

tenure debate: battle lines drawn

by Candace Savage

Does tenure really safeguard academic freedom? Does it protect the incompetent? What are the procedures for dismissal of tenured staff? Are the rights of individuals respected?

Some of these questions will be discussed at the special GFC meeting on tenure which will be held next Monday, November 20th at 2 p.m. in GFC Chambers. And the rhetoric should be ringing for the battle lines between faculty and students—have been clearly drawn—at least on paper.

Basis for the debate is the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on tenure procedures which proposes that two types of contracts be implemented to replace the present probation-tenure system.

The committee would retain permanent appointments which can be terminated only "upon proof of adequate cause", in addition, it would provide for term appointments of "not more than three years."

The committee "fully recognizes that academic freedom is essential to the carrying out of the primary functions of the university in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and understanding through teaching and research."

All the same, it admits that "academic freedom and tenure of appointment carry with them an obligation to ensure the maintenance of the highest standards of academic and professional competence and performance by the members of the Faculty."

'Tenure report inadequate'

-Delaney

SU vice-president academic, Patrick Delaney yesterday criticised the university for a cursory reappraisal of its policies in the field of tenure.

In commenting on an ad hoc committee report, Delaney said that the committee established by General Faculties Council had not adequately discharged its task.

The committee was charged with "considering the whole question of probation and tenure as a form of appointment, and, if it is to be retained, to undertake a comprehensive review of the current procedures to see how they have failed". "In presenting its two page report, the Committee has overlooked the task it has been set," stated Delaney.

According to Delaney, it is "the students' union view" that the report is unnecessarily vague in a number of important areas. The committee continually refers to "appropriate action" or "appropriate procedures" for selection, appointment or review of professors and the granting of tenure. It does not at any time suggest what these "appropriate" procedures or action should be, Delaney charged.

In his opinion, the report's greatest weakness is that it fails to deal with two of the crucial issues in the granting of tenure: the criteria to be used in granting tenure, and the method of assessing these criteria. The report offers no convincing argument for the continuation of tenure. It is a shallow and at times arrogant report, he charged. The committee has assumed that tenure is the right of all professors and has not answered the questions being made of the tenure system.

A special meeting of the University's General Faculties Council will be held on Monday November 20th to debate the report of the Ad Hoc Committee. At this meeting an amendment will be moved to delete that section of the report which recommends the continuation of tenure, Delaney promised.

It suggests changes primarily to allow the university to respond flexibly "to changing financial dictates from our government and society."

When the report was originally submitted to GFC executive—two years ago—it was criticized for its vagueness. These charges have recently been reiterated by the students' council.

The students' council recommends that tenure should be abolished and replaced by a "system of five-year renewable contracts for all full-time staff." Staff would be hired and reviewed by committees on which students had substantial representation. "In no case should teaching effectiveness be rated at less than 50%" when the decision to hire or renew a contract is made, the brief insists.

Should GFC not decide to abolish tenure, the students' council has prepared "motions which might make the system more tolerable". Chief amongst them are the recognition of teaching ability as the

single most important factor in tenure deliberations and the appointment of students to tenure committees.

According to a \$2,000 report prepared for the students' union by Pan-Alta Management, the granting of tenure has a negative effect on teaching ability. When Course Guide ratings of "the professor's general abilities as an instructor" were correlated with the status of his contract, it was discovered that ratings of tenured professors were consistently lower than those of their probationary colleagues.

The results, for the three largest faculties, were as follows:

Education	
probationary	4:19
tenured	3:79
Science	
probationary	3:64
tenured	3:46
Arts	
probationary	3:78
tenured	3:67
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Thursday, November 16, 1972

the gateway

Edmonton, Alberta vol. 63 no. 20

fee referendum

SUB service cuts again loom

On Wednesday, November 29, students will be asked to o.k. a change in the SU budget which would increase SU revenue without raising fees.

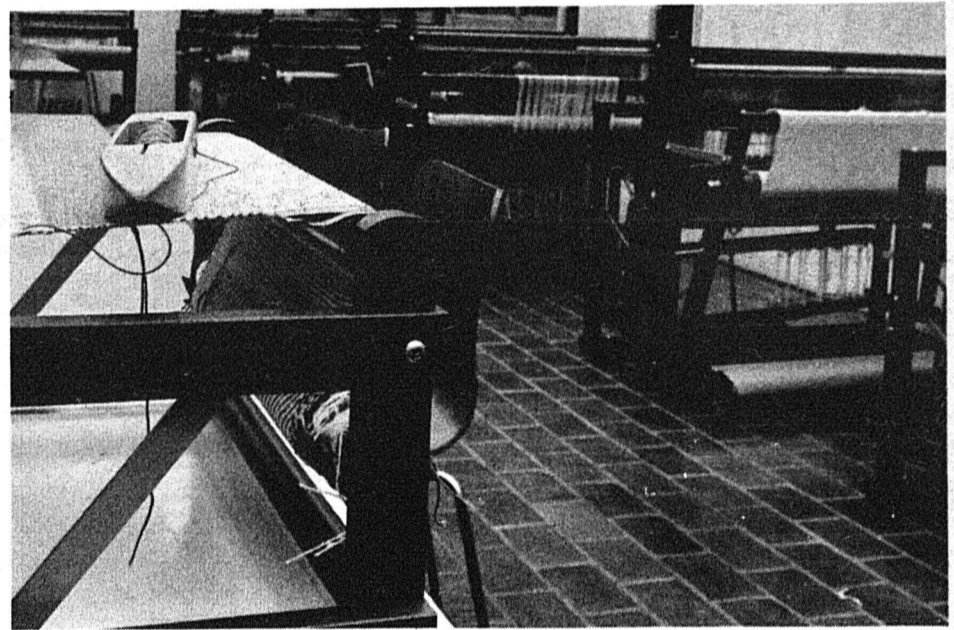
If students' council acts on the recommendation of the administration board, the referendum ballot will pose two questions: Should the SUB expansion fees be diverted into the general revenues and should the \$100,000 expansion reserve be replaced with a capital equipment replacement reserve?

Since 1969, full-time students have paid \$3 per year into the dormant SUB expansion reserve. "We're definitely not going to expand this building," SU v-p finance Garry West asserted yesterday. Unless the fees are diverted into the general revenue, he said, money will continue to pile up, but it won't be available to meet the increasing costs of operating SUB and other SU services.

If the reserve which has already accumulated is opened to immediate use, it will pay for the up-keep of SUB—replacing the stage in the theatre and replacing the floor in Dinwoodie, for example.

West suggested that the ballot should also provide the option of eliminating the \$3 fee altogether. But he warned that if the change is not authorized, services will have to be eliminated next year.

"They've already been cut back to a minimal level. Now there are no obvious targets. Last year, you could save a lot of money by cutting one service—the art gallery, but that won't work this year"



A fate similar to that of the late-lamented art gallery may await other student services in next year's budget if council does not get approval to free SUB expansion funds for other capital costs. The former gallery is now used as a crafts area to bring in additional revenue.

He named the Course Guide and the Gateway as two amongst the services which would be threatened if revenues weren't increased.

He said that the U of A has comparatively low students' union fees. "Our size enables us to have a low fee structure and still do something really worthwhile," he explained.

Also included in the referendum will be a CKSR's request for money to enable it to do FM broadcasting. It would cost each student at least \$5 or \$6 beginning next year, and it is possible, according to West, that additional increases would be required to meet costs in about five years. cs

'promote into oblivion' prof says

his salary decreased due to promotion.

"While the university could not fire an incompetent or lazy person, it could promote him into oblivion and insolvency," Huston says.

"Thus there is a strong incentive to continue to be productive. This is the reverse of the present situation whereby the tenure professor cannot be fired and therefore has a strong incentive to do nothing."

No one could stay in a bracket longer than 10 years under Huston's system; it would take a competent person 40 years to reach the senior professor level, while "a real dud would get promoted to senior prof in five years."

The basis of Huston's proposal is that universities should be prepared to pay a high cost during the youthful creative years, and a low cost in the stagnant years. No new appointments would occur

after age 25.

The teaching of students would be permitted down to, and including, professors. Senior professors would not be permitted to teach and would constitute a pool from which administrative officers and committee personnel would be drawn.

"The Huston Inverse Salary System provides a group of effective incompetents from whom to draw administrators. It may be argued that this is no change from the present situation but the HISS assures incompetence and does not leave it to chance."

Particularly appropriate in light of B.C.'s present government is Huston's assertion that: "Politicians feel ill at ease in the presence of intellectual ability."

"The use by the universities of senior incompetents will facilitate rapport with governments."