of the position taken by Professor Lovejoy on the communist issue and I think that the official position of the Association is doing great harm to public esteem for the men of our profession, among liberals as well as among conservatives.

Sincerely yours
Joel H. Hildebrand, Dean

College of Chemistry
Enclosures