

## Tenure-in need of redefinition

by Michael MacNeil

The issue of academic tenure has periodically generated debate among those universities where it is an institution.

Tenure is essentially a guarantee of academic freedom through the appointment of a professor to an academic position without definite terms. Thus, a professor may not be discharged without good evidence that his conduct has been either detrimental or non-productive to the university

community as a whole.

The prime difficulty throughout the years has been that "good conduct and productivity" have been undefined. The recent firing of tenured university professor Larry Chamberlain at the University of Western Ontario has once again demonstrated that academic freedom varies from individual to individual. The conditions of appointment at UWO (which a tenured professor must maintain throughout the term of his tenure) are "ability in teaching, research and publication and general contribution to the university", all of which are largely undefined and subject to the judgment of the president of the university.

The president in turn is expected to act on recommendations from members of the individual's faculty.

While the information from UWO is as yet sketchy, it would appear that Chamberlain was not teaching satisfactorily, not was he publishing any research material. If the grounds of poor teaching are valid, there did not appear to be any reason to retain Chamberlain as a teacher, but the second criterion is questionable. While the reasons for publication are not apparent to the average student, research is a means whereby grants may be obtained. This also serves to attract graduate students and gives the university a certain amount of prestige.

As was stated, Chamberlain was originally charged with poor teaching, but the crux of the matter certainly appears to have been Dr. Chamberlain's lack of publication.

What is significant in the Chamberlain case is that the whole concept of tenure has been thrown open to question again.

If Chamberlain was indeed a poor teacher, why should the case for dismissal have weighed so heavily on his failure to publish?

And if he indeed did not publish, but was in fact a good teacher, (as was claimed), should the first criterion override the second?

In either case, because of the vagueness of the conditions for granting tenure in the first place, such non-academic criteria as compatibility with the powers-that-be in the department in question may enter the issue.

Also, the general prejudices of the university administration in terms of "General Contributions to the University"

may cloud the issues of hiring and firing.

For reasons to be discussed later, the issue of tenure procedure needs major redefinition and justification. While it is essential that academic freedom be enjoyed by both academicians and students alike, enough cases of refusal of tenure and firing have arisen in the academic community to question that the present methods of tenure do indeed guarantee academic freedom.

NEXT: Tenure at the University of Alberta.

## letters

### Ghost writer

I have read with interest the two letters recently appearing in *Gateway*, one from Ms. D. Budd and one from W. Finn.

As an observer, it seems to me that the C.S.A. of A. will never convince the majority of non-academics of the capabilities of their organisation all the while they feel the necessity of using a "ghost writer" to put



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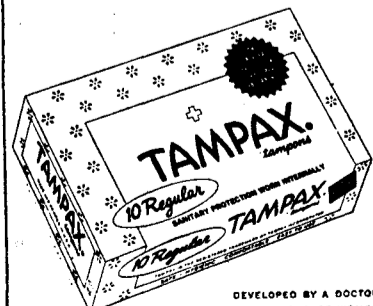
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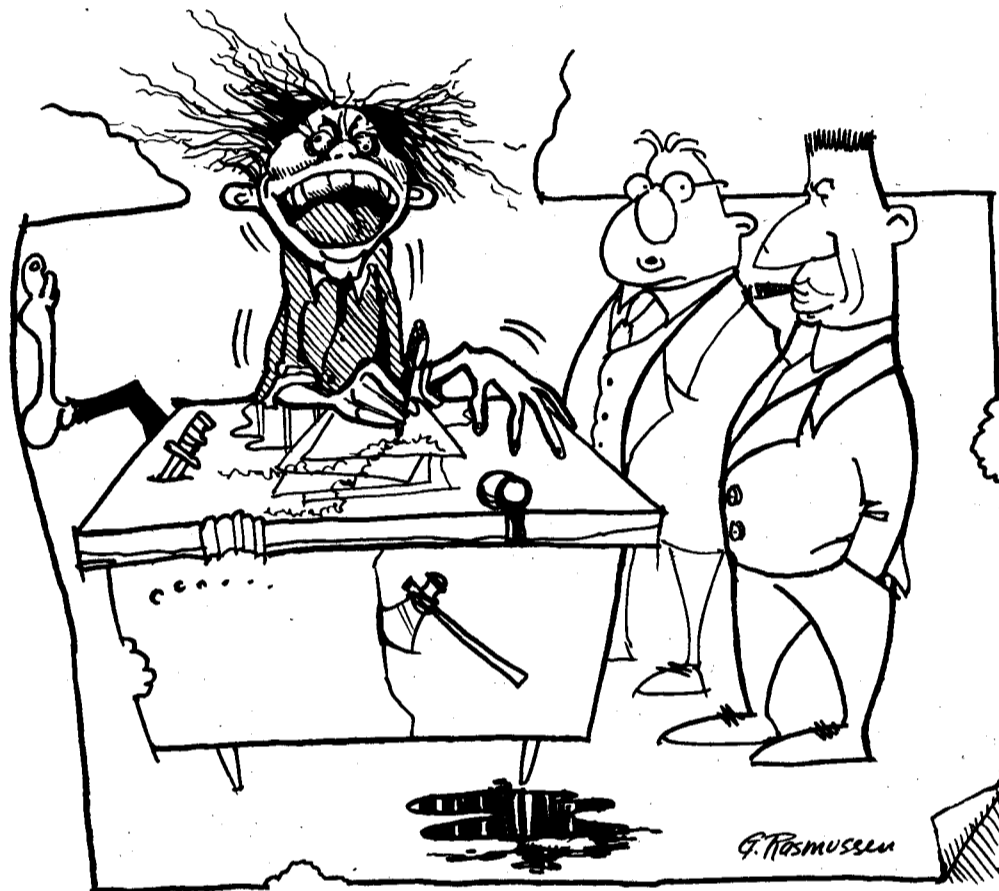
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