



Report of the Southern Section of the Committee on Privilege and Tenure, ca. November 1950

REPORT OF THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGE AND TENURE TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE, SOUTHERN SECTION

On May 2, 1950, the Academic Senate, Southern Section, asked the Committee on Privilege and Tenure of the section to concern itself with a continuous review of the procedures imposed by the Regents on April 21, 1950, with reference to whether prospective faculty members invited to come to the University refuse for reasons associated with these procedures, whether these procedures are cited as a reason for resigning by faculty members leaving the University, and whether the University's reputation in the academic world is damaged by these new procedures. In accordance with that resolution, the Committee submits the following for the information of the Academic Senate, Southern Section. The Committee wishes to emphasize that the information presented is in the nature of an interim report. It should be noted also that the Committee has collected information that originated in that part of the University associated with the southern section of the Senate or that pertained to the entire Senate. The Committee on Academic Freedom appointed by the Academic Senate, Northern Section, has been given responsibilities similar to those of this committee and we repeat here portions of that committee's report. The two committees have been in communication in an effort to keep the two sections of the Senate informed.

1. Faculty members who have resigned and who have given these procedures as a reason.

Information reported to the Committee indicates that one Senate member and two non-Senate faculty members who were on the University staff last year resigned or declined reappointment and referred specifically to these procedures as the reason for their action.

The Committee on Academic Freedom has reported that eleven Senate members resigned from the northern section.

2. Professors from other Universities who declined appointment in this University and cited these procedures as the reason.

The Committee here reports for the information of the Senate excerpts of letters from distinguished scholars at other Universities who have declined to consider offers of appointment on the Los Angeles campus of the University of California, and who have cited these reasons specifically.

Professor Robert K. Merton, Department of Sociology, Columbia University, declined appointment in the 1950 Summer Session saying: "I as a responsible teacher face a situation that makes it impossible for me to carry through my contract with the University of California. As I understand the New York Times' reports, anyone accepting a teaching post at the University will be expected to subscribe to the Regents' doctrine of refusing

to employ any scholar, whatever his intellectual qualifications, if he has a communist political affiliation. This I will not do. I am fully in accord with the very different policy adopted by our academic guild, the American Association of University Professors, which holds that the political affiliation of a professor is not sufficient ground for refusing him academic employment; but that, rather, each man

— 2 —

must be judged solely in terms of his merits as a teacher, and a scholar. If we start by making political affiliation, rather than merit of performance, the crucial test for academic employment, then the next step will be to refuse academic employment to otherwise, able individuals because of race, religion, or private beliefs. It is a wry commentary on the situation created by the Regents' action that a person like myself, who thoroughly disagrees with communist anti-democratic policies, is compelled to affirm my 'political innocence' by saying, that, of course, I am not a member of the Communist Party, nor have I ever been a member of the Communist Party. One may have no illusions that, by refusing to accept summer employment on the Regents' terms, the course of events in California can be changed. However, I cannot find warrant in my conscience as a teacher for participating in a policy that is a bitter blow to teachers everywhere."

On October 27, 1950, Professor Howard Mumford Jones, Professor of English at Harvard University wired the chairman of the English Department at U.C.L.A.

"In view of the good repute of the University of California until recently, and especially in view of the unique opportunities for scholarly research in the Los Angeles area I am strongly drawn to your offer of a visiting summer term professorship in 1951. I hope this offer can be renewed under happier circumstances. But until your board of regents ceases to violate the ordinary principles of academic tenure and honest agreement between parties to a contract I cannot in good conscience accept. In view of the condemnation of the unparalleled action of your board by professional bodies and groups of scholars and scientists over the country I am regretfully taking the liberty of making this reply public."

On October 12, 1950, Professor Rudolf Carnap, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, wrote as follows:

"I am grateful to you for suggesting me to the department to fill the Flint visiting professorship....But I feel rather strongly about the unfortunate situation with respect to academic freedom which has arisen at the University of California, and I do not wish to come there while the situation prevails. I am opposed in principle to the idea that any but academic considerations should qualify a man as fit or unfit for teaching. If I held a post at the University of California, I presume I would have signed under protest to protect my livelihood....But, not having been put before the obnoxious choice of signing or resigning by the need of protecting my job, I feel that the least I can do to help the cause is to refuse to accept an invitation to teach there at a time when the university needs additional men because of the dismissals....Perhaps my attitude will seem unreasonable to you since you do not even mention the oath situation in your letter. I was happy to learn that other men who have been invited there, have refused for the same reason."

Following Professor Carnap's refusal of the Flint professorship, Professor W. V. Quine of Harvard University also declined. The latter wrote on November 1:

"I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the honor which you have done me in wanting to recommend me for the Flint Professorship for next term. The prospect of spending the term in such congenial and

— 3 —

stimulating company, and in such an agreeable part of the world, is very attractive. Moreover, this is a year when, through an usual combination of circumstances, I could easily arrange to be away the second term. However, I should feel that in accepting such an offer at the present time I should be acquiescing in the recent action of the Regents of your University in dismissing permanent members of your faculty. Therefore I cannot accept.

"My attitude in this matter springs from no underestimation of the communist threat to democracy. Imposition of mandatory oaths is surely no defense against the enemies of democracy, but this again is not the point of my protest. I am protesting rather against a flagrant abuse of power on the part of the Regents, who have put aside the judgments of the faculty regarding the scholarly qualifications and trustworthiness of its members."

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Northern Section has already reported that eleven persons had declined appointment to Senate-rank positions there.

3. Effect of these procedures upon the University's reputation in the academic world.

The Committee here quotes from some of the letters received by the Academic Senate from the faculties of other universities and colleges expressing the attitudes of scholars in those institutions towards the procedures adopted.

One letter was received from a member of the Rutgers faculty disparaging letters from other faculty groups. In it he emphasized the view that "the 'professor' with Communist leanings is a menace."

On September 27, 1950, Professor S. E. Harris of the Graduate School of Administration at Harvard University sent the following statement, signed by 93 members of the Harvard faculty:

"Since all scholars belong to the community of scholarship, the undersigned members of the Faculties of Arts and Sciences and Law of Harvard University are profoundly concerned by the injury which has recently been done to that community by the Regents of the University of California. In all large controversies the greatest danger is that the basic principle will be obscured by secondary issues. The latest action of the Board of Regents renounces its faith in the responsibility of scholars, repudiates the established traditions of the University of California, and violates faculty rights of academic freedom and tenure. We hope and expect that the Academic Senate of the University of California will relentlessly defend the principles from which the health of all universities derives."

On September 22, 1950, Professor Gordon A. Craig of the Department of History, Princeton University, sent this telegram, followed by a letter listing 294 members of the Princeton faculty who had signed it (74 per cent of the faculty):

"We, the undersigned, members of the faculty of Princeton University, send greetings to the Academic Senate of the University of California and assure the Senate that we have observed with deep concern the recent

— 4 —

action taken by the Regents of the University of California in dismissing members of the faculty against the recommendation of the Senate's Committee on Privilege and Tenure. We recognize that this action of the Regents constitutes a denial of an enlightened policy of tenure and repudiates the principle of the self-determination and responsibility of the faculty which the Academic Senate and the Board of Regents of the University of California have hitherto steadfastly maintained. We trust that for the sake of academic freedom in the University of California and in all American universities the Academic Senate will vigorously defend its traditional policies and principles, and we assure the Senate of our whole-hearted support in its cause and of our readiness to assist it with any means at our command."

On September 26, 1950, Professor Howard M. Jenkins, Secretary of the Faculty at Swarthmore College sent this telegram:

"The members of the faculty of Swarthmore College wish to express their opposition to the policy adopted by the Board of Regents of the University of California requiring faculty members to subscribe to a special loyalty affirmation as a condition of employment. Further they affirm their support of those members of the faculty who having been cleared by the Committee of the Academic Senate on Privilege and Tenure were told

by the Regents to sign the prescribed loyalty form or forfeit their positions.

"This threat to the principle of Academic Freedom must not go unchallenged. To forsake this principle would place a curb on the free pursuit of truth and seriously weaken the cause of democracy.

"The members of the Swarthmore faculty hope that believers in this academic freedom everywhere will join together in opposing this action by the Regents. For their own part they are prepared to help their colleagues at the University of California in whatever way they can.' The foregoing resolution of the faculty of Swarthmore College was adopted without dissenting vote at a regular meeting of the faculty of Swarthmore college held September 25th, 1950, and ordered transmitted to the Regents and the Academic Senates of the University of California."

On the same day, Professor Broadus Mitchell, Department of Economics, Rutgers University, wrote that 30 members of that University wished to associate themselves with the statement of members of the Princeton faculty.

On September 18, 1950, the twelve members of the faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton wrote:

"We, the resident professors and professors-emeriti of the Institute for Advanced Study, being aware that the Regents have dismissed members of your faculty contrary to the recommendation of your Committee on Privilege and Tenure and that this action violates the policy of tenure and the principle of the faculty's self-determination and responsibility hitherto recognized by the University of California, unanimously wish to encourage you to unite in defense of your traditional policies and principles against encroachment. (Signed) Frank Aydelotte, Harold F. Cherniss, Edward Mead Earle, Albert Einstein, Hetty Goldman, Benjamin D. Meritt, Marston Morse, Robert Oppenheimer, Erwin Panofsky, Walter W. Stewart, Homer A. Thompson, and John von Neumann."

— 5 —

On September 19, 1950, 51 members of the Columbia University faculty signed the following letter:

"The undersigned members of the faculties of Columbia University have been following with intense interest the recent events at the University of California. We have been greatly perturbed at the action of the Regents of that University in dismissing members of its faculty contrary to the recommendations of the Committee on Privilege and Tenure of the Senate. This action seems to us a reversal of the policy of tenure that has long governed the University of California, and a denial of the principle of the self-determination and responsibility of the faculty in educational affairs, firmly established at California and vigorously upheld by its Academic Senate. This policy and principle are of vital concern to all Americans, and especially to your professional colleagues on the faculties of other American universities. We are confident that the Senate will do everything in its power to continue to maintain and defend them, and we wish to assure you of our concern and our whole-hearted support in this our common cause."

On September 22, 1950, 29 members of the faculty at Oberlin College signed and sent the following:

"We the undersigned, members of the faculty of Oberlin College, send greetings to the Academic Senate of the University of California and assure the Senate that we have observed with deep concern the recent action taken by the Regents of the University of California in dismissing members of the faculty against the recommendation of the Senate's Committee on Privilege and Tenure. We recognize that this action of the Regents constitutes a denial of an enlightened policy of tenure and repudiates the principle of the self-determination and responsibility of the faculty which the Academic Senate and the Board of Regents have hitherto steadfastly maintained. We trust that for the sake of academic freedom in the University of California and in all American universities the Academic Senate will vigorously defend its traditional policies and

principles, and we assure the Senate of our whole-hearted support in its cause and of our readiness to assist it with any means at our command."

On September 22, 1950, 39 members of the faculty at Johns Hopkins University signed the following communication to the Academic Senate of the University of California:

"We, members of the faculty of The Johns Hopkins University, herewith send warm greetings and salutations to the Academic Senate of the University of California. We feel that the action of the Regents of the University of California in dismissing members of the faculty contrary to the recommendation of the Senate's Committee on Privilege and Tenure directly attacks the principles of faculty self-determination and responsibility, in whose support the Academic Senate and the Board of Regents have hitherto been so felicitously and properly united. Those principles are more important than the attainment of any specific and immediate objective to be achieved by ignoring them. They comprise the essence of constitutional government in the academic world, and so are of vital concern to all of us.

"Therefore we urge the Academic Senate of the University of California steadfastly to maintain its stand in support of these principles, vital to

— 6 —

higher education, and so to the nation. We assure the Senate of our whole-hearted support in this shared cause and duty, and trust that it may prevail on the Board of Regents to reverse its stand and revert to the enlightened policy which had previously marked its relations to the faculty and had constituted so conspicuous an example of educational and political wisdom."

The following statements have been received from learned societies. On November 8, 1950, J. Barkley Rosser, Professor of Mathematics at Cornell and President, Association for Symbolic Logic, wrote:

"The American Section of the Council of the Association for Symbolic Logic deplors the harm done to academic freedom and scientific progress by the recent action of the Regents of the University of California in imposing arbitrary and humiliating conditions of employment on their faculty. The Council notes that this action has already resulted in a great discontent and loss of morale in the California faculty, and in the consequent desire of many distinguished faculty members to move elsewhere. The future effects of this action upon the scientific and academic work of the California faculty, and upon the standing of the University, will be disastrous. The Council therefore urges that the Regents reconsider their action, so as to restore academic freedom and to insure the continued high standing of the University of California."

The American Mathematical Association has filed a statement with the President and the Regents urging them to reverse the Regents' action dismissing the non-signers. The American Philological Association has taken similar action.

The board of directors of the American Psychological Association dispatched the following telegram to Governor Warren and President Sproul on September 6, 1950, following the meeting of that Society at State College, Pennsylvania:

"In view of present unsatisfactory tenure conditions for teachers and research personnel in the State University system of California, the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association by unanimous agreement has instructed the Association's placement service to refuse assistance in filling vacancies in this system until such time as tenure conditions meet acceptable standards. Furthermore, it is recommending to the Association's members that they not accept positions in the State University system until such time as tenure conditions improve."

G. H. Ball

A. E. Longueil

K. Macgowan
W. C. Putnam
W. W. Crouch