

Support for Lawvere grows

Dal Math under attack

Dr. Jean-Louis Verdier, a well-known mathematician from Brandeis University (U.S.) and Orsay (France), refused to give his lecture at the Mathematics Category Conference held at Dal. from January 16 to 19. The action was a protest against Dalhousie Math Professor Dr. F. W. Lawvere's dismissal.

For Verdier, the trip was wasted. He stated that "I decided to participate at this conference only at the invitation of Bill Lawvere. If I had known of these events before the conference, I certainly would not have come." And that "It is, I believe, essential to the function of universities that one is able to freely express his political opinions."

He also compared the situation in our math department to that existing in the universities in Germany in 1930.

A statement protesting Lawvere's dismissal was circulated at the conference and signed by a majority of the mathematicians there. (see this page).

Dean MacLean was consistently "in the bathtub" or "on the other line" or "out" and could not be reached for comments about this statement, either by the Gazette or by a member of the Student Council.

Additional criticism of the case came from Dr. F. J. Servedio, a member of our math department, whose letter is reprinted here.

A regular meeting of the graduate and honors students of the department of mathematics passed a motion proposing the renewal of Dr. Lawvere's appointment. Opinion supporting Lawvere is becoming massive, and we know of no stated opinion supporting the administration of Dalhousie except the administration of Dalhousie. Yet his case is not being reconsidered.

THIS IS THE COMMITTEE

that refused to reappoint Dr. Lawvere.

Item 5 (b) of the minutes of the departmental meeting held on Friday, December 11.

5 (b) "A. J. Tingley informed the department that in his opinion the present Appointments Committee can no longer function properly. It seems inadvisable to appoint a new committee at this time. We must acknowledge this to the deans. It can be expected that, in any case, they will effectively make the decisions in the near future at least.

"A. Larson inquired why.

"A. J. Tingley explained that because of the personalities involved, he doubts that the Appointments Committee as it now exists can function effectively, nor would recommendations from it be likely to be respected."

Note: The Appointments Committee consists of Drs. A. J. Tingley, H. Brunner, M. Edelstein, and F. W. Lawvere. The committee which dealt with Lawvere's case consisted of the first three, without Lawvere.

Dean MacLean under attack

To Members of the Mathematics Department:
At the request of Dr. F. W. Lawvere, G. MacLean, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and G. Langstroth, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies had an interview with him today at 4:00 p.m. I accompanied Dr. Lawvere and was present at that interview.

The purpose of the meeting was to discover the deans' positions on the question of Dr. Lawvere's reappointment and to discuss with them reasons. It was hoped that Dr. Lawvere might provide clarification on his behalf, but MacLean's position did not enable clarification to take place. He stated strongly that he would recommend non-reappointment. The vague reasons given were allusions to Dr. Lawvere's political activity and his involvement in recent disruptions of meetings at Dalhousie.

However, MacLean did acknowledge the following arguments against his own point of view.

1. Dr. Lawvere's scientific work, his teaching, and his contributions to the university community were not considered.

2. Non-reappointment would be regarded by

compiled by Lloyd Buchinski

many university people as tantamount to dismissal even though there is no legal question of dismissal.

3. The university should not stifle free questioning and free discussion. However, Dean MacLean admitted to not evaluating carefully all reports on disrupted meetings in which Lawvere was involved. No inquiry was made on



Dean Guy MacLean, the man with "the countryboy's taste".

whether "Lawvere's group" were themselves disruptive or merely catalysts for disruption coming from other factions.

4. Dr. MacLean admitted that the notoriety of non-reappointment might be more detrimental to Dalhousie than the presence of those political factions which disrupt meetings.

The finality of this verdict was couched in the crude but appropriate imagery that in his "country boy's taste" Lawvere was "sour milk". No amount of persuasion could change his mind. Dean Langstroth contributed only by rubber-stamping the words of MacLean.

I respectfully submit this for your consideration.

Signed, Frank J. Servedio.

To President Hicks, and to the Mathematics Department of Dalhousie University.

The failure of Dalhousie University to renew the appointment of Professor F. W. Lawvere raises a fundamental question concerning academic freedom. Lawvere is a highly original and talented mathematician whose scholarly qualifications for reappointment have been challenged by no one. Neither does anyone question the fact that Dalhousie was under no strict contractual or legal obligation to reappoint him. The issue raised concerns the criteria apparently applied in refusing his reappointment. We, the undersigned mathematical colleagues of Lawvere, are convinced by uncontroverted evidence that Dalhousie's refusal is a direct result of Lawvere's political ideas and activities.

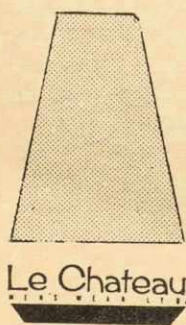
Lawvere is well-known to be a man of deep political conscience. His political ideas and actions have been characterized by others in terms such as unorthodox, naive, provocative, laudable, or otherwise, depending on their own political dispositions. Nevertheless no one has formally charged that Lawvere ever acted outside his right to free political expression, a right which, it is our hope, Dalhousie will continue with other universities to respect. If this right is reserved for those who cause others no

intellectual or moral discomfort, or for those who are so inert as to have a negligible impact on their political milieu, then it is no right at all.

Dalhousie, despite Lawvere's outstanding scientific qualifications, despite his enormous contribution to the activity and stature of the Dalhousie mathematics department, has apparently refused Lawvere's reappointment because his political ideas and actions have made some people uneasy.

We, the undersigned, strongly protest the application of such criteria in academic appointments, especially in the absence of any violation of university or other statutes. We urge Dalhousie to reconsider Lawvere's reappointment on purely professional grounds. In the event that such reconsideration is not forthcoming we will urge our colleagues to refuse acceptance of Lawvere's vacated position to exercise whatever further influence toward correcting this situation that their means and consciences make appropriate.

This statement was signed by a majority of the participants at the Category Conference, representing a sampling of opinion from universities across Canada, the U.S. and Europe.



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