



Letter to John Francis Neylan, March 16, 1950

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March 16, 1950.
Mr. John Francis Neylan
Arizona Biltmore
Phoenix, Arizona.
My dear Jack:

Present at yesterday's conference were Regents Teague, Ahlport, Jordan, Sprague and myself.

The question of the Regents' attitude at the March 31st meeting was carefully discussed. It was the unanimous opinion that any publicly interpreted compromise would be disastrous to the University.

All civic organizations are supporting the firm policy of the Regents and public sentiment here is simply overwhelmingly in support of the Regents' position.

Jordan called attention to the fact that at the last meeting of the Board, he tried to present the idea that it be made clear that a statement satisfactory to the Regents, and the equivalent of the loyalty oath, would be a simple "I am not a member of the Communist Party". He called attention to the fact that at our September 30th meeting, faculty members were given the alternative of signing the oath or a statement acceptable to the Regents. However, the Regents had, up to that time, neglected to explain what would be a statement "acceptable to the Regents". No action, he recalled to us, was taken at the meeting.

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More recently, as you will remember, I issued on March 8th, 1950, a statement from which the following is an extract:

"The statement of protest signed by members of the University faculty seems to be founded on an unhappy misconception of the anti-Communism provision proscribed by the Board of Regents.

"Those who for religious or other reasons object to taking a formal oath, may sign a simple statement that the person signing is not a member of the Communist Party."

Jordan and I urged that the Board as a whole should indicate that a personal signed statement or contract setting forth in clear-cut language, "I am not a member of the Communist Party", should be adopted, inasmuch as a great many good faculty friends of the Regents believe the phrase "acceptable to the Regents" should be thus clarified.

Ahlport, however, is taking a very positive position. He feels that the Regents should make no further comment on the situation whatsoever. That we stand on the wording of the resolution adopted, and go forward with the policy of dismissing all non-signers. I think that possibly you can persuade him that a rigid and stand-pat policy is not in the best interests of the University in this situation.

All, however, are agreed that every member must sign a statement, either separately or in the contract, that he personally is not a member of the Communist Party.

Someone suggested that the Regents' interpretation be expanded to conform with the second proposition now being balloted on by the faculty. That statement, as I understand it, is:

"No person whose commitments or obligations, Communist or other, demonstrably prevent impartial scholarship and free pursuit of truth will be employed by the University.

"Proved members of the Communist Party, by reason of such commitment to that Party, are not acceptable to the faculty."

A suggestion might be as follows: "I am not a member of the Communist Party. Nor am I a member of any other organization whose commitments or obligations prevent impartial scholarship and free pursuit of the truth."

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The above, of course, is purely suggestive and I forward it to you merely for such use as you may make of it in formulating the Board's final statement. Our group yesterday was not taking any formal action.

We approved your suggestion to have a conference at the California Club, Thursday, March 30th, at 2:00 o'clock, and I will advise Underhill to have no committee meetings on that date.

Here is a thought that flashes across my mind:

Let us assume that the result of the faculty ballot will be a strong endorsement of Proposition 2 (outlawing Communism at the University). There will be, of course, a certain number of dissidents even on that, and being a secret ballot the Regents will have no means of knowing who the dissidents are, and whether or not they are members of the Communist Party.

What would you think of a statement from the Board (assuming that a big majority vote for Proposition 2) expressing our gratification that the faculty by such vote have demonstrated that they are as determined as are the Regents to rid the University of members of the Communist Party, and that we shall fight shoulder to shoulder on that broad American policy?

However, obviously there are still persons on the faculty who refuse to go along with the faculty in out-lawing Communism and, it having been a secret ballot, there is of course no way of knowing who or what these dissidents are. Who and what they are can be determined only by requiring all dissidents to sign a statement of non-Communitic affiliation.

This might be done in either of two ways: 1- By the signing of a simple statement to be filed with the Secretary of the Board in phraseology hereinabove quoted, or 2- as a gesture of getting together— a statement on the contract stating that the signer of this contract is not a member of the Communist Party, etc.

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The group yesterday was definitely was of the opinion that the matter should not be reopened by the Regents beyond the adoption of an explanatory statement predicated on the pending balloting by the faculty; that it would be a disastrous mistake to appoint another "conference committee".

Public patience would be disgusted with further effort of appeasement on an issue so simple and clear.

Cordially
Edward A. Dickson.
EAD/GS