

# The Gateway

Member of the Canadian University Press

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**STAFF THIS ISSUE:** A baker's dozen staffers turned up Tuesday for our twelfth-to-last press night. Age coming before beauty, they were: Jim MacLaren, Richard Vivone, Andy Rodger, Ralph Melnychuk, Marion Conybeare, Marna Marsh, Sheila Ballard, Lorraine Minich, Lorraine Allison, Don Moren, Maureen Love, The Whistler, and your truly, Harvey Thomgirt.

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## ability or compatibility?

During the past month two assistant professors in the department of philosophy have gone through sheer psychological hell while an advisory committee of the Vice-President deliberated over their fitness to remain on the staff of the University of Alberta.

David Murray and Colwyn Williamson were first informed January 3 that they would be denied tenure, and immediately initiated action to have the decision appealed.

The Vice-President reconvened the original committee, which, after several meetings reached an identical decision.

Allegations of incompetence, political manoeuvring, and downright maliciousness against certain faculty members directly connected with the committee have cast serious doubts on the objectivity of the decision. These allegations may or may not be true, but as a direct consequence of them, the campus has buzzed with uninformed speculation ever since Jan. 3. And the unreasonable silence of the administration has further aggravated the situation.

Any decision regarding professors directly affects students. Students have the greatest interest in good teaching, for it is their future which depends on the education they obtain here.

The tenure committee in its wisdom has decided that Mr. Murray and Mr. Williamson are not good enough for this campus. Why?

As we understand, the current criteria for judging a tenure case are teaching ability, competence in scholarship, and general value to the department and the university community. Practically every student who has studied under these two individuals has praised them for being excellent teachers. Noted professional philosophers have commented favorably on the scholarly work of these gentlemen.

Mr. Murray, as an active participant in the Film Society and Studio Theatre, has made a valuable contribution to our academic community. Although our political opinions differ widely with those expressed in Mr. Williamson's publication, Commonsense, nevertheless we feel that he has helped stimulate political discussion and awareness among students at this university.

Members of the philosophy department have suggested that personal incompatibility with other members of the department was the basis for the decision. If this is so, why were not the two professors involved persuaded to resign quietly and seek jobs elsewhere? Now, the stigma of tenure denial lies over

their heads; and it could conceivably be difficult for them to obtain good positions elsewhere.

There have been suggestions that if Mr. Murray and Mr. Williamson go, the philosophy department will have trouble obtaining good professional philosophers. A member of the philosophy department has already expressed concern that the whole university may become black-listed in academic circles.

This may or may not be true, but we are extremely concerned that its possibility has even been mentioned.

University President Dr. Walter H. Johns, in a recent address to a city group, said it is becoming difficult to obtain top calibre professors. Because of this difficulty the university should move with extreme caution in this affair.

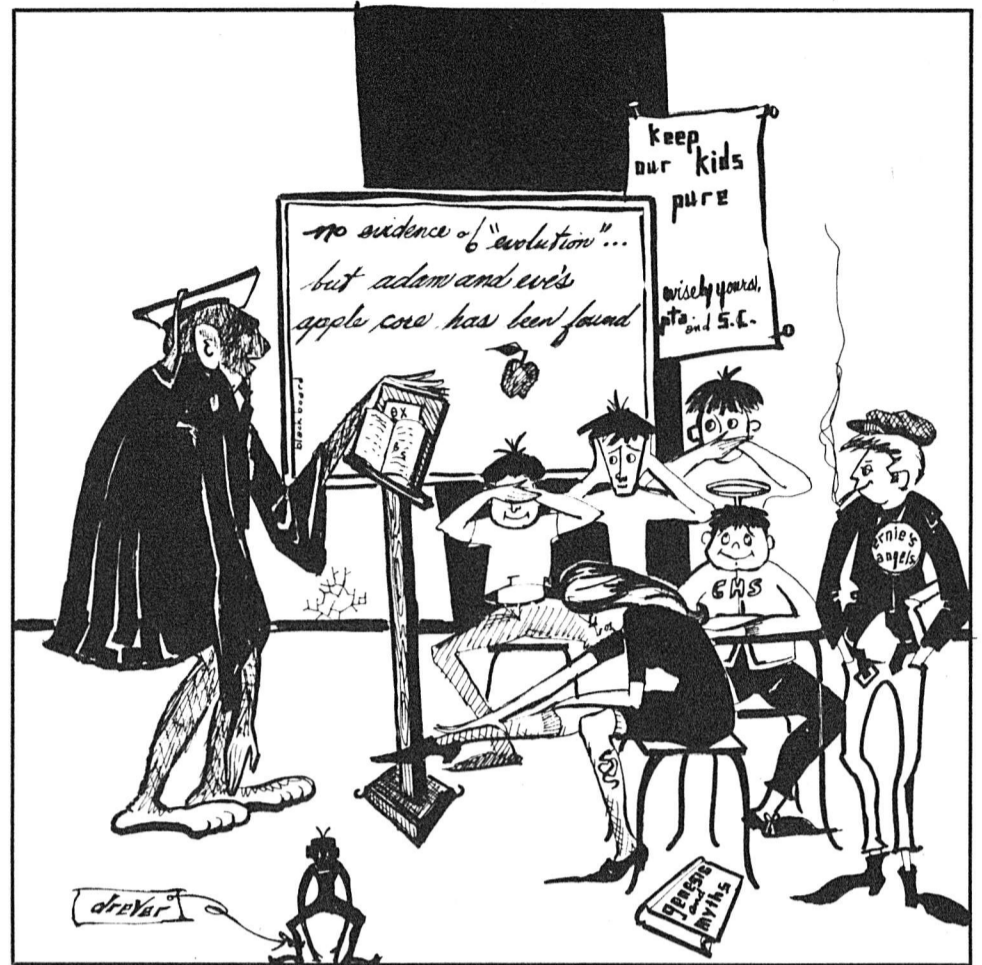
The administration argues that this is a personal matter, and can best be settled in the secret confines of the university bureaucracy—in fact in such secret confines that the professors involved are not allowed to appear personally before the committee that judges them. All submissions must be written.

In this particular case, the normal procedure has led to all sorts of wild allegations and rumors. For example, it has been alleged that the tenure committee's recommendation is the direct result of personal jealousies and antagonisms of certain philosophy department members. It has also been alleged that the head of the philosophy department personally rigged the committee to guarantee the two offensive personalities would be removed. We find it hard to believe that educated and intelligent men would act in this fashion.

If the allegations are false, then the administration has nothing to hide by issuing a direct statement of why tenure has been denied. The whole matter would then be cleared up. But silence has led to a serious loss of confidence by the students in the university administration and faculty, based largely on rumors which the individual is not in a position to justify for himself.

This newspaper first learned January 3 that Mr. Murray and Mr. Williamson had been denied tenure, but decided to remain silent so that emotionalism would be excluded from the committee's *in camera* deliberations. It appears that university officials have now settled the matter to their own satisfaction, but their inability to dispel widespread murmuring leads one to wonder whether a gross injustice has been done to all residents of this academic community.

Has there?



evolutionlessness in alberta schools

## publish or perish

by doug walker

It is a common complaint made of professors and of the university administration that the need to "publish or perish" in order to be promoted hinders a professor's classroom performance and in effect cheats the undergraduate student out of time that is somehow rightfully his.

This complaint found its way into The Gateway last week (and not for the first time) in an editorial which stated, "And furthermore, many of them (the complaints) are being written in the minds of first year students who are being victimized by a system which requires professors to spend more and more time publishing articles and books, doing research or teaching graduate students—and less and less time working on their undergraduate courses."

This conception, or misconception as the case may be, is refuted very forcefully by Arthur Mizener, a professor of English at Cornell University, in a recent issue of The Atlantic. "The idea that universities select their faculties on some mindless principle of publish or perish is so ludicrously childish that it will not take in even a foolish undergraduate," says Professor Mizener.

The fact that universities have been unable to keep pace with a hugely expanding student population contributes to a feeling of unrest on the part of the students. This heightens their suspicion that the professors are ignoring them for the sake of publication, and is one way in which students show their mis-

understanding of the structure and function of a university faculty.

Professor Mizener divides the university faculty into three distinct and easily recognizable groups. The first contains what may be called the true scholar—a man who is in perfect command of his area of specialty, and is actively concerned with expanding the frontiers of human knowledge. The second group is composed of men who, above all, are interested in making their lectures interesting, rather than contributing to the expansion of knowledge. If these lectures are enough to motivate the students to further study, then this in itself is not a bad thing, but too often, the students are merely diverted.

The third group forms the actual backbone of the university. It is made up of men who have a good command of their subject; who can organize and teach it, as well as organize and teach the new material discovered by scholars. These are the men whom the university is forced to promote or release on the basis of all too nebulous criteria, but quantity of publication is not one of them.

How is one to judge whether a man will become a good teacher? He may spend a great deal of time with his students and consequently be very popular, but have too little time to prepare his subject material adequately. He may cloister himself with his work—and publish extensively—but then he will have too narrow an outlook to become a good teacher.

What is the solution to the dilemma? It would seem to be in the present system, a system far from perfect, but hopefully based on the knowledge and the good judgment of a group of responsible administrators.