



letters

a plea

To The Editor:

As a member of the philosophy department, I wish to make it plain that I have authorized **no one** to act as a spokesman in my behalf, and that the only official voice of our department is the head, Professor Mardiros, in whom I have complete confidence.

Second, the cases of Professors Murray and Williamson have been handled in a fair and thorough manner. The procedures followed involved two sittings of the tenure committee, a hearing before the Academic Staff Association and interviews by the Dean of the Arts Faculty with every member of the Philosophy Department. In addition, written testimony was obtained from persons no longer at the University.

Third, in their cases, as is usual in all considerations for tenure throughout North America, several criteria were employed: (1) teaching ability, (2) scholarship, (3) service to the University. One should keep this fact in mind, and in the absence of exact and reliable information one should be cautious about accepting informal reports on what factors were decisive in their cases.

Fourth, it is absolutely untrue that anyone else is leaving the Department because Professors Murray and Williamson are not receiving tenure. As is normal in a department of our size some men will not be here next year, but **in every instance** their departure will be in connection with plans made prior to, and independently of, this situation. The rest of us are staying.

Fifth, although it would have been pleasanter for all concerned if things were not as they are at the moment, I can see no real or permanent damage to the Department. Everyone has a right to his feelings, and at a time like this emotions can run pretty high; but dire predictions about the future of the Department, however understandable as expressions of personal sympathy, are hardly acceptable as reasoned estimates.

Finally, I urge everyone concerned to act decently and intelligently. For those who feel injustice has been perpetrated, there are responsible channels for further appeal; for those who are curious, there are accurate sources of information. To indulge in rumormongering and backstairs gossip is as useless as it is foolish—or worse.

Maurice Cohen
department of philosophy
associate professor

shocked

To The Editor:

I was shocked and dismayed when I learned through Gateway, that professor Colwyn Williamson of the department of philosophy has been denied tenure at this university for the coming term. Possible reasons for his dismissal have come to my attention, and, having been a member of one of his classes as well as having some slight acquaintance with the man, I would like to question the validity of those reasons most commonly proposed.

Officially, I believe, tenure cases are decided primarily on two grounds

nb

**"the time has come," the walrus said,
"to talk of many things—
of ships and seas and sealing wax,
of cabbages and kings."
—charles lutwidge dodgson**

—teaching ability and scholarship. It would be absurd to dismiss Mr. Williamson on these grounds in view of the fact that his approach to his subject matter is, among other things, most coherent, clear and concise. In his classes, no question was ever left unanswered, no questioner had need to feel unsatisfied, his great ability to reply to questions on any matter pertaining to the course—and his willingness to carry discussion beyond the limits of class time must rank well above that of the average lecturer on campus.

It has been suggested that Professor Williamson is a disruptive element in his department. It is true that no department should be forced to condone a person who by his actions does more harm than good; but it does not seem plausible that a man with so much to offer to students of philosophy, and who has such reliable qualifications to recommend him to us, could be in the least detrimental to the operation of a good philosophy department.

If it is true that he is a disruptive element, as is claimed, I say good; perhaps a little disruption will improve our department of philosophy. Disruptive elements are most often the elements of improvement, while complacency most often is the first step toward stagnation.

In view of the above, and in view of the fact that Mr. Williamson is well liked by his students, that his teaching is highly respected and that he is extremely well qualified. I sincerely hope that the university administration will reconsider its action and offer tenure to one of its ablest and most promising lecturers.

Bob Mallett
arts 2

misleading

To The Editor:

In was somewhat misleading when The Gateway, February 2nd, in an article on Professors Williamson's and Murray's tenure denial, referred to the journalists' source—or sources as: "the spokesman from department of philosophy." It may have deluded some semantically naive reader to believe that The Gateway had been in contact with an **officially appointed** spokesman for the whole department (including Professor Mardiros!) although I doubt it. It is probably more deceiving to **deny** that the informants were spokesmen for the department, as this will tend to induce the impression in the readers' minds that a majority of the department disagrees with the interviewee.

I, for one, agree with the general from a few formulations, e.g. "Neither is there any doubt in the minds of **those who are competent**, that both are able scholars", which seems to insinuate that anyone who does not think so is **eo ipso** not competent. It would be more correct to say that so far there is no one who has made an attempt to acquaint himself with the works of Williamson and Murray, who has not **also** found them to be competent scholars.

In Williamson's case, this includes some of the greatest names in modern philosophy. Neither do I know of more than one member of our department (except for Professor Mardiros and the non-tenure mem-

ber of the tenure committee and myself), who has not either expressed to the dean of Arts and to the tenure committee, or would be willing to do so (and here I include Professor Ted Kemp), that Professors Williamson and Murray are superior to any one of them as scholars and/or as teachers.

Between the two sets of meetings of the tenure committee, Murray and Williamson were made to believe that tenure is granted or denied dependent upon teaching ability, and scholarly work. On these grounds they were able to make their cases very strong before the reconvened tenure committee. It is no secret, however, that, to put it mildly: the emphasis in the reconvened committee changed from these alleged legitimate grounds to a question of compatibility; that in fact the whole question boiled down to a simple majority vote for Professor Mardiros vs. Professors Williamson and Murray. If this is considered just and correct tenure procedure, I believe I can speak for a majority of faculty members and administrators at this university when I claim that something must be done with this tenure procedure and with this notion of '(in)just(ice)'. To top it all, it can be added that there is at the most one member of our department (outside the tenure committee) who would claim to have had any difficulties in getting along with Professors Murray and Williamson.

It is absolutely untrue that no member of our department has resigned or will design because of the denial of tenure to Williamson and Murray. I also have reasons to believe that quite a few applicants for a position in our department have withdrawn their names, because of the Williamson-Murray case. Some graduate students are moving elsewhere for the same reason.

Finally, I agree that 'unnecessary cruelty' has been committed in this case. I have talked to other department heads. The consensus seems to be that, since a Head as a rule gets his way in a tenure committee, it is his moral responsibility to **inform** his colleagues of his intentions, in case his mind is set to do his best to sway the committee to deny these colleagues tenure. Williamson and Murray asked me on December 17th to try to find out what happened to their scheduled tenure committee. "Tell them not to worry" was the message I was to convey to them from Professor Mardiros. Whatever the intentions may be behind this utterance, it can certainly be said that were Professor Mardiros to attempt to communicate to Williamson and Murray that the outcome of the tenure committee was at least uncertain and that they should use their stay in New York to look for positions elsewhere, then the above quoted remark was a rather unhappy choice.

Consequently, with no evidence to the contrary, I have been bound to conclude that both Professor Mardiros and the administrators involved, have acted wrongly in denying Murray and Williamson tenure—wrongly, that is, both in an ethically relevant sense, and with a view to the future of our Department and this University.

However, I have a strong personal feeling of loyalty and gratitude to-

wards the administration of the University of Alberta—in particular to the president, the bursar and the chief of personnel—and I am, despite our different views in the tenure case at hand, and particularly if something is done to rectify the injustice prepared to offer Professor Mardiros my full co-operation, whole hearted support and unconditional loyalty in any attempt to salvage the wreckage of the philosophy department and in building up a new Department and, particularly, a strong graduate programme.

Herman Tennesen

denial

To The Editor:

In the Feb. 4 Gateway you have a news story on the denial of tenure to Professors Williamson and Murray of the philosophy department. In it you include a member of quotations purporting to come from an anonymous "department spokesman". This gives the impression that the "spokesman" was speaking for members of the department other than himself. The undersigned members of the philosophy department wish to point out that such is not the case.

The signers of this letter include all the members of the faculty of the department of philosophy:

E. W. Kemp
R. M. Wright
L. Tallon
Roger Shiner
H. Tennesen
George Price
Maurice Cohen
John M. Michelsen
David Murray
C. T. J. Williamson

This letter says that the spokesman did not speak for any members of the philosophy department other than himself. We never claimed he did. Our spokesman was "FROM" the philosophy department and was not THE SPOKESMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT, as some people seem to think.—The Editor.

wondering

To The Editor:

I hate to add to the already-considerable public gossip about internal affairs in the department of philosophy. Prudence and good taste clearly demand silence. However, since at least two of my professors, with whom I disagree on the matter of professors Murray and Williamson, have made public statements and since I have an important hard fact to insert into a great morass of rumor, I am doing so.

It is not true that no one in the department is leaving as a direct result of the dismissal of professors Murray and Williamson. I polled all the likely people last week and TWO professors and TWO students told me flatly that they were leaving as soon as other good positions could be found. They are not doing so in protest, but for the sounder reason that the department of philosophy will be a less worthwhile place in which to teach and work if these two men go.

Some members of the staff of the department cannot know this yet, because there are some members to whom this cannot at present be announced. In fact, one student who is now leaving has made his views known though only to a select number of the proper authorities.

However, the imminent departure of one-third (and among them two of the most senior people, Murray and Williamson) of the department must not be allowed to outweigh the central issue: the worth of these two professors.

Both men are first-rate teachers. Fifty-five of their students in a petition have attested to this. Both have read many papers at philosophical gatherings. And one of them has proved his work of publishable quality, though both are under thirty years of age. As a student, it appears to me that both have been outstanding in their efforts to render service to the department and to the whole university community.

It has been stated many times

that proper tenure procedure has been followed. However, given that both are good teachers, appear academically competent and appear to have given considerable extra, if sometimes controversial, service, given that accurate information has proved almost impossible for students at least to obtain, and given the high emotion that even students have observed over this issue, it is difficult for us to believe that justice has been rendered. I personally can see no objective reason for depriving the university of the services of these two first-rate men.

It is a pity that the so-called "spokesman from the philosophy department" weakened his case by referring to our department as 'the most exciting in Canada.' A year ago it was the most exciting west of the University of Toronto, in my opinion.

However—(a) now the department is split; (b) four out of twelve professors are leaving; (c) an undetermined number of good students are leaving; and (d) the most senior men next year (aside from professors Mardiros and Tennesen) will have been here for two years. The years ahead are a source of some wonder.

grad studies, philosophy
J. A. Brook

inside

To The Editor:

On behalf of INSIDE, I'd like to acknowledge the critique made by Miss Ypma (The Gateway, Feb. 2). In regard to some of her specific complaints:

● "Does the cover really say something . . . ?" Indeed it does. It says "INSIDE, vol ii, No. 2" (see the ABC of reading by E. Pound)

● . . . "If Robert Frost or Norman Rockwell had anonymously contributed their works, she (the editor) would have considered them the products of immaturity if not retarded minds . . ."

Admittedly Norman Rockwell has a degree of manual dexterity where draughtsmanship is concerned. And I am sure we are all fond of Robert Frost (see **The Wall** by Jon Whyte, inspired by Frost's "Mending", INSIDE 3, Coming Soon!) but I have yet to see the campus equivalent of either gentleman (G. L. Rockwell-Bassek, are you listening?)

● . . . my not-too-intelligent colleagues and myself could find a better purpose for INSIDE than using it for toilet tissue or cigarette papers . . ."

With luck we shall be able to sustain the quality of the magazine's stock, under the banners of SPITE, that is the Society for the Proliferation of Institutionalized Toilet tissue for Education students. You have expressed, The Need!

● "May I propose a student literary supplement for all . . ." Propose away, and my good wishes to you. But if you are really interested in doing something, be warned, there is a lot of work involved.

Better still, why don't you write for INSIDE?

Patricia Hughes
arts 3

re request

To The Editor:

I am compiling a book which will detail the aspirations and problems of youth in present-day Canada.

In order to prepare this book in time for our country's centenary next year I am asking the editors of all the university newspapers to pass along to the readers of their papers my request that my fellow students write to me.

The format of the letter is up to the individual, but I should like him to write on the problems faced by students in his area and the solutions to these problems, as they exist or as the student foresees them.

Your assistance in obtaining information for this book, tentatively titled "Letters From U." will be greatly appreciated.

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