AUTHORITY

Last January I wrote that education was an authoritarian system. As a result I have received a number of telephone calls and notes taking issue with me on this point. I am forced to conclude from this that the dissenters understand the limited definition of the word but have little concept of its broader meaning or of its place in a free society.

Admittedly, the word "authority" is not popular. Indeed, for the past decade there has been a widely publicized revolt against authority on campuses and elsewhere. Authority has become confused with coercion and enforcement and has gained the reputation that it is opposed to the ideal of freedom. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Authority is not coercion. It is not based upon force or the threat of force. It is not the tyranny of the cabal or the inept majority, nor the tyranny of the ruler and his henchmen. It is, on the contrary, the preserver of order in a free society; the tangible expression of the moral and cultural consensus that must prevail if a free society is to exist. Freedom is not possible without authority - without a decent respect for the judgment that is embodied in professionals, specialists, officers, and administrators. A free society is built on a framework of laws, rules, customs, ideals, beliefs and associations that are essentially consensual and authoritarian rather than imposed and coercive. Ideally, the interactions between people combine to produce both the expression and the acceptance of the fact that some individuals and groups have more expertise and knowledge in certain areas than do others, and that judgments of these knowledgable persons form the moral and intellectual basis of a free culture. It is education's task to help produce such authorities, and at the same time to exercise authority over those in whom it is being produced in order to foster disciplined thinking and to preserve and promote a free society liberated insofar as possible from any form of tyranny.

One cannot equate freedom and coercion, but freedom and authority are synergistic. Authority is a vital element that is necessary for the proper evaluation of social works, art, science, education and law. Without it there can be neither taste, nor justice, nor learning, nor a social order. There can be only anarchy or absolutism.
To confuse authority with coercion is to confuse intellectual or moral consensus with brute force. The one is arrived at by an association of free people, the other is imposed by a despotism or a mob. Revolt against authority is ipso facto a revolt against freedom. Its consequences are cultural sterility, lack of social consciousness, infantilism, exhibitionism, sensuality, materialism, cowardice and a general degradation of both the nation and the people who inhabit it. Carried to its logical extreme, revolt against authority becomes revolt against life itself. It is respect for legitimate and duly constituted authority that is a mark of culture and civilization, not this revolting sickness of our times that has the temerity to at once demand a dictatorial ruler, tyrannical majority, and the authority of pressure groups - and the gall to call such a melange "freedom".

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February 23, 1973

[Editorial note: Professor Bone's paper above was the only one submitted for publication in the March issue. With his permission and as an economy measure, publication of Professor Bone's paper was held for an April issue. But again no other papers were received by the end of the month deadline and again Professor Bone kindly consented to have his paper held until May. When the following paper from Professor Harter was received shortly after the deadline and when the above matters were reported on April 9 to the Faculty Senate's Executive Committee, they asked that both papers be published in this April issue. DBN.]
Collective Bargaining for Professors in Oregon

In the next few weeks we shall witness a campaign to bring collective bargaining to professors in Oregon. Some will embrace it eagerly and others will approach it with dread. We who have been watching it spread across the nation are surprised how the momentum is increasing. The question may now be changed from "should we" to "how do we live with it".

Why are we faced with collective bargaining when by tradition we are dedicated individualists? Why should we experiment with collective bargaining at the expense of our collegial system? The answer is that many of our colleagues feel they are no longer appreciated by the public, by the administration, and by the students. Our economic well-being is threatened by the financial squeeze imposed by taxpayers and the legislature. While our neighbors clog the roads with their campers, trailers, and boats, we are told that the public cannot afford to finance higher education adequately. Our salaries with a few exceptions have trailed the rise in the cost of living. We can see no end to inflation and no prospect that the state will grant us any substantial relief.

In the last biennium the bulk of the faculty received $400 or 4% which ever was smaller in the first year of the biennium. The situation was worse in the second. While the papers stated that the average increase was to be 3%, the vast majority received far less than that. In effect, talented, hard-working, and long-serving professors were told they did not deserve the average. Meanwhile the cost of living has inexorably mounted. Now in this biennium the Governor recommends 5% average increase in each year of biennium. However, most of us suspect that after merit money is subtracted there will not be enough to provide raises sufficiently high to compensate for the rise in cost of living for the majority (unless administrators change their methods of distribution). Even if everyone receives a flat 5% increase, such raises are not likely to represent significant improvements in anyone's standard of living.

But our salaries are only part of the story. Our university and its sister institutions are in a severe financial bind. During the period of rapid increases in enrollment we over-extended ourselves. We created new programs, sometimes at the expense of student-teacher ratios. Yet what we did was modest compared to what our competitors did. Because our legislature was never generous, we stretched our resources thinly. Now we are experiencing a small decline in enrollments. While having a few less students in each class does little to reduce our costs, our base budget is cut significantly. Unless the legislature modifies its financing method or compensates us for our loss, we face even more financial trouble. Unfortunately the Governor and the legislature find higher education an expensive luxury with a priority ranking below property tax relief and other politically attractive programs.
Austerity forces administrators to make unpopular decisions. There is no popular way to handle cuts in programs which means loss of jobs. When some people face higher work-loads because of shifts in enrollment or loss of colleagues, often there can be little relief. Those whose work-loads are dropping have more reason to be anxious than thankful.

There was a time when all new colleagues could expect to receive tenure if they performed reasonably. Today few can have such confidence. At the very least the final tenure decision is delayed, and for many may be negative. Until then the non-tenured undergo yearly evaluations explaining why they are not making it.

A few years ago anyone who received tenure could believe that his promotion to associate and finally to full professor were merely a matter of time. No one can hold such views realistically today. After several unsuccessful evaluations many will suspect they may never make it.

Full professors can no longer feel they have it made either. Student evaluations remind most professors that they are nothing special. When they compare their ratings with their colleagues they discover them to be about average (whatever the average rating students assign). Faint praise also comes to them from departmental evaluations unless the chairman has something special to say or understands how to motivate people. By and large both student and administrative evaluations are likely to be disappointing. Most of us are not thrilled with evaluations which do not distinguish us from our colleagues.

We keep hearing that the tenure system is under attack. Students would abolish it and some administrators are unhappy with it. Members of the public and the legislature keep asking how can they get rid of the incompetent. While we know that Oregon is not likely to take on a further disadvantage by becoming the first and perhaps only state to abolish tenure, the contempt such a desire expresses irritates us.

Our collegial system seems to be eroding. We no longer have the influence we once had. Our administrators have become a remote elite. They may be good men and women, but they are less and less our men and women. The Chancellor has bluntly told us that he does not represent us. His responsibility is to the Board. We should shift for ourselves.

Elsewhere organized faculties are making economic gains through collective bargaining. In our own state we find the members of the legislature listening respectfully to the classified employees who have collective bargaining. It is obvious to those of us who have talked to members of the legislature that they regard the agreement bargained through two months of negotiations between the governor and the O.S.E.A. as a firm commitment. The Governor recommends 6.5% for them and only 5% for us. It is also obvious that his recommendation for us is a figure which we may or may not get. Many of the legislators have told us flatly that we should organize.
After a meeting with legislators, members of the Southern Oregon College faculty took this advice seriously. Within days after 13 out of about 250 faculty members (all first year teachers who are not entitled to one year timely notice) received termination notices, the majority petitioned the state Public Employees Relations Board for a bargaining election. Because a majority of both the Portland State University and Oregon State University faculties had expressed interests in collective bargaining in informal surveys, the O.S. E.A. Board of Directors decided to seek a state-wide election in which it might gain exclusive representation. The decision will be ours to make in the next few weeks.

At this point competing organizations do not appear strong enough to challenge O.S. E.A. The American Federation of Teachers lacks strength and would have little chance unless the A. F. L.-C. I. O. would pump in funds. Its advantage would be the considerable power of organized labor in Oregon and its influence with the legislature. Like the A.F. T. the N.E.A. has very little membership among professors. Its advantage would be with the support of its affiliate the O.E.A. The third competitor is A.A. U. P. While it has a special appeal to faculty members, insufficient members have joined to make it a strong contender in Oregon. Furthermore, it lacks the strong allies of the A.F.T. and N.E.A. O.S.E.A. has the largest number of members: 1400 out of about 4500 potential members. It will need more before it can commit itself definitely. It has the advantage of 16,000 total members including classified employees. No legislature can afford to earn the antagonism of this organization.

What would collective bargaining mean? Except for the economic gains most faculty members may see little difference on the surface. No one seriously expects turmoil and strikes. Political pressure is more likely. We will see contracts both on the state level and on the campus level spelling out both the rights and responsibilities of faculty members and administrators. When we have a grievance, we will no longer need to plead. A grievance procedure will handle the situation. We will win some and lose some. At least we will know where we stand. Such traditions as academic freedom, faculty participation in curricular matters, relations with students, and other matters are not likely to change. We will have a voice and a vote in whatever organization wins, if we join it. Then we can make it what we want it to be.

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