

Tenure may not be obstacle

Editor's Note: The following commentary was written by Robert James, chairer of the Fine and Applied Arts department at the University. The column is a response to an Emerald editorial published last term. But the material remains current.

By ROBERT JAMES

As a tenured member of the faculty and as the Head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts I have read with great interest your editorial "Tenure System in Need of Change" (Friday, Dec. 1, 1972).

I share your interest in seeing the availability of classes coordinated with student need and interest. I am not sure the tenure system is the obstacle.

May I share with you, first, some feelings about the tenure system then make some comments about staffing problems.

No "system" is any better than the people in it. If the tenure system were eliminated, I am afraid the thing that would take its place would be some kind of

civil service condition which would allow dismissal only for "good cause" (provable in court). The people responsible for the decision and their values would not change by changing the system. Letting someone go—which is not a synonym for "fired"—to preserve the flexibility you are advocating is a possibility of the tenure system. Allowing a faculty to become "over-tenured" is not a fault of the tenure system.

Your analogue regarding professional athletes may be applicable as an alternative to giving tenure to those hired with grant funds. But I become uneasy as I try to extend the analogue—Bart Starr, very savvy ball player, has to become a coach (administrator?) or git his gimpy old self out of the game?

The problems this University is experiencing in respect to distributing and proportioning the instructional resources come more from a general set of circumstances, in my opinion, than from the hazards of the tenure system.

Universities, not unlike most

"established" American institutions, have historically if not traditionally solved their problems by treating physical growth and health as synonyms. I believe the emerging frame of mind attending concern for the environment and its resources will give us the attitude required to solve our problems in terms of needs. In my mind solving problems in terms of needs is very different than responding to "political reality" and preserving academic Empires.

We are creating a verb "to priority". Its use and definition is new, strange and threatening for many—maybe the most difficult for many of the higher administration because it is there that "prioritizing" is the most complex.

I do feel that the higher administration is making a serious effort to resolve the problems in Fine Arts. This term, six sections of lower-division studio classes were added by allocations from reserve funds; this emergency allocation has not solved the problem by any means, but it is addressing the need.

I am not trying to generate complacency. There are many sensitive points for me. The load situation is one. The faculty of this Department have responded to the interests of the students and each has nine classes per year. I have heard it rumored that the load in many other areas of the University is seven classes per year.

That is bad enough but when my advisees return from other parts of the campus with quotes from faculty that they don't do special studies—they just meet their classes, I begin to wonder, with what kind of a rubber yardstick we are being beaten. This is not a faculty gripe—it affects the whole question—if it would take six additional faculty to field just our current offering if we each taught but seven classes per year it would seem, going the other way, if those doing seven classes were to go nine we would have some surplus.

Perhaps that line of reasoning is beside the point, but I can say something that may generate animosity among my colleagues because I have tenure.

Mississippi on my mind

By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

When Brown vs. Board of Education was handed down, and the schools were ordered to desegregate, a prominent writer pronounced the decision "bad law and bad sociology," with which assessment many of us agreed. It remains, in my inadequate judgment—which judgment however is all I have—bad law.

There is very good reason for calling the Warren Court a "revolutionary" court. It simply took the law and stood it on its head. There are arguments for what then happened, particularly on the matter of desegregation. They will tell you that the initiative of the Warren Court deflected what might have been true national violence, as distinguished from the fireworks we got in the sixties. That the state governments weren't doing what they should to end Jim Crow, nor was the national legislature, so that it was the Supreme Court that came in to the rescue.

Let us assume, for the sake of magnanimity, that that is correct. It does not alter the argument that Brown was bad law. If our legislative procedures are constipated (and I think they are) we should flush them out, rather than encourage the Supreme Court to proceed as a standing constitutional convention. Thus the legal point.

The sociological point is proving to be a pleasant surprise. In the state of Mississippi, through which I have recently wandered, there is nothing like the tension one read about seven years ago, when the novelist Walker Percy was writing sulphuric copy about the transformation of the people he grew up with into monsters. The fact of the matter is that the end of compulsory Jim Crow, and the opening up, by law, of the stores and restaurants and hotels that were previously segregated, hasn't increased inter-racial hostilities; quite the contrary. In the past four years Mississippi has achieved a racial integration unthought of in the north, the state is prospering, and relations between White and Black are, for the most part, altogether relaxed.

Does it follow from this that the methods by which that relaxation was achieved are desirable? Well, not as a formal

proposition; though it tells you at least this, that coercive measures can breed desired results.

An analogy, however strained, can be drawn with the denazification of Germany. There was no nonsense, after Occupation, about academic freedom for pro-Nazis, or anything of the sort. Textbooks were not only banned, they were burned, vaporized. And in due course Nazism, in Germany, was something you needed to go to rather extensive libraries to stare at the skeleton of.

The occupation of Mississippi was not conventional, but something of the sort

was done. Mississippi lost the right to supervise its own voter qualification lists, to pass its own laws respecting schooling, transportation, hotels, and restaurants. And: it is, without question, a better place to live in, now than before.

Granted, the improvement is only a surface improvement, put up against, say, the exacting standards of Martin Luther King's dreams. But surface improvements are improvements. If the White man behind the counter still declines to fraternize with the Negro, we have not got ourself the evanescence of color. But meanwhile, he will serve the Negro a hamburger, and that's, well—progress.

Of course, conservatives and libertarians have never denied that state force can accomplish certain things. When the Nazis invaded France, if truth must out, the overwhelming majority of the French simply—cooperated. They went on living and, mostly, confined their contumely to private expression. In Mississippi the White man is still very much in charge of things, but there is civility there, and it is tempering race relations which, outside the north, have not been nourished by southern good nature.

It is worth dwelling upon, but meanwhile there is reason quietly but fervently, to give thanks.

. . . of rugs and pine trees

Editor's Note: Nan Henderson is the Emerald's legislative reporter for the current session of the Oregon Legislature. The following commentary describes some behind the scenes action we'll never see in the statute books.

By NAN HENDERSON

An aura of power billowed out of the Speaker of the House's office as, one by one, veteran House members filed in.

Some of the freshmen legislators were leaving the room muttering something about a lottery and clutching maps of the Capitol.

Inside, The Speaker patiently listened to arguments and wailings.

"I have to have number 800 because my staff needs that extra corner with the wall plug to do any kind of effective research," a legislator pleaded.

"Besides, I leave my dog tied up

downstairs and number 800 has a window right above the place I tie him."

Downstairs, the Assistant Majority Leader (in charge of freshmen) was alternately picking names from a basket and making phone calls: "Hello. Just drew your name . . . yea you're number three so look at the map and explain where you want to be — office and desk on the House floor . . . Can't you just tell me where? O.K., I'll wait 'till you get here."

The particular freshman finally arrived to make sure he got precisely what he wanted.

"I like number 820, but I'm wondering if there are any diagrams showing the building's airflow — I have difficulty breathing," the freshman explained.

"Number 860 looks better, but the carpet isn't as thick and I have corns on my feet that really bother me when I get tense . . ."

So the tour went with fifteen more freshmen to be called before the telephone installers descended in two hours.

Up in The Speaker's office the tension had erupted into some overt quarrelling among the veterans waiting to get into the inner-office.

"I refuse to have an office that has never been remodeled," one veteran declared. "I don't know why except I just like old things."

"But I am going to have two administrative assistants and a part-time barber so I need that extra chair," another one wailed.

The door from the inner-office opened and a two-term member appeared looking downhearted.

"Hey Joe," one of the waiting legislators called, "maybe your committee assignments will be good. What committees do you think you'll get on?"

The two-termer shrugged his shoulders. A six-term veteran had ached him out of the office that smelled like pine trees when the window was left open.

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