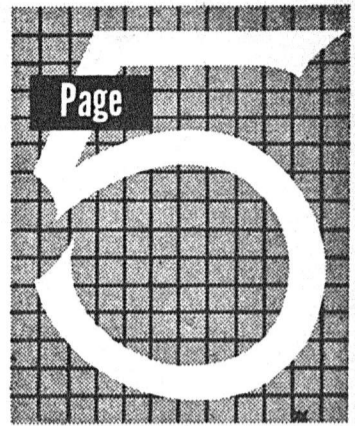


# an involved professor speaks



The Editor,  
The Gateway.

Dear Sir:

I was very gratified by Paul Robinson's letter to Professor Mardiros, and by The Gateway's decision to publish it (March 11th). This is the first published document which gets really to the heart of some of the moral issues in my tenure case: members of this university should have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the incredibly devious means by which my exit was finally procured.

Two considerations seem to have figured large in Mr. Robinson's decision to withdraw his application and to persuade other philosophers not to come to Alberta in the future: first, Professor Mardiros' unfounded aspersions on my academic competence and, secondly, the wildly contradictory accounts of the criteria employed to have me denied tenure. At this stage I do not intend to elaborate on the first point except to say that, apparently, the standards of intellectual propriety are very different at the University of Toronto: Mr. Robinson, unlike Professor Mardiros, has taken the trouble actually to read some of my work before evaluating it. (In passing: according to their letters in The Gateway of February 18th, Mr. Price thinks that I am "very competent" and Mr. Kemp, it seems, does not. Neither has read any of my work for publication and, needless to say, I would never discuss philosophy with either of them.)

I should like, however, to outline some of the facts relating to the second point, the criteria employed in my tenure case, because I think that I can clear up some of the confusion caused by the contradictory accounts given by various parties in the present dispute.

One story has it that the criteria for tenure are: (1) teaching ability, to which a weight of 60 per cent is attached, (2) scholarly work, valued at 30 percent, and (3) contribution to the profession and society, worth 10 per cent. This story is, in its way, completely accurate. On January 20th, Dean Smith informed me (and he informed Professor Murray similarly) that the criteria governing my tenure case were the same as those set out in a document called "The Procedures for the Evaluation of Merit and Qualifications for Promotion," and he gave me an opportunity to study this document. "The Procedures," it should be noted, is not directly about tenure; it acquired official status only after the Dean's assurance that the criteria it contains are also those for tenure. And these criteria are identical with those described above. Furthermore, I understand that Dean Smith has subsequently insisted that these were the criteria employed in my case. Naturally, this has caused some puzzlement, because of the quantity of evidence affirming my teaching ability (e.g. Student Opinions) and because no-one on my tenure committee is acquainted with my philosophical work.

But what is even more puzzling is that, as now emerges from Paul Robinson's letter, Professor Mardiros has claimed, in writing, that questions of my teaching and technical competence were not major factors in the decision to deny me tenure. Since the criteria indicated by the Dean make teaching and technical ability overwhelmingly major factors (weighted at a total of 90 per cent), this means that Professor Mardiros is claiming that these were not the criteria employed, and that myself and others have been misinformed by Dean Smith.

As though this were not enough, we then encountered a further contradiction. Having written to Paul Robinson that academic ability was

not a major factor in my case, Professor Mardiros then proceeds to attack my teaching and philosophical competence on television, on radio, and in conversation with several people, even though his evidence in this regard is not better than when he began.

How can anyone make sense of all these absurdities? It seems that, by implication: (1) Dean Smith is saying that Professor Mardiros is not telling the truth, (2) Professor Mardiros is saying that the Dean is not telling the truth, and (3) Professor Mardiros is calling himself a liar. Only one thing is completely clear: the accounts given by Dean Smith and Professor Mardiros are full of contradictions, such that it is impossible for everything that they have said to be true.

The key to these contradictions and falsehoods, as Mr. Robinson

correctly infers, is to be found in the fact that the criteria switched from the first to the second tenure committee meetings. And this probably happened because, as Mr. Robinson reasons, some members of the tenure committee came to believe that Professor Mardiros misled them in the first meeting. In any case, it is certainly believed by many people who have investigated the case that Professor Mardiros did present seriously incomplete or misleading evidence to the tenure committee. Hence, since the criteria originally employed could no longer be used to procure my expulsion, it was necessary that different criteria be adopted; and the Dean's information about the relevant criteria was already out of date.

Now, all of this is morally disreputable and, as Mr. Robinson says, scurrilous. But what is to be done about it? Mr. Robinson himself has

decided that he is not prepared to countenance being in a department run by Professor Mardiros, and to urge other philosophers to take the same view—in effect to blacklist the Department of Philosophy. The first useful move in this direction is for students and faculty members to communicate with their friends and acquaintances in other universities, and I understand that something of this kind has already begun.

Since the appearance of Mr. Robinson's excellent letter, I have several times been asked what view I take of a proposed campaign to bring about the resignation of one or two of the main villains in this theatre of the absurd. This demand is reasonable enough, but it is much too narrow. University bureaucrats are able to act badly only because the system itself is bad. All of the Star Chamber proceedings surrounding existing tenure practices

must be abolished.

Any campaign should, therefore, have two main slogans:

- the total reform of existing tenure procedures
- the resignations of Professor Mardiros and Dean Smith.

If these objectives are achieved, or even partly achieved, I shall feel that this whole tedious case has not been entirely worthless.

Yours sincerely,  
Colwyn Williamson  
Department of Philosophy

## an open letter

Sir:

I am not prepared to talk about the charges and counter-charges concerning what was said and not said in the Murray-Williamson dispute.

But I am prepared to talk about your responsibility and the responsibility of administration and AASUAE in that matter, and I will.

Administration is culpable in the case because it has not: (a) observed section 11 (a) Promotion, of the Interim Publication, Information for Members of the Academic Staff, setting out a principle of prior notification.

(b) You, yourself have told me that the four year tenure period is especially long here in order to provide full scrutiny of staff members. Williamson and Murray received full merit increments without question each year.

(c) The notice given them, abnormally short as it was, implying as it did (and as "Dimension" quoted in the name of the head of the Philosophy Department) incompetence in teaching and scholarship, was unprofessional and defamatory.

(d) The time taken to hear appeal was, on the part of the administration unnecessarily long, and, therefore, productive of ill feeling, suspicion, uncertainty, and pain in the minds of the men involved. The administration allowed procedures to be broken to come to its decision, and after the decision was reached.

Apart from the squibs let loose by the supporters of the administration, the vice-president, Dr. Wyman, has allowed in his name a quotation to appear in Gateway which he had no right to make or to let stand if he did not make it. The quotation: "This is a personal matter between the professors involved and the university administration," is provocative and misleading in a high degree.

The vice-president has written about another grievance the general principle that "valid decisions can be obtained from improper procedures . . ."

My conversation with you about the matter on Wednesday, February 16, did not lead me to believe that you are of any different conviction than the vice-president.

I assume, therefore, that the policy pursued by administra-

## to president Johns

**tion in this matter is a general one which demonstrates a contempt for procedures: the honourable procedures of professional men; the procedures and principles set down in this university; and the procedures that ordinary men would observe wherever they are reasonable and prudent citizens.**

I am acquainted with another case in which contempt for procedures on the part of administration is perhaps even more outrageous than the Murray-Williamson case.

But even so, the conclusion that one must draw from the Murray-Williamson case is that a precedent has been set, as follows:

Any head may, with the full support of the administration, dismiss a candidate for tenure by honourable or dishonourable meetings of tenure committee, despite the competence of the candidate as a teacher, a scholar, and a member of the university, and public community, for reasons which are not professionally acceptable, or if they are, without prior notification formally given, with undue haste, with hurt to the candidate's reputation, and with the abuse of procedures that any reasonable and prudent man might expect to operate in any institution in civilized society.

A precedent has also been set: **that, whatever may be said to the contrary, the head of a Department possesses absolute power. To disagree with the department head over matters however relevant to the life and vitality of the department and the university is to invite personal disaster.**

Not only do those precedents pour calumny on the heads of administration members, they also sew, and have sewn, and will continue to sew seeds of hatred, distrust, contempt, and scorn among all members of the university, especially those who must sit at arbitrary discretion upon the careers and characters of their fellows.

I am convinced also that the AASUAE has not moved with the speed, the assurance, and the clarity of position that it should have adopted early and held without vacillation. To the AASUAE must go much of the responsibility for the unhappy mud-slinging that has gone on and on in a case dragged out too long, too full of

uncertainties and unsure loyalties. I am not for a moment suggesting that loyalties should have been placed with the two candidates for tenure automatically. Loyalties should have been placed with principle and fundamentals of civilized procedure, written or unwritten.

The terms that were brought as a mixture of deliberations between AASUAE and the administration (though that is now denied) give a demonstration of the culpability of ASSUAE. The candidates for tenure were asked to give up in the matter liberties that fly in the face of the Canadian constitution, professional ethics, and simple human self-respect. That the terms were eventually withdrawn does not invalidate the fact that for a long time they were demoralizingly pressed.

**I do not blame individuals, specifically, in this case, because individuals who have no procedures to follow that command just action from them will be intemperate, blind, unjust and confused. Where real culpability lies is in the failure of procedures. And as the two men chosen to guide most wisely the conduct of the university, you and Dr. Wyman are the most to blame for having failed to see the needs early and for having failed to provide a remedy expeditiously to prevent the sorry precedent and general slander that have resulted in this case.**

An example of the general contempt in which the administration holds procedure is provided by the two members of a vice-president's committee, who by the nature of tenure committee agreement are bound to secrecy about deliberations. Those two men discussed relevant matters in public. Professor Mardiros used CBC television. Professor Price used Gateway letter column. When I wrote to the vice-president protesting the tenure committee violations, he refused to allude in his reply to the fact of any such violation as such.

The terms of the compromise solution have been named. They are unsatisfactory. Even if the men involved directly accept them, the terms are procedurally and as a result of the precedents they forge, unsatisfactory.

The compromise does not do away with the fact that a decision was

reached by a series of questionable and abused procedures (as even the AASUAE report accepts).

It does not do away with the ugly precedents involved.

It does not do away with the general knowledge that able men are being dumped for highly suspicious, even secret reasons.

The terms of the compromise still openly reject the men, extend their term demeaningly, and forbid suggestions that they might be honourable men deserving of the fellowship of the academics of this university.

The men are still fired, still demeaned, still defamed, still placed in a position of contempt by unjust means for unacceptable reasons.

**If the two men are not returned to their positions without conditions; and if universal procedures are not passed binding upon all parties, procedures the abuse of which automatically invalidates decisions; and if the procedures are not passed by the end of the present contract year; then I submit by resignation from the university to underscore (a) the personal injustice done to the men, Murray and Williamson, who have been, by abuse and contempt of procedure, placed into a position which guaranteed that they would be at an unfair disadvantage incapable in the present circumstances of obtaining justice in the case; and (b) the precedent of jungle law that has been established with administration blessing (and it would seem the blessing of the AASUAE) in the dispute; (c) and the demonstrated unwillingness of all sides to demand justice in individual instances and for all future cases.**

I sincerely hope, sir, that the members of the university agree with me in this matter and that they will act to force the conditions of this letter into general law.

If I am angry, I am angry that a community of so-called intelligent men, as we presume ourselves to be, members of a free nation, could allow ourselves such savagery as has arisen in this case, and that I should find myself in a position that this is the only letter, by conscience, I can write to you at this time.

Sincerely,  
R. D. Mathews