

Six viewpoints on the Leggett case

Editors note: The following six statements, solicited by the Emerald editors, represent the contending perceptions of the veto of sociologist John Leggett's appointment. They are presented, unabridged, in the hope of providing the reader with insights on a complex question.

Chapin Clark

President, University chapter of the American Association of University Professors

Although final authority rests with the President and the State Board of Higher Education in faculty personnel matters, the process at this University is essentially a decentralized one. Initiating capacity lies at the departmental or school level and recommendations are added by the department head and pertinent deans. Appointments involve many considerations such as budget, qualifications, and the needs of the department. Appointments necessarily involve considerable discretion and subjective judgments, particularly when a choice must be made among many candidates. This is normally worked out at the departmental level.

In the Leggett case, the Sociology Department (not the recruitment committee as reported in the Emerald, January 15) voted 15 to 9 in favor of the appointment. This vote included student representation, and I understand the Sociology faculty is itself evenly divided (or nearly so) on the matter. In most departments and schools an appointment is not recommended when considerable opposition is reasonably stated against the appointment. Professor Benton Johnson (former chairman of the Sociology Department) told me in response to my question that this practice has been informally adopted by the Sociology Department. When this issue was raised in the departmental meeting on Leggett, a motion was made to forward the recommendation on the basis of majority vote, despite the considerable opposition. This motion carried. In this posture, the matter eventually reached President Clark for decision.

It is just as easy to charge political motivation or use of non-professional criteria against those who strongly urge an appointment with controversial aspects as it is to make the same charge against the President in deciding against the appointment. In either case the charge is gratuitous unless supported by evidence. In this regard one can find at least opinion evidence in the various quotes from Sociology faculty and students which supports numerous and disparate conclusions.

From a distance, it appears that a department divided on nearly every aspect of the case has passed the buck to President Clark. Those who disapprove of his decision are now invoking our sympathy by charges against the President and appeals to the rhetoric of academic freedom. He has demonstrated his ability to apply the standards of academic freedom under far more intensive pressure in the Froines decision.

Linda Mills Erickson

for the Sociology Student Union

In the Spring of 1968 John Howard resigned from the sociology faculty and left the department without a race relations instructor. The Sociology Student Union, a year later, voiced their concern that a race relations instructor should be the first priority in hiring, but the faculty hedged another year and a half. Fall term of this year it was found the department could hire a visiting professor for two terms—Winter and Spring.

Since Howard's resignation the only race course offered was through SEARCH; "Racism in American

Culture," voluntarily taught for one term by Chuck Armsbury.

Considering the administration's veto over the department's two third's majority vote to hire John Leggett, it seems that the only race relations instructor the administration would find acceptable would be a RACIST, as he would come closest to paralleling their interests and sentiments in the perspectives he would take in teaching the course.

The administration based its decision on the politics of John Leggett, blatantly so. They want to escape the obvious accusations, and so to defend themselves, are saying Leggett was not qualified academically. The criteria used to judge academic competency of a potential instructor certainly has risen. I'd estimate fifty per cent of our present faculty would not be here if the same criteria had been used when they were hired. It used to be the case that the administration would trust the departments or schools judgement on the academic qualifications of a candidate. It was until the case of John Leggett was presented to the administration. It's my guess and that of the sociology undergraduates that the administration still trusts the department's judgement academically, but the trust stops there.

The administration has little trust in the liberal faculty's political decisions, and that is what the hiring of John Leggett is all about. A political decision. The memo the department received originally stated that the hiring of John Leggett at this time would not be in the best interest of the university. There was no mention of his academic qualifications—or lack of. That came later because they were shoved into a corner and asked why.

The best interest of the university, to the administration, can obviously be interpreted as "to the best interest of the State Board of Education and their interest in the furtherance of the university as a tool of the corporate elite of America." John Leggett wasn't vetoed because he isn't academically qualified, but because he is and can make an intelligent statement about the oppression of minorities. If he were not intelligent there would be a greater chance he would be hired, because the chances of his sentiments being leftist would not be as great. Jean Paul Sartre has said he does not believe one can be an intellectual without being left-wing. This seems to be truly the case and the threat.

The teaching of undergraduates is seriously deficient at this point. Not until two weeks before winter term did the Sociology Department have an instructor for one of the required undergraduate courses. And not in order to maintain the political interests of the administration and the State Board the undergraduate education is one more sacrificed—John Leggett has been disqualified.

Roy Rodgers

Chairman, sociology department

The following facts seem to me to be pertinent to the history of the case of Professor Leggett.

First, the Department of Sociology followed its usual procedures in carrying out a careful investigation of Dr. Leggett's professional history and qualifications.

Second, the Department was divided in its opinion as to whether Dr. Leggett should be appointed as indicated by the secret ballot vote of fifteen in favor and nine opposed. Voting were seventeen permanent faculty, one graduate teaching fellow, three graduate student representatives, and three undergraduate student representatives.

Third, the Department's recommendation was forwarded to the Administration with the complete file which had been compiled on Dr. Leggett. The Department does not have the authority to appoint faculty, but only to recommend such appointment.

Fourth, the President of the University made his decision on the basis of the factors which he believed appropriate. He

came to the conclusion that the appointment would not be "in the best interests of the University" and that it should not be made. This is the President's legitimate responsibility and authority. As such, I support that decision.

Fifth, the resolution cited in the Emerald of January 14, was passed by the Sociology Graduate Student Forum at its meeting of January 11, by a vote of seventeen in favor and two opposed. There are 68 graduate students enrolled in residence in the Department of Sociology winter term.

Finally, the Department of Sociology is offering one course under the Sociology 205 number winter term on the subject "Race, Class and Ethnicity in America." This course will be repeated spring term. In addition, Sociology 445, "Sociology of Race Relations" will be offered spring term. The only additional course which might have been offered, had Dr. Leggett been appointed, would have been a seminar in race and ethnicity.

Robert Clark

University President

Faculty appointments at the University of Oregon are handled in accordance with carefully worked out procedures which apply uniformly to the entire campus, regardless of field, and in accordance with criteria of professional and scholarly qualifications that are as objective and impartial as we are able to make them. Appointments are made without regard to race, religion, sex, personal "life-styles" or political beliefs.

This policy was followed and all regular procedures observed in the case of John Leggett. He was proposed for appointment as a visiting associate professor of sociology for winter and spring terms, 1971, through the regular process employed by that department in recruitment of faculty. The department as a whole, however, was sharply divided on the proposed appointment. There would have to be strong overriding considerations, in such circumstances, for the President to make the appointment against the wishes of a substantial minority of the faculty.

In view of the division within the department, the dean of the college forwarded the request to the Dean of Faculties without recommendation, for review and decision. The Dean of Faculties, after careful study of the case, had doubts whether the candidate's qualifications for this particular appointment were sufficiently impressive to warrant the offer of an appointment. He therefore forwarded the department's request to the President for appropriate study. I then, after careful review, decided against the appointment of Mr. Leggett.

It should be understood that the authority to approve appointments rests with the President of the University. Authority to make appointments for one year or less is normally delegated to the Dean of Faculties. Any proposed appointment over which there are strong divisions of faculty opinion, however, is referred to the President, regardless of rank or term of service. Thus did the Leggett appointment come to me for decision.

It should be understood, too, that the President's authority to appoint is also a delegated power. I expect to exercise that authority.

The Leggett case was decided on grounds of academic merit. There is obviously a division of opinion as the candidate's qualifications for the position in question. It was the judgment of the administration that the appointment was not warranted.

Sociology Forum

The Forum wishes to express its serious concern regarding the failure of the University to appoint John Leggett.

Dr. Leggett's professional, academic and ethical qualifications are clearly

consistent with those expected of staff members at this University and in this department. This has not been questioned even by those opposed to Dr. Leggett's appointment.

We are led to conclude, then, that the University's decision not to appoint Dr. Leggett for the Winter and Spring terms was made on the basis of factors other than professional, academic and ethical qualifications.

We deplore the University's use of criteria other than professional qualifications. The department is not without a highly qualified individual who would have filled a glaring weakness in the area of race relations.

This dispensing of professional qualifications, in favor of others not related to those which should legitimately be employed, indicates to us a betrayal of the principles of academic freedom. We vigorously protest this action and strongly urge that the Administration limit the criteria by which it makes appointments to academic, professional and ethical fitness. Consideration of possible political criticism is clearly not an appropriate criterion upon which to base such a decision.

We feel it would be appropriate to rescind the decision and offer Dr. Leggett a position.

Acco Hengst

Chairman, Sociology Forum

In addition to the resolution several comments are in order.

The administration has asserted that Leggett would not be qualified for ethical reasons. The facts are that all investigating committees have exonerated him. At no time has he been found guilty of anything he was charged with. Some charges were dropped. The Canadian Association of University Teachers even strongly condemned the actions of the Simon Fraser University administration, suggesting that members of the association not accept jobs at Simon Fraser and that other universities hire the unjustly discharged ten professors.

The administration has also stated that Leggett would not be qualified in race relations. Any person with a specialty in political sociology and social stratification qualifies. In addition, Leggett has written a book called "Class, Race and Labor," and has done some research on violence and the black worker. This would clearly make him qualified.

If President Clark feels that the university is a neutral institution in the world and serves as a market place of ideas, the hiring of a controversial sociologist should not be an objection to him. It is on these grounds that he has defended John Froines. If the administration is not willing to defend academic freedom, fearing budget cuts or threats by the State Legislature, this raises the question of which issues the administration is willing to go to battle for.

The action taken by the university demonstrates clearly its preoccupation with public relations and fundraising, making the educational process suffer. It does injustice to students who are now enrolling in ever larger classes, and lessens the role of the faculty in taking decisions which affect their own careers.

Gerald King

Instructor, Sociology

I regret that the Leggett issue has become a public issue before it needed to be. Because it is, however, it will have to be fully aired. Nevertheless, the university community will not benefit if it is blown out of proportion. Further action is possible only if the department and administration are allowed to continue to negotiate quietly.

Leggett was recommended by the department because of a crushing demand

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