



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712-1164

Department of English

PAR 110

(512) 477-4991

Sept. 6, 1984

Dean Robert King
West Mall Building
Univ. of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX 78712

Dear Dean King,

We, the undersigned tenured members of the UT English Department, request restitution of our right as tenured and tenure-track faculty to make department policy.

A lack of specificity in the Handbook of Operating Procedures has been misconstrued, we believe, to authorize full voting privileges for one-year appointees at the lecturer rank. Inasmuch as burgeoning enrollments since 1977 have forced an expansion of the number of English lecturers to between fifty-seven and seventy, the permanent faculty's ability to make hiring, salary, recruitment, and curriculum decisions through its principal policy organs has been compromised and, in some instances, entirely coopted.

We support the right of any member of our teaching staff to argue for his or her interests and to enjoy due process consistent with the department's Constitution.

We do, however, assert the regular faculty's sole right to make all authorized policy decisions affecting its future, its place in the University, and its relation to the profession of college teachers. Because we believe this right is a fundamental prerequisite to the faculty's willing and conscientious performance of its many service obligations, we consider the University's prompt clarification of the faculty voting privilege to be imperative.

OVER →

Tentative draft, submitted by H. G. T.

We feel that the Sept. 6 "voting privilege" letter to the Dean, from a number of tenured members of the English Department, has come at a very poor time. We feel that it does not address the central problem the department faces. And we feel that if the "voting privilege" letter is seen (as it surely will be seen) as the senior faculty's primary response to the controversy surrounding the department's reliance upon temporary faculty to teach a major portion of its courses, then the underlying problem will only be deepened and made more intractable.

The letter calls for an affirmation of the principle that the department's governance should be in the hands of its permanent members. On the face of it the principle is reasonable, and under normal circumstances we would subscribe to it. Our department, however, has drifted so far from what we would consider normal circumstances that to affirm the principle now is to compound an injustice, and to set our practice even more deeply at odds with sound academic ideals. Our department's problem is that instead of committing ourselves (stress ourselves) to developing and teaching an integrated curriculum of English studies, we the "Regular Faculty" have pared off a fundamental component of those English studies, convinced ourselves that it is a contemptible thing to teach that component, have accordingly hired on a corps of academic refugees to do most of the work, and are withdrawing ourselves to the role of sahibs, brokering an enterprise we do not believe in. In this context, to request the disenfranchisement of our "temporary" colleagues is a precedent-setting instance of cynicism. (We note that our "need" for these "temporaries" is not temporary at all, but indeed constant, so long as we continue to evade the real problem.)

It has been suggested by some of the signers of the questionable letter that the desired outcome is the splitting of our department into a department of rhetoric and a department of literary studies. This would be the most unfortunate outcome we can imagine. Already we see a single pedagogy being divided in two, an intellectual double-standard arising between the two, and a professional and social double-standard emerging beneath that.

We are dismayed. It is in just the opposite direction that we wish to move. We believe that historically and conceptually there is a unity in English Studies, a unity which it is now our difficult task to recover. It can happen only if there is respect and trust among the entire staff, "regular" and "temporary." A letter of the kind in question, if it is construed as the dominant sentiment of the permanent faculty, must make us look very small indeed, and must do our common enterprise great damage.