

This is Forum-Five's Letter Page

Brian Campbell castigated for negative alienated views

With reference to Brian Campbell's article "Our schools produce lobotomized dolts" (Casserole, Friday, Jan. 15) I would like to pose the following questions:

With what proof, e.g., surveys, research, statistics, can he support the claim that teachers are nothing more than authority figures? While conceding that they are invested with some degree of authority I fail to see how they can be regarded exclusively as authority figures.

How can he substantiate the claim that female teachers are usually sexually frustrated? This belief is shared by many people, but such generalizations, when not backed up by concrete evidence, can be very dangerous (e.g. the Nazi "theories" of a pure race).

Can he prove that teachers never respect any opinions their pupils have? (surely the basic school exercise of writing essays contradicts this) or that nothing taught in schools is relevant to anything the pupils do outside (what about sex education, physical education?)?

Mr. Campbell's failure to show the validity of the above points surely invalidates the central conclusions he draws from them,

namely that schools produce fascists and that teachers are pigs. Another question which springs to mind is what will happen to the children of school age in the period between the burning of the schools to the ground and the creation of some new institution to take their place? Or is the concept of education to be abolished in its entirety?

I can well understand Brian Campbell's lack of optimism about the creation of a world in which the quality of our lives will be improved, since he, presumably a person who considers himself to be politically aware and enlightened, has no constructive suggestion to make: his article is characterized by negative, destructive attitude. Surely he cannot hope to persuade readers to agree to the destruction of the present "system" without even indicating what he would replace it with. Sad to say, this article was typical of many in The Gateway which succeed simply in alienating many U of A students, and wasn't it alienation that the article was directed against?

JOHN T. MARSHALL
grad studies
Editor's note — Mr. Campbell's article appeared on page two of Friday's Casserole. His byline was inadvertently omitted.

Kemp sacrificed a PhD to teach— tenure criteria have wrong emphasis

This university and the Edmonton community are about to lose a very valuable member, if the powers that be at the U of A are allowed to have their way. I refer to Mr. Ted Kemp, professor of philosophy. He has just received notice that he has been denied tenure. To be denied tenure means he must move on to another job at the end of the 1970-71 academic year.

As you may or may not know, the reason(s) for not granting tenure to an individual in the academic community are very seldom given to that individual. Such is the case this time. Simply a letter saying, "Sorry, we find you not worthy of continued work here."

Reasons for denial

So, please bear with me, while I speculate as to the likely reasons. Mr. Kemp does not have his Ph.D. True, he has finished his course work, and he has passed what are called candidacy exams, a number of oral quizzes delivered by his colleagues to determine whether he is prepared and able to write a thesis. But he doesn't have that all-important thesis. He has a reason, which he willingly states. Namely that he has been too busy teaching and exploring new teaching methods to take the one year to four years usually necessary to write what must be a publishable, original work.

Secondly, Mr. Kemp has not acquired what would be usually regarded by academicians as an acceptable publishing record. He has given several series of radio and television talks about philosophy, he has published in "popular" magazines like Edge, but it is true that he has never had, or even attempted to have, an article in the obscure, high status jour-

nals valued so highly by aspiring academic obscurantists. Again, he has a reason, namely that he is too busy teaching to bother.

Hung up on teaching

In fact, Mr. Kemp seems really, totally hung up on teaching. He has been heard on more than one occasion to remark that he regards it as a very honorable and taxing and exciting profession, and would like to make a lifetime career of it. He's hung up on it to the extent that after about 20 years in the public schools and university here, he still wants to go on doing it and striving to get better at it. He says strange things like, "Knowing a subject is necessary, but not sufficient. You have to know how to teach it too."

Hired to boost phil. teaching

He's so hung up on teaching that he was hired originally to boost the teaching ability of the philosophy department; he's hung up on it to the extent that he gets on the Students' Course Guide Honor Roll; he's hung up on it to the extent that his enrollment keeps going up (170 this year in the course of his specialty); he's hung up on it to the extent that it gets harder and harder to see each student personally and comment on each assignment personally. And somehow, he still manages to find time to devote to the wider Edmonton and Alberta community. (Television, radio, Alexander Ross, Studio Theatre, etc.)

Teaching was mistake

Now, to be explicit, I think the above priorities are exactly where Mr. Kemp has gone wrong, in the eyes of those who hire and fire at the U of A. The Faculty Hand-

book until recently stated that teaching ability was the main criterion on which professors teaching undergraduate courses (e.g. Mr. Kemp) would be considered. That clause has now been dropped from the Handbook.

It is my opinion that research ability (i.e. Ph.D. and publications in said ivory tower journals) are now the main criterion. I further suspect that many people who accept that as the main criterion also accept that students do not know a good teacher when they meet one. They might use as proof the low registration in their own classes.

Following "their" logic, what am I to conclude about Mr. Kemp? Since they are brilliant (i.e. Ph.D.) and since they are good teachers (i.e. students stay away from their classes), it follows that Mr. Kemp must be ignorant (i.e. no Ph.D.) and a poor teacher (i.e. 170 volunteers to take his course).

Ridiculous logic

Now, I don't happen to agree with their logic. In fact, I am sorry for them that they must adopt such a ridiculous stance. So, before I propose a solution, let me state my position. I think Mr. Kemp's reward speaks for itself. Its message clearly is that he should have tenure, and that to lose his service would be a serious blow to U of A and the larger community. My reason for writing this is that I want to appeal to the many others who agree with that view. Since Mr. Kemp has devoted his career to us as students and former students, I cannot in good conscience stand by while he gets axed. Over the next weeks, and if necessary months, we must unite and demand (if necessary force) a reversal of this unfortunate decision.

The wider issue

There is a wider issue at stake in this whole matter. Namely, the criterion for granting tenure. If teaching ability is the primary emphasis, then perhaps some individuals with very outstanding research abilities will be punished. If research ability is the primary emphasis, good and exceptionally good teachers will continue to be treated unfairly. There is no reason to believe that teaching and research ability go hand in hand at the level required in university academic staff. This seems clear. So why doesn't the university adopt separate or at least separable yardsticks: One for teaching, one for research.

CARL JENSEN
alumnus



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