



# letters

## neglected students

To The Editor:

This is written on behalf of the neglected students housed in the Old Education Building (E. A. Corbett Hall) which, believe it or not, is a part of the U of A campus. This building houses three faculties—Nursing, Rehabilitation Medicine and Drama—which involve a fair number of students, who are part of the University, who all pay their students' fees and who all feel they are eligible to receive the same services as student on the main part of the campus. For example, access to The Gateway (I've heard it's called). It is a rare occasion when The Gateway finds its way to our building. If a few copies do turn up they are usually two days to a week old. Without a Gateway how are we able to keep up on campus activities and offer our support to student affairs? A case in point are the present Student Council elections.

Exactly three nominees found the strength to make their way across campus to put posters in our building. As a result, we discovered elections were taking place but as to who was running for the offices we are completely in the dark. Where do we vote? Should we trek across campus to support these elections when no one takes the time to trek across to us and let us know what's going on?

I feel this situation should be examined and corrected. A university advocating student support, loyalty and participation should perhaps take a good look at just what kind of an effort they are making to deserve this support.

Majorie Robson  
p. h. nursing

## responsibility

8 March 1966

To The Editor:

The letter which appeared above my signature in the March 2, 1966 Gateway was written and handed into The Gateway sometime in January. I still accept full responsibility for its contents, but no responsibility for the date on which it appeared in The Gateway.

Ronald C. McMahon  
arts 3

## reading list

To The Editor:

In sympathy with John Kelsey (Modern Marriage: a Deteriorating Situation), I am forwarding an article entitled *Momism: Evils and Prevention*, for your perusal. It is highly recommended reading, especially for those who do not wish to perpetuate the "mom syndrome": that is to say, for university students in general, and in particular for Bruce Ferrier (Does Sex Exist?) as an antidote for his problem.

Further information can be obtained upon request. Some of the more elucidative titles include: *Marriage (Common and Marriage (Christian))*; *Pros and Cons*; *I was a Teen-Age Momist*; *From Butting to Divorce and Back Again*; *Memoirs by B. U. M. Deel*.

Judith A. Gill  
faculty of arts

a celebrated tenure case has implications

# edmonton can ill afford such a loss

March 5, 1966,  
Dept. of Philosophy  
University of Toronto.

Dear Professor Mardiros:

I regret to tell you that I must now withdraw my application for a position in your Department.

Since you and I first entered into correspondence last fall, conditions have revealed themselves which make it impossible for me to continue any further. The source of my discontent is, of course, the Murray-Williamson affair. I have written to you several times on this subject, and each time I have received answers which are either (1) non-committal, (2) impossible to verify, (3) in direct contradiction of other sources, or (4) patently false.

I think that my right to question you on these matters is undeniable. And I must make it clear again, that I am not a close friend of either Murray or Williamson, although I have met them briefly and I have corresponded with them. From the start, I have merely tried to ascertain the reasonableness of the action taken in your Department as an interested party.

One thing which was clear to me from the very beginning was Prof. Williamson's competence. I have read an article by him which is to appear shortly in CJEPS, on Hobbes, which is on the highest possible philosophical level. Perhaps I myself am not competent to judge these things. But I think you will agree that Prof. C. B. Macpherson is, and it was he who recommended this article for publication.

This question of competence is a crucial one; a judgement on tenure under existing rules must be based almost exclusively on competence (both scholarly and pedagogical) and both Murray and Williamson have, in fact, been led to believe from the start that the denial of tenure rested primarily on these grounds. With this in mind, knowing Prof. Williamson's competence and knowing the alleged reasons for denial of tenure, I wrote to you asking for an explanation. You informed me on January 31 that "philosophical competence was not a major issue." Yet no other reason was offered for denial of tenure. On February 15,

**"Either the rules of tenure have been contravened or else the rules are exceptionally loose and dangerous."**

in response to my inquiries, the President of the AASUAE, Dr. Daniel, assured me that "professional incompetence or lack of teaching ability are not reasons presented for the denial of tenure to Professor Williamson." But Dr. Daniel did supply the real reason: "it is incompatibility between Prof. Williamson, the department head and certain other members of the department." However, Dr. Daniel did not say that the normal tenure procedure had been circumvented. Yet, from what I can gather, the members of the first tenure committee were in fact told that Murray and Williamson were incompetent, and the victims themselves were told the same thing. And it is an undeniable fact that some members of that committee then came to believe that you had misled them and that they must reverse their initial decision on tenure. Thus the tenure committee was reconvened. But the change in mood of certain members had no practical result, because, in fact, they could simply be outvoted by those who were prepared to use any excuse to deny tenure to Murray and Williamson.

Either the rules of tenure have been contravened or else the rules are exceptionally loose and dangerous. I am not in a position to know which is the case. One

academic close to the scene informed me that the former was correct, yet Dr. Daniel seems to suggest that the latter is correct. "We have reservations about the present tenure procedure and I have good reason to believe that our reservations will be considered and acted upon by the administration in the near future."

It would appear from all this that a wrong has been acknowledged and that steps are being taken to right it. Moreover Murray and Williamson are to be allowed to stay for another year because, according to any number of observers and quoting Dr. Daniel again, Williamson and Murray "did not receive adequate notice of the proposed recommendation of Professor Mardiros or of the action of the Tenure Committee." That is, they are being allowed to stay because you acted wrongly. Yet you had assured me on January 31 that "the matter of their tenure got the fullest consideration and . . . in my opinion no injustice was done."

**"The fact remains, however, that both Murray and Williamson have been denied tenure and that you have acted wrongly throughout this tenure procedure."**

The fact remains, however, that both Murray and Williamson have been denied tenure and that you have acted wrongly throughout this tenure procedure. And to return to an earlier issue, I had been led to believe that Williamson had been denied tenure because he could not get along with other members in the Department. I believe now that (1) the charge concerning Williamson's incompatibility is questionable, and (2) you have since charged him once again with incompetence. With regard to the first point, I have in my possession statements from three members of your Department, apart from Murray, disputing this charge. Moreover, I have reason to believe that one member now on leave, and one on leave who resigned just recently, similarly would reject this charge. That leaves three senior members of your Department whose opinion we have yet to canvass. Let us turn to recent issues of Gateway. I find there statements by each of the three remaining members (namely, Price, Cohen and Kemp) who have supported the tenure decision; in one case do I find any indication of Williamson's troublemaking or disruptive influence. What I do find is Kemp disputing the evidence supporting Williamson's competence, Cohen stating the criteria for tenure cases, namely, competence (no mention of incompatibility as a reason), and Price discussing secondary issues which I want to comment on in a moment. Price does, however, make a very strange comment. He refers to, I presume, Williamson and Murray, as "my two very competent colleagues." This is a strange comment because Price was instrumental in the tenure proceedings; he was the only 'philosopher' apart from yourself, on the committee!

Strictly speaking, only Price and

yourself are in a position to know what the grounds for denial of tenure really were; this might explain why Cohen and Kemp stick to the rules of tenure. But this is to suggest again that you and Price did not believe that competence was at issue here. Why then, did you appear on a broadcast quite recently to charge Williamson with incompetence once again? If my sources of information are correct you said or implied the following: that Williamson's forthcoming article in CJEPS would not have been accepted for a philosophy journal, therefore his philosophical competence was still very much in doubt. If this is what you said or implied, I submit that you have made a very sad mistake. A philosopher of Williamson's calibre does not need a defence from anyone, much less from me. I can only suggest that you watch for the reaction to his article. In any case, if what he has written is not philosophy then there can be no place for me in your Department. Nor, in my opinion, for any competent philosopher.

The overriding point, however, is that you have either contradicted yourself or acted in bad faith. I wrote to you concerning the question of competence and you led me to believe that this was not a major issue. You implied that I need not worry about Williamson's competence. But now you have proceeded to malign his professional competence publicly; you have thus misled me, you have slandered a colleague, and you have taken steps toward the real destruction of your own Department.

Up until the time that I heard of this broadcast, I was expecting that you would soon make a public statement putting an end to all the loose talk about these matters. In particular, from your letter to me, I had expected that you would make clear that the usual rules of tenure, with the emphasis on competence, and by that time the rules were public knowledge, have had been set aside. And then you would reveal the real reasons as objectively as possible; this might have ended public debate in a proper manner. Instead, you have not only encouraged the public belief that Williamson has been dismissed on grounds of incompetence, you have reaffirmed it.

**"A philosopher of Williamson's calibre does not need a defence from anyone, much less from me. I can only suggest that you watch for the reaction to his article."**

It is not possible for me to sit idly by and see a man slandered whom I greatly respect, and whose philosophical companionship I would be proud to cultivate, to be slandered.

Since I was interested in becoming a member of your Department, I made some inquiries concerning its present members. These are the results: there is one man part from yourself, who now enjoys tenure. That man is Prof. Tennessen, a distinguished philosopher. Prof. Tennessen was not on the Tenure Com-

mittee and he strongly supports Williamson and Murray in this dispute. Price, the man who was on the Tenure Committee, does not have tenure himself. Nor are his qualifications overwhelming to me at first sight. But at least he has published something. And the same cannot be said about many (if any) other senior members of the Department whom I have not yet discussed. In fact, it would be fruitless to discuss them at all from my investigations. There is one notable exception, but he is, significantly, sympathetic to Williamson and Murray.

Now let us turn to this matter of philosophers leaving the Department. In a reply to my question, you wrote on Feb. 16, "No members of the Department are resigning." This position has been supported by Price, Cohen and Kemp in The Gateway. Yet I have reason to believe that the only first-rate people in your Depart-

**"Nothing less than a public statement from you and from the university administration clearing Williamson's name of the charge of incompetence will be acceptable for a start."**

ment, without exception, will leave just as soon as they can secure an acceptable position elsewhere. I am sure Williamson himself will not be bribed with your shameful offer of a one-year extension. In short, your Department will be reduced to a shambles next year or the year following. You have managed to attract bright young philosophers in the past but you will not do so in the future if you persist in your present practices.

This plan of a one-year terminal appointment is the crowning stroke of this whole bizarre business. You have slandered a man; now you want to buy his silence. You want him to admit to his own incompetence. The bare offer is bad enough. But it is rumoured that Williamson and Murray would be excluded from departmental meetings and all policy-making and that they would be given only introductory courses to teach. This shameful offer, whatever its terms, must not be the end of this matter. Nothing less than a public statement from you and from the university administration clearing Williamson's name of the charge of incompetence will be acceptable for a start.

What are the alternatives? For Williamson, his obvious brilliance will win out in any case, and under the circumstances, it is he who stands to destroy his career if he stays in Edmonton. I am contending then, that this is Edmonton's loss, and I wish to make it publicly known that Edmonton can ill afford such a loss. The Department is already notable primarily for the vitality of its younger men. With their departure, it will be notable only for its mediocrity. And 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.

I am sorry to have to write this letter. But it is too clear what you have attempted to do to Williamson and Murray, and what the state of your Department must now be, for me to remain silent. And in order that the University administration and the University community at large may be made aware of these scurrilous activities, and more generally, of the great jeopardy in which you have put the whole future of the Department of Philosophy at Edmonton, I am sending copies of this letter to the following: Dr. Daniel, the Dean, the Vice-President, the President and The Gateway.

Your truly,  
Paul Robinson

nb  
**"why is the mcgill daily?"  
asked the pessimist sourly.  
"thank god," said the optimist gaily,  
"that it isn't hourly!"**