

# Massive obstacle to change

job. Here is another nonradical voice from the academy. Ronald Bergethon, an executive committee member of the commission for the independent colleges and universities: "The truth is that research is a very convenient pretext for the professor who does not want a full teaching relationship to his students. Research can be a form of withdrawal. It is a form of professionalism in which the scholar cultivates his colleagues rather than his students. He seeks for information to enhance his standing as a specialist—instead of exchanging with the students their capacity for contribution."

Administrations are indicted, as they should be, for some of what's wrong with the academy, but a fundamental flaw is that real educational concern is held by tenured faculty who chronically oppose changing what is comfortable for them and who also don't give much of a damn about anything at all.

It is their fastnesses of power which have to be overcome if the university is going to be basically concerned with the needs of students—and not the needs of mandarins. It is tenure which so far makes the power unassailable. It is tenure which prevents accountability.

This past September, Yale president Kingman Brewster focused on accountability. He did not believe, he said, that a university president should have the equivalent of tenure and he proposed instead that his own leadership of the university be reappraised in 1971, at which point he will have served for seven years. "Accountability is what should be striving for," he added, "and if accountability is to be real (there has to be) some regular, understood process whereby reappraisal of the competence of administration and the community's confidence in it can be undertaken without waiting for a putsch or rebellion."

But if the administration ought to be accountable for its competence, how can any less be expected of the real power in the university — the tenured faculty?

Tenure first came about as a protection for professors so that they would not be arbitrarily fired for saying or teaching "unpopular" things. Or arbitrarily fired for any other reason. But now there are other sources of protection in this regard. If the administration does indeed show contempt for human and faculty rights, the combined power of the association of university professors, the rapidly growing federation of college teachers, the various professional societies (now coming under the control of younger, more libertarian men), and the vicil liberties union can make it exceedingly difficult for the offending university to get rid of its high-rate faculty. Sanctions can be imposed, and furthermore, just the spreading of the baleful news will cut off the supply of high calibre faculty whose presence is necessary for the continuance of the university's accreditation.

But what of those regions where the yahoos in state legislature have the power to cut off the funds of state universities which employ faculty with "subversive" views and intentions? Even the possible loss of accreditation may not curb these

troglodytes. It seems to me that when the atmosphere is that inimical to the most basic tenet of education — freedom of expression — sanctions have to be sustained until those universities sink to the common denominator of the howling legislators. If by that point the people have not been aroused to demand real universities, they will have been left with what they obviously want—extension of the prisons they call high schools. And mobility now being habitual to the young, students will go to colleges and universities in other states.

I do not think, however, it will come to that. I have traveled in enough so-called "backward" states to doubt strongly whether the full force of sanctions against a state university which has been taken over by legislature will leave the citizenry passive. Not because of any large-scale, fierce dedication to free speech, but because parents everywhere want credit cards for their children which will work. And if a particular university's degree has been thoroughly discredited because of national approbrium, the voters, will insist that the legislature act to make that degree negotiable again. If economic self-interest is threatened, even "suspicious" characters on faculties have to be allowed.

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## Accountable only to themselves, faculty interests are in conflict with those of most students.

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But if tenure is to be abolished everywhere, what will be the criteria for accountability? Up to a point, Paul Woodring, writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, has proposed a sensible set of guidelines: "Each faculty member should be allowed to decide for himself whether he wishes to be judged on the basis of his publication, his teaching, or both. If he chooses to devote a substantial portion of his time to research and writing, his teaching load should be reduced sufficiently to enable him to plan his research carefully and write well. When he comes up for promotion he should be required to give evidence, not merely that he has published a specified number of papers, but that he has made a substantial contribution to the analysis, interpretation, and criticism of the work of other scholars."

I would add that promotion is one thing and tenure another, and that tenure should be done away with. Let the man who is essentially involved in research be reappraised at certain intervals—maybe every seven years, as Kingman Brewster has suggested for himself. I would also include much more diverse criteria for "substantial" re-

search. A social scientist, for instances, may have chosen to devote a good deal of time to community action work. Or someone involved in education may have spent several years helping start an elementary "free" school. Neither may want to publish the results in the usual "scholarly" fashion. There ought, therefore, to be other options: a film, a book intended for a wider audience than scholars (which doesn't mean, to say the least, that it would be any less substantial); or simply that the empirical evidence of what that community action or what that school has developed into. Let the student-faculty committee in charge of promotions spend some time observing and seeing for themselves what has been taking place.

Paul Woodring goes on: "Those faculty members who choose to be judged by their teaching—and in an undergraduate college their number should be substantially larger than the first group—should, when they come up for promotion, be expected to give evidence that their teaching is of superior quality. Such evidence . . . must be based in each case upon a distillation of the subjective judgments both of students and of other faculty members who have observed the individual's teaching. Recent graduates of the college, as well as present students, should be invited to express their judgments through anonymous questionnaires designed to distinguish the more obvious form of popularity from true success as a teacher."

"By the time a faculty member is ready for promotion to full professor," Woodring concludes, "many of his former students will be mature men and women who will have been out of college long enough to be able to look back on their college experience in perspective. They know as much as anyone will ever know about which teachers made a real difference in their lives. Their opinions should be made available to the deans, department heads, or faculty committees who make decisions about promotion."

My own view is that only faculty-student committees should have the power to make such decisions, and again, that promotion not be tenured. The teaching professor too should be reevaluated at certain intervals. If you believe that teaching is — or should be — one of the most vital functions in the society, a corollary conviction ought logically to be that teachers should remain accountable so long as they teach. Tenure and any real kind of accountability are mutually contradictory.

I noted that Woodring's proposals are useful up to a point. They are, with the additions I suggested, at least a beginning toward the breaking up of that centre of university power which at present is accountable to no one but itself. I would then go further. I am convinced that, except for scholars, the concept of a full-time university professor is itself anachronistic. How can those who are teachers, not scholars, keep learning enough to teach if they spend all their lives within the academy? How can they learn enough about themselves, about whatever field they're in, from poetry to political science? George Bernard Shaw to the contrary, teachers and doers ought to be one and the same.