

Words from the wise . . .

Legislation, Lawvere's treatment lead to tension and violence

Open Letter to the University Community from the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students Council

The Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students Council most strongly protests the action of the University administration in the apparent dismissal of Professor Lawvere of the Mathematics Department without reasonable cause.

Professor Lawvere is a distinguished scholar who has won international recognition for his achievements in his field. He established his reputation before coming to Dalhousie, and since his arrival, he has not only consolidated his reputation as a scholar, but has proved himself to be an able and respected teacher as well.

These facts are attested to by the support he has received from his students and colleagues at Dalhousie, and by the support of the participants in the international mathematics conference held at Dalhousie last month.

Under these circumstances, and in the absence of any stated, credible alternative, we can only conclude that Dr. Lawvere is being dismissed

because of his political views.

It is, of course, well known that Dr. Lawvere is an individual of some political conviction, and there are presumably some members of the university community who would object to this fact alone, regardless of the tenor of Dr. Lawvere's views. There are, presumably, still others to whom Dr. Lawvere's political ideas are a cause of discomfort.

However, these considerations are not relevant to the question of academic dismissal or re-appointment, and any individual who attempts to introduce such considerations does so in utter contempt of the institution and community he is supposed to serve.

The implications of this situation for intellectual, academic and political freedom at Dalhousie are enormous, the more so since persons unknown have succeeded in raising accusations that Dr. Lawvere has acted outside his right of free expression by "disrupting meetings" or something of the sort.

These accusations remain (unsigned and) unsubstantiated in any form but appear to have

been taken at face value despite the fact that no inquiry into such allegations has taken place.

Freedom of expression has traditionally been one of the most important principles on which a university is based. If Dr. Lawvere is dismissed because of his political views, Dalhousie deserves not only to lose the stature and distinction that scholars such as Dr. Lawvere confer with their presence, but allow to lose whatever reputation for integrity, fairness and academic impartiality it ever had.

We are ashamed and alarmed at the growing tendency on the part of the Dalhousie administration to discourage innovation and stifle academic and political expression. The most recent illustration of that tendency is the Senate motion

involving "disruption of academic activities" so obviously conceived in the wake of the Lawvere accusations and in the realization that there as yet existed no university rule which he could be shown to have infringed.

Whether or not the new rule is used retroactively against Dr. Lawvere, its existence now, and in the future, is a danger to peace and tranquility in the functioning of the university.

This is not so much because of what it purports to prevent or punish. Rather it is because no situation that would warrant the passage of such a regulation and it could only have been motivated by other considerations.

The new Senate rule is open to much abuse, and, in the absence of any objective conditions to

justify its use, we must look upon its existence as a threat to the freedom of the academic community and view the motives of its sponsors with the deepest mistrust.

In its misguided attempts to impose a rigid structure of control upon the university community, the administration must hold itself responsible for bringing about those things it claims to be seeking to prevent. The shameful treatment of Dr. Lawvere and the kind of legislation recently proposed to Senate are the sorts of acts that lead to tension, unrest and ultimately violence and can only serve to bring everlasting discredit on those responsible for the running of Dalhousie University.

DAGS Council

Political repression a fact

To the editor:

Students and faculty members at Dalhousie have recently been victimized because of their political opinions.

Most of the student body are aware of the arbitrary termination of contract, for anti-establishment views, of F. W. Lawvere, a member of the Department of Mathematics. This was followed recently by the firing of a graduate student, Greg Neumann, also in the Math Department, from his teaching position.

The arrogant nature of the College authorities was brought home to me vividly, some days ago, when I attended the Senate Report on Greg Neumann by the Senate Discipline Committee. The charge was alleged "disruption" of classes.

I had been invited along to hear Greg defend himself against the "powers that be". I expected fireworks. I got none. What in fact occurred was a cruel farce, masquerading under the name of democracy.

I witnessed, first of all, an obvious resentment on the part of the Senate against the "intrusion" of the student supporters of Greg. From the start, the Senate demonstrated an attitude of bored and arrogant indifference. They sat stolidly behind their respectable facade, little concerned with the facts of the affair, only wanting to get things over and done with.

Greg was allowed to speak all right, in the best democratic tradition, only his sentence and fine had already been decided upon. During Greg's defence speech, the senate members' faces registered either outright hostility or amused contempt. To most, the proceedings seemed a huge joke, an ex-

pensive one for Greg, though. He was fined \$250, to be paid by this April.

Greg was accused of disrupting classes he had taught prior to the dismissal. I asked the question whether the students in these classes had been consulted as to their opinions in this case. Vice-President MacKay considered this matter irrelevant, to the facts of the matter in hand.

Throughout the whole hearing, only one member of the Senate seemed to be conscientiously attempting to give Greg a fair "trial". There was

only one vote against Greg's "conviction."

I came away completely convinced of the truth of allegations concerning political repression at Dalhousie, whereas before I had been extremely sceptical. Then let us have no more illusions about freedom of speech and politics either at Dalhousie or in Canada as a whole.

So watch it, brothers, you may be next, and remember, "An injury to one is an injury to all".

Pete Ridley

Neumann firing political

Open Letter to the University Community from the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students Council regarding the recent firing of Math student, Greg Neumann, by the Dalhousie Senate.

The Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students Council stands in complete opposition to the recent action of the Dalhousie Senate in its firing of mathematics student, Greg Neumann, for "disruption of academic activities".

We consider that the action taken against Mr. Neumann was initiated for political, rather than academic reasons, and that such procedures constitute a direct threat to the freedom, both academic and otherwise, of Dalhousie students and faculty.

We are witnessing a dangerous escalation of such incidents at Dalhousie — the fining of Mr. Neumann, the attempted firing of Dr. Lawvere, and the passing of a recent Senate motion providing for expulsion and other punishments for so-called "disruptions of academic activities". The University seems determined to create a reality of open political repression on this campus.

We point out to the Senate again that this course of action can only lead to heightened feelings of frustration and oppression within the university community which may result in future disruptions. Should the Senate continue its present policy, it must bear the responsibility for these outbreaks.

The DAGS Council recommends to Senate the following procedures for rectifying the injustices which have been done to Mr. Neumann and to the university community at large.

- 1) The Senate immediately revoke the fine levied against Mr. Neumann.
- 2) The Senate initiate a referendum among those TYP students formerly taught by Mr. Neumann to determine whether they wish

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