

letters

none of my business

To The Editor:

I would like to comment on Paul Robinson's letter (Gateway, March 11) on the tenure case because it is none of my business . . . as it is none of his.

He, as a student of another university, is in even less of a position to know the real facts of this case than we, as students of this university, are.

The student body here has been very much aroused by the tenure issue. But on what grounds? We are expected to choose sides on the grounds of rumours and counter-rumours, statements and counter-statements but without access to any official information. We are not helped by emotional campaigns from outsiders, like Robinson. His Shakespearean statements . . .

"You have slandered a man; now you want to buy his silence." and highly emotional words . . . 'dangerous,' 'bizarre,' 'shameful,' 'scurrilous' . . . do not encourage clear thinking.

And who is Robinson? A student who knows not one of the people he is condemning and who has had perhaps a dozen words in passing with the person he is praising.

Mr. Robinson has published, in a major student publication, a statement based entirely on hearsay information. He has quoted private correspondence on a confidential issue and quoted it out of context. This latter information was rightly couched in cautious ("non-committal") terms because of its private nature and, even in these guarded terms, was expressed only out of a sense of fairness to a prospective applicant. Here is one of Robinson's quotes suitably trimmed by him. Note the dots.

"the matter of their tenure got the fullest consideration and . . . in my opinion, no injustice was done."

Surely to quote private information in this manner—juxtaposing phrases and omitting parts to suit his personal polemic—is unethical and unphilosophical, if not in fact libellous.

The entire letter is written in terms more apt for a politician than a philosophy student. In fact, information from a friend in Toronto indicates that Paul Robinson is more interested in Political Science than Philosophy. Surely this is not a man to pinion any philosopher of our university in inverted commas! Surely this is not a man to catalogue the people in our department since, with his diverse academic background, it is doubtful that he would have proven to be a "first-rate" addition himself!

Who then is this presumptuous student to look a prospective gift-horse in the mouth? His letter is filled with vague generalizations . . .

"a judgment on tenure under existing rules must be based almost exclusively on competence."

and safe passive tenses . . . "I had been led to believe," "Conditions have revealed themselves," "It would appear" . . . and pat phrases by which he presumes to sum up pontifically a highly complex situation about which he knows nothing at first hand.

Such arrogance smacks of a distinctly Eastern attitude. How does he know the rules by which our university is run? Has he read our constitution? Did he bug the tenure meetings? Or is he in fact just operating on unvalidated information which he has used freely and irresponsibly.

Here we have an excellent example of the effective use of revolutionary tactics. This man has made a very dedicated effort to undermine authority by a direct appeal to the student masses.

He has used emotive language and carefully edited quotations. He has slipped over issues he cannot be in a position to understand with generalizations and indirect sentences. And under the guise of righteous protest, he has made the

strongest possible effort to subvert the student body against the authority of the Philosophy Department and the University.

I respect every philosopher I have had contact with at this university, and I refuse to be forced into taking sides and establishing categories of "goodies" and "baddies."

I am deeply disgusted at this brash interference from outside. This much publicized situation is still a private issue and neither I nor any other student on this campus should be expected or encouraged to pass judgment on his professors.

Yours truly,
E. Wyoma Hatchard
graduate student
department of philosophy

the use of genocide

To The Editor:

I read Prof. L. C. Green's letter in your last issue with considerable interest and found I could not agree with some of the statements contained in it. I have no wish to try to read Prof. Green any lessons in international law, and indeed would be foolish to try to do so. I

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this is page 5
it really is page 7
page 6 is also
page 5
and so
is page 8

do, however, take very strong exception to his apparent claim that international law has in some way acquired the right to legislate the use of words in the English or any other language. The term "genocide" has a number of uses, none of which are invalidated by the fact that it also happens to be a technical legal term as well.

I should also like to point out that legal and emotive uses are not the only possible alternatives when considering the use of a word like "genocide." The term also clearly has a generally descriptive use: "The effect of these actions will produce

the same results as a deliberately adopted policy of genocide." Perhaps Prof. Green will consider me too much of a pragmatist if I render this statement as "This is genocide," but I am certain that I will be generally understood. Similarly the term 'genocide' may be used simply as a morally evaluative word. This use would follow on the interpretation that I have just suggested but would add to the assertion that a certain state of affairs exists the further assertion that I disapprove of it.

I should further like to point out that a similar looseness of usage



occurs with regard to many words in our language and the abolition of it would render our conversation pedantic and intolerable.

I would like to thank Prof. Green for the fact and opinion contained in his letter. I find them both worthwhile and interesting. I sincerely hope that Prof. Green will be less hesitant to express his views publicly in future, for I believe I speak for a considerable number of students when I say that his contribution to this discussion will be eagerly welcomed.

T. W. Goodenough
grad. studies

the errors in your letter

Mr. Paul Robinson,
Department of Philosophy,
University of Toronto,
Toronto, Ontario.

Dear Mr. Robinson:

I am writing in consequence of your sending me a copy of your long, confused and often incorrect statements in your letter to Professor Mardiros regarding the Murray-Williamson cases at this university. You have evidently been a recipient of a great deal of misinformation which you have not bothered to verify despite my offer in a previous letter to answer any questions which you might have. To help you in obtaining correct information, I am enclosing a copy of the public statement of the Association of the Academic Staff of the University of Alberta, Edmonton, in regard to this matter.

May I point out some additional errors in your letter. You state on page 2 that a judgement of tenure under existing rules must be based exclusively on competence, both scholarly and pedagogical. This is not correct, since the agreed rules at the University of Alberta include service to the university as well as teaching ability and scholarship. Service to the university, as you will recognize, has its negative, disservice to the university, and I for one would contend that disservice may be adequate grounds for denial of tenure.

GROUPS OF COMPETENCE

You state that Murray and Williamson had been led to believe from the start that the denial of tenure rested primarily on grounds of competence. This is, I believe, at least a partial misstatement of fact. I think a correct way of putting the matter would be to say, that owing to the dissatisfaction expressed with regard to their service to their department, that their scholarship and teaching ability were not considered by the Tenure Committee to be a sufficient counterweight to justify granting tenure. I explained this in my previous letter. Here it is necessary to remind you what you have apparently forgotten, that tenure, to have real significance, must provide for different treatment of tenured and untenured persons. It is clear that untenured persons are taken on at the university to prove their worth and that they are likely to make a contribution to the university. This implies that there must be considerable discretion available to those who recommend for tenure or against it. It also implies that it is as important to deny tenure when it is undeserved as to provide it when it is.

You state that it is an "undeniable fact that some members of the committee then came to believe that you had misled them and that they must reverse their initial decision on tenure." Once again you are simply wrong. The reconvening of the Tenure Committee was on the basis of the recommendation of the Academic Welfare Committee of this Association. Anyone who says that some members of the committee "then came to believe that you had misled them and that they must reverse their initial decision on tenure" simply is basing himself upon supposition rather than fact. The same applies to your statement that such members as you describe above could simply be outvoted by those who were prepared to use "any excuse to deny tenure to Murray and Williamson."

You are additionally wrong when you state that "either the rules of tenure have been contravened or else the rules are exceptionally loose and dangerous." I would submit that if you examine the rules of tenure presently practised across Canada you will find that they are just as loose and dangerous as the ones under which we operate, probably more so. Further, I would contend that insofar as the participation of the Staff Association in the governing of the university we are far in advance of any other Canadian university of which I have knowledge. You twist my statement when you imply that I have suggested that the rules are exceptionally loose and dangerous. I said "We have reservations about the present tenure procedure," and that statement is still correct and it is also correct that we are working very hard to improve them. We are confident that improvement will be achieved as I told you in my previous letter.

DISTORTION

It is also necessary for me to correct what appears to be another distortion from my previous letter. As you will note in the statement of the Staff Association Executive, the tenure agreement at this university provides for six months' notice which both Professor Murray and Professor Williamson received. Our argument that the notice was inadequate was based upon our contention that six months is not a sufficient period and that the timing of the tenure decision in these cases was particularly unfortunate. In my letter to you I said, "We are convinced that Professors Murray and Williamson did not receive adequate notice etc." This conviction was based on moral rather than legal grounds.

It think it is correct to say that the matter of the tenure of Pro-

fessors Murray and Williamson did receive the fullest consideration and you will note that in the opinion of the Welfare Committee and the Executive of the Staff Association that the procedures used in handling this matter did conform to the tenure agreement and conformed to a proper standard for a fair hearing. It seems to me, therefore, to go beyond the facts for you to conclude that Professor Mardiros "acted wrongly throughout this tenure procedure."

I think you should be aware of some other facts which are not value judgements.

1. Professor Williamson's article was rejected by some philosophy journals before being accepted by a political science journal.

2. Professor Williamson did not publish any important scholarly material during the period in which he was on probation before being considered for tenure. The interpretation of these facts is disputed but they are facts as Professor Mardiros indicated.

3. The information that Professor Murray and Professor Williamson were considered to be incompetent was made public by Professors Murray and Williamson via communications to students in their classes. They have a right to make such communications if they so desire but not the right thereafter to claim that they have been slandered by such communications or their consequences. This is particularly the case since at the time they communicated this information to the students they had not exhausted the review procedures and appeal procedures of this university and had not had their cases dealt with by this Association. The Association did clarify any misunderstanding that may have arisen over the reasons for denial of tenure. They were not, therefore, in a position of having to use a public fight as the only means left to them at that time to obtain clarification or justice.

BOUND TO SILENCE

No one other than the members of the Tenure Committee itself, who were bound to silence, and to a lesser extent our own Academic Welfare Committee, were aware of the proceedings of the Tenure Committee. It was proper, therefore, that Professors Price, Cohen and Kemp, in writing to The Gateway, did not discuss the issues on which the Tenure Committee reached its decision. It is poor logic than to conclude that because they did not deal with such a matter as disruption in the department in these letters that this can

be taken as evidence that there was no disruption. Here I am not attempting to confirm or deny the existence of disruption but simply pointing out, if you will forgive me, your poor logic.

You refer to a broadcast in which you allege that Professor Williamson was slandered with a charge of incompetence once again. It is evident that you did not hear this broadcast and it is further evident that you have not heard the broadcasts made by Professor Williamson on the radio and the interview given by him and published in The Gateway. I think the charges of slander could be made by a variety of persons concerned in this case, not only Williamson. Indeed, I think the charge might be made against you since you have used the words, "scurrilous activity, great jeopardy, shameful offer, bizarre business," etc. You have used these words without a full knowledge of the facts and without bothering to verify them. At the very least I consider your letter represents poor judgement and leads me to question your motives in this matter.

EMOTIONAL DESIRE

Finally, because you have made the following statement, "I can assure you with some degree of certitude, that no young philosophers from the University of Toronto will be available to relieve this situation in the foreseeable future" that your department should be aware that you are presuming to speak for them. In view of the facts which I have indicated above and which you can verify, if you care to take the trouble, that the Staff Association of this university has tried hard to achieve justice in the matter of Murray and Williamson and has succeeded in this case as in others in achieving significant advances over practices in most other Canadian universities, and expects to continue to do so, I find your letter disturbing and prejudiced. I hope that in the future you will take more trouble to verify the facts before you make public statements which can be considered damaging to this university and to many people in it. One can sympathize with your emotional desire to correct what you believe is an injustice. I would submit, however, the first necessity is to determine whether, in fact, injustice has been done and to whom—if you seek to correct injustice rather than to perpetrate it.

Yours sincerely,
E. E. Daniel, Ph.D.
President,
A.A.S.U.A.E.