

Uncle Tenure . . .

is watching you

# The faculty is nigger too

Originally printed under the title "Faculty as Nigger," this first appeared in The Peak, student newspaper at Simon Fraser University. In view of the brief now before U of A students' council recommending abolition of tenure, and the major confrontation on campus last spring over tenure recommendations for professors Don Whiteside and Seth Fisher of the sociology department, this article has been reprinted as food for thought and struggle.

A couple of weeks ago I was up on campus to put in a good, normal, academic day's work of brown-nosing and ingratiation when, slinking into the English Department Office for my mail, I noticed an official-looking envelope. It was a letter from Strand informing me that I had been granted tenure. The letter dropped, as they say, from my nerveless fingers.

Good morning, the Department Chairman said, choosing that moment to emerge from his lair. Listen, I said, feeling a sudden surge of power. I don't have to say good morning to you anymore, I said. I've got tenure, I added brusquely. And what's more, I said, you can fuck off.

Clutching my letter I strode off down the corridor with a new spring in my step, an asbestos suit, and an overwhelming sense of triumph. That morning I felt so good I funk'd twenty students without even reading their papers. Tenure! Think of it! It means I can now be fired only for moral turpitude, for insulting my colleagues, for moonlighting, for not teaching adequately, for not publishing enough, for publishing too much in the wrong places, for lack of objectivity, or for any other reason. It means that nobody can fire me but the Board, the President, my old friend and smiler with the knife Dale Sullivan, my Chairman, Premier Bennett (if he decides I'm a Marxist-Leninist), or by the Lieutenant Governor (if he can think up any other reason) with an order-in-council. I can be fired by any authority for anything under the rubric "cause."

Now it so happens that I was on the first committee of the Faculty Association that worked on the Academic Freedom and Tenure Brief. All of us saw very clearly

that if a man can be fired for "cause" then the word "tenure" is close to meaningless. It means only that one's contract does not come up for consideration and that a man is harder to fire than he is without "tenure." In no way does it mean that he enjoys job security. Accordingly we worded the draft of the brief to eliminate those explosive little words "for cause." The draft was approved by the faculty in a referendum, but the Faculty Association Executive, ever alive to the interests of the Board, put the words "for cause" back in again. So I resigned from the committee with a snarl feeling that my effort was wasted and that it would be better to return to my favorite hobby of producing quasi-pornographic magazines under various pseudonyms. But later it struck me that we were wrong from the start.

Let me put it this way: tenure, as Proudhon would have said had he worked in a modern university, is theft.

If you institute tenure under the normal system of university operation it means that you have to have a group of men deciding on who should get it and who should not. You need committees at both the department and university levels to decide on tenure and you need an elaborate appeal mechanism to make sure that nobody gets too ostensibly screwed. Once the committees and mechanisms start to proliferate and "due process" lifts its red-herring head above the dark waters of "democracy" you begin to shift the responsibility for that small aspect of your life to the power-wielders and committee-men.

The system you invent can become a device used by authoritarians (either of the right, liberal, or left persuasion) to reward orthodoxy and eliminate dissenters. I do not say this has happened yet (I have no evidence, at the moment, one way or the other) but nothing in my world-view says that it can't happen, and indeed, everything within that view says that it will happen.

So I can predict (as can anybody at this university) a series of crises and upheavals as first one decision on tenure is made and then another. With the result that stomach ulcers, blood pressures, cholesterol counts will increase while tempers and abilities to function will wane. I shall no longer be able to do my work of writing dirty books but will feel forced to attend long, abrasive meetings and listen to boring Authoritarian rhetoric from all points along the political spectrum.

The solution is to give everybody, man and beast, genius and dolt, immediate tenure. This will eliminate the need for departmental and university tenure committees; it will save whoever is the president one additional chore and

enable him to get on with his primary task of cultivating the goodwill of the RCMP; it will eliminate the reward and punishment concept built into the present system. It is probably far too sensible an idea for anyone to take seriously.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about these dolts you mention? If everybody gets tenure how do you rid the place of dolts?

**SELF:** There never was a dolt yet that did anyone lasting harm. I did not say you give everybody high merit increases; I merely suggest that if there is a dolt on the faculty it is too late to do anything about him but give him tenure. The students, after all, know who are the dolts and who are not, and there is no law that says a student must take a course from a dolt. And a dolt without students will, like government after the revolution, wither away.

**INTERVIEWER:** But what about new faculty? Suppose a department finds itself stuck with a cretin?

**SELF:** But damn it, man, you do not have to hire cretins. You can have a candidate for a job in to give guest lectures and seminars. You can give him a Visitorship for one semester. You can even throw free lunches into him to discover whether or not he eats peas with a knife, or invite him to parties to establish the possible promiscuity of his wife. You can, in other words, find out a lot about him before you offer him his tenurable job. Somebody straight from graduate school may have trouble adjusting himself to the teacher's role of lecturing, faking, and inventing suitable and fresh-sounding

comments to write on student essays. In which case it seems fair to give people without previous teaching experience a two year contract which is absolutely non-renewable. And at the end of this period the man can, by mutual arrangement between himself and his department, be offered a permanent job.

**INTERVIEWER:** But how about those words "for cause"?

**SELF:** That's precisely the point. Either we must make tenure more than a word that's going to divide the university still further or we must eliminate it altogether. I would obviously prefer the first course of action, but even if we were to adopt the second, and eliminate tenure, we would still be far better off than we are now. There would be an increase in paranoia, certainly, but nothing compared to that produced by the reward system. And even if a man is non-tenured it is still very hard to get rid of him if he has any sort of student following and doesn't want to go. We have had the cases of Ken Burstein and John Juliani to prove it. And it is here, incidentally, that student power lies—not in such authoritarian concepts as "parity."

I do not know whether the members of the University Tenure Committee are incompetents, villains, innocents, or honorable

men doing a difficult and unnecessary job. I have no evidence for them or against them and neither do I know as yet by what process they arrived at those very remarkable decisions. They will, of course (since we elected them), be keeping us informed. Meanwhile we can act before too much damage has been done by recalling them, dissolving the committee, reworking the Academic Freedom and Tenure brief, and by granting everybody presently employed on the faculty of this university instant tenure.

Watch these pages for a continuing parade of color.

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BANK**



**CANADIAN IMPERIAL BANK OF COMMERCE**

**Page the CLEANER & FURRIER Ltd.**  
8525-109 Street

- Did you know that Page has an operating plant only three blocks from the campus.
- One hour service including all day Saturday.
- 10% discount on presentation of current union card.

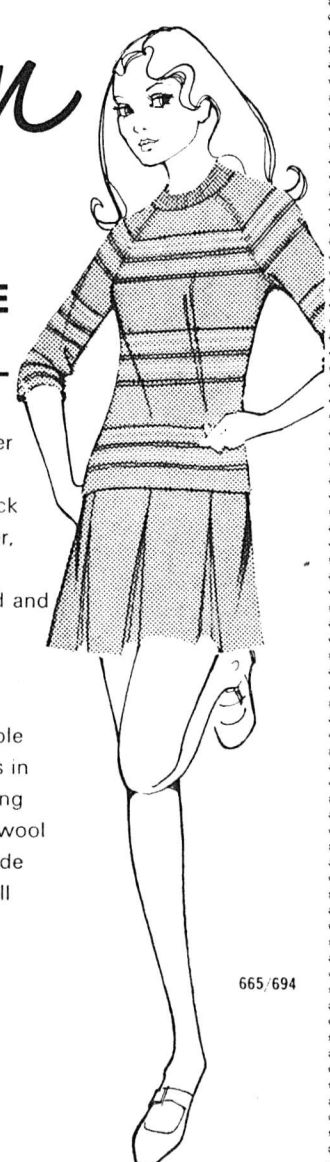
**YOU COULD BE A WINNER OF AN EXPENSE PAID TRIP TO HAWAII WHEN YOU SEND YOUR GARMENTS TO PAGE**



*You'll love being a Kitten girl!*

Glenayr  
**Kitten**

**MACHINE-WASHABLE PURE WOOL**




This smart striped pullover in machine-washable English botany has a mock turtle neckline with zipper, full-fashioned ¾ raglan sleeves, Continental band and cuffs. Pick from Kitten's new Fall palette.

A swinging hand-washable mini skirt with box pleats in front, and plain back giving A-line appearance. Pure wool worsted, fully lined. A wide range of glorious new Fall colours.

665/694

PURE VIRGIN WOOL

Without this label  it is not a genuine KITTEN.