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Acadia U. Pres fires music prof

by Bob Barnes

A dispute last year at Acadia University over the firing of Professor Robert McCarthy of the School of Music would appear to be repeating itself this year. The University Administration at Acadia (notably President J.M.R. Beveridge) has again fired Professor McCarthy for reasons identical to those given last year as grounds for the non-renewal of his contract; those reasons were subsequently dismissed as inadequate and frivolous by no less than two independent grievance committees established in

the Spring of 1974, to hear Professor McCarthy's complaint.

The dispute erupted last year when it became apparent to students that Professor McCarthy was being fired on the advice of only four tenured staff members in the School of Music. No untenured staff or students were consulted with respect to the decision and, as a result, most of the music students "walked-out" in protest. Later Students' Union officials organized an effective two day student boycott of classes and forced the Administration to allow a

second grievance committee to hear Professor McCarthy's complaint (the Faculty Association had already established a similar committee which had recommended unanimously that Professor McCarthy be reappointed — this recommendation was ignored).

The second grievance committee composed of three outside academics (including Professor Murray Fraser, formerly of Dalhousie) also found that the reasons given for Professor McCarthy's dismissal were inadequate and recommended that he be reappointed with adequate reassessment in 1974-75 for further appointment. Their conclusion was that the problem amounted simply to a personality clash between Pros. McCarthy and two or three other faculty members and that Professor McCarthy's positive achievements as a teacher in the School of Music and in the community were not given sufficient consideration.

Again the Administration ignored this recommendation (after earlier promising the Students' Union that they would follow it) and advised Professor McCarthy that he would be given a one year terminal appointment. At this point, in the summer of 1974, the Canadian Association of University Teachers officially intervened, threatening Dr. Beveridge with censure, and he again capitulated.

Gearing up for a second round Dr. Beveridge, in his year-end report to the Board of Governors in 1974, completely reversed his earlier stated position with respect to student involvement in the hiring and firing process and denied that students, untenured staff, or faculty grievance procedures could have any significant part to play in decisions of that type. He states: "I think it important that despite the outcome of this case the right of the academic Head, Dean or Director of a School, after appropriate consultation with senior colleagues, to make the definitive recommendation or reappointment or non-reappointment of a faculty member on a term contract be observed. Although, in my view, the booklet on Conditions of Academic Appointment and Tenure protects this right, nonetheless, it is obvious that certain amendments will have to be made in order to make this right crystal clear. It is of paramount importance that this responsibility not be taken away from the senior members of a department or school by popular appeal to the students or, indeed, to other members of faculty, otherwise we face a very bleak future, indeed, in attempting to improve and upgrade our academic programmes and faculty." (cont'd on pge. 17)

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