

8 Aug 84

TO: English Department Senate and Executive Committee
FROM: Neill Megaw
SUBJECT: Nonresponsiveness of Department Chair and EC on Lecturer
Appointment Policy and Procedures This Summer

Attached, copies of correspondence earlier this summer, all of which except the Chair's letter to me of 12 July you should have received already.

Writing as a concerned member of the Department Senate, I asked-- in "Letter #1" of 22 June--eight questions about the policy and procedures followed this summer in making lecturer appointments for the fall. In his memo to the Department of 10 July, Dr. Sutherland answered one of the eight directly (#3: 47, including 11 UT PhD's or near-PhD's, got 9 month offers at 75%) and one more indirectly (#2: no lecturer asked for and received 100% appointment, except for some of the senior lecturers--who were reinstated at 100% on the Dean's insistence, although the memo does not mention this, rather than on the initiative of the Chair or EC.) The remaining six questions were not answered, and in his letter to me of 12 July the Chair makes clear that this nonresponse was intentional: "I cannot see that any useful purpose would be served at this time by releasing preliminary figures other than the ones I have given." So much for the Senate's right to find out what is going on.

Before passing on to the second letter of 22 June, let me inform the Senate that one non-"senior" lecturer who was (a) informed of his termination and then (b) restored on the 75% basis has in fact (c) been restored to 100% status, through the device of being retitled a "Specialist." This introduces still another class of nontenure appointment in our Department, and one which, if it is fair to judge by the experience in the School of Nursing a few years ago, is subject to even greater abuse than that of Lecturer. I have heard also--since neither the Chair nor EC will provide information, it is necessary to rely on hearsay--that the Chair's computation of how many lecturers would be needed in the fall (from which sprang the 75% decision) was based in part on his decision to cancel all fall sections of 307, 308, 310, 317, and perhaps other courses as well, which did not "make" on preregistration.

In the second letter of 22 June I objected strenuously to the collapse of intradepartmental communications, and requested (1) circulation to the Senate of EC minutes for lecturer-related meetings, (2) information on the EC's reaction to the plenary meetings of last spring, and (3) an apology to

the Department by the Chair and EC for failure to conduct an election for the Department Ombudsman. Dr. Sutherland's only response to all three is to chide me for unwarranted suspicion of colleagues who have "acted with great propriety." He responds, in fact, only to a closing paragraph in which I mention hearing from younger colleagues who thought the 75% decision by the EC was politically motivated and punitive; he suggests I ask these younger and defenseless colleagues to name the punished individuals and present evidence of punitive action. My suspicions about the EC, he concludes, are "unfounded and unjust." The implication is strong that I need lessons in courtesy, fairness, and moderation, and that the EC provides me with a convenient example of all these qualities in action.

The Senate may be interested in two additional items of hearsay. One is that the freshman class next year will be larger than expected, so that the 75% principle may be jettisoned at the last minute; at which time, if this does come about, the Chair and EC no doubt will regard the lecturer problem as happily resolved. The other is that the Dean has been considering once more the possibility of splitting the Department in two, separating the literature and composition people.

If the Department is to survive and if we are to have open lines of communication again, the Senate must find the nerve for real action early this fall. The Chair seems committed to continuing secretiveness, and the EC, composed though it is of colleagues most of us admire deeply as individuals, seems incapable as a group of insisting on open disclosure of important decisions to the Department, or of demanding from higher administration the level of financial support needed for our lower-division courses and the younger colleagues who teach them. The events of this summer show the Department in a shocking state of disrepair, and the pain it has caused forty-odd individuals to suffer may come to seem relatively mild in the future if the Senate does not act this fall to put our house in order.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712-1164

Department of English
PAR 110
(512) 471-4991

July 12, 1984

Professor Neill Megaw
Department of English
Campus

Dear Neill,

I enclose a copy of my notice to the Department. It gives the information pertinent to the hiring situation with regard to Lecturers and the Executive Committee's action. The process of the appointment of Lecturers is not finished; so the figures will change as we go along. Staffing is, of course, the responsibility of the Executive Committee and the chair. The Senate will certainly be interested in the results, but I cannot see that any useful purpose would be served at this time by releasing preliminary figures other than the ones I have given.

I find it hard to react to your second letter, Neill. It shows such unwarranted suspicion of your colleagues. Surely you know that the members of the Executive Committee are people of integrity whose concern for the Department is every bit as great as yours. Your colleagues have acted with great propriety in a very difficult situation.

The accusation, which you attribute to some unnamed persons, that those who spoke against the proposals of the Executive Committee have been punished is simply not credible. Ask those who have made such accusations to name those who have been punished and to show some basis for such a charge. Surely that is the least you could have done before circulating such attacks.

These people you are making such statements about are colleagues you have known for years, some of them ever since John Silber brought you to this Department. Surely if you will consider the matter calmly, you will realize how unfounded and unjust such suspicions are.

Sincerely yours,

Bill

W.O.S. Sutherland



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712

Office of the Chairman

TO: Members of the Department of English

FROM: W.O.S. Sutherland

DATE: July 10, 1984

SUBJECT: Lecturer Appointments

The appointment of Lecturers for 1984-85 is still in a fluid state, with applicants being moved from the "hold" list to the appointment list as successful applicants find jobs elsewhere or for other reasons decline their appointments; nevertheless I can report on some figures now even though they are not and will not be final until later.

1984-85 is a slack year for registration in required English courses. Many students have begun under the new catalogs but have not reached the 316K or 346K requirement. The Executive Committee, faced with a drop in enrollment, had to decide whether a limited number of Lecturers would hold full-time positions or whether it would make appointments at a maximum of three-quarter time and spread the work among more staff. It chose to make the work go farther; so three-quarter time is the maximum appointment except for those on the printed budget. The result has been that the department has been able to offer nine-month appointments to some twelve more applicants than it could have if appointments were full time. It was not an easy decision to make, but the three-quarter time keeps more of the staff working and keeps more of the staff intact for the predicted upturn which should begin next year.

To let everyone know where we now stand: We have been able to make nine-month offers to some forty-seven applicants. Eleven of those are or expect to be University of Texas Ph.D.'s, a category to which the department gave priority in hiring. Others who applied and who had made good records were placed on the "hold" list. We certainly expect to need a number of these people. We have committed the department to as many appointments as we are allowed, but for reasons of prudence we have never been able to hire 100% of our predicted need.

With a staff as large as ours one would expect that there will be a few whose work, in the eyes of the committee, does not warrant reappointment. A few were placed in this category this year; fortunately, fewer were in this group this year than last.

I am sorry for the difficulties which the uncertainties of the changeover to the new English requirements cause many to face. We should understand, though, that 1985-86 as the second year of the transition will carry its own particular difficulties which, since many will grow out of patterns of student registration, may be even harder to predict. Since the Lecturer is on one-semester or one-year appointment, hired according to need, it

LETTER #1



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712-1164

Department of English
PAR 110
(512) 471-4991

22 June 84

W. O. S. Sutherland
Department Chairman

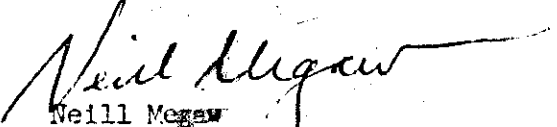
Dear Dr. Sutherland:

As a member of the Department Senate, I formally request a report on actions taken recently in regard to the reappointment or nonreappointment of Lecturers with prior service in our department interested in teaching in 1984-85.

Specifically, I wish to be informed on the following matters:

1. How many of such prior-service Lecturers requested reappointment at 100% or reduced time for one or both semesters of 1984-85--or, as may be true for "Senior Lecturers" with names on department lines, may be presumed to be interested in reappointment?
2. Of these, how many received notice of reappointment at 100% time, if they requested 100%?
3. How many received notice of reappointment at 75% or less, though requesting 100% or a greater percentage than granted?
4. How many received notification of nonreappointment?
5. How many received notification that reappointment might be forthcoming but that no assurance could be provided until later in the summer or fall?
6. How many, as of this date, 22 June, were sent no written response of any kind?
7. On the basis of what estimate, from what source on what date, about the number of sections of what specific courses which might be taught by Lecturers in 1984-85, were these actions based? To your knowledge, were there no conflicting estimates--from what source, as of what date--to cast doubt on the estimates actually used?
8. Was the Dean of our College kept informed at every stage of the deliberations on these questions?

I send additional requests for information, and some strenuous objections to your conduct as Chairman, in a separate letter. In order not to downgrade the urgency of this request for the basic facts, or to occasion any excuse for delay, I ask that you respond first to this letter, as of clearly greater importance. Please answer with all reasonable promptness, in writing.


Neill Megaw
Professor, and Department Senator

copy: Dean Robert King
cc: Department Senate & EC



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712-1164

Department of English
PAR 110
(512) 471-4991

22 June 84

W. O. S. Sutherland
Department Chairman

Dear Dr. Sutherland:

This is the second of two letters. I earnestly request that you consider the first letter and its questions first, and promptly, not delaying a reply until the information there solicited can be combined with the information here solicited.

I formally request, as a Department Senator, that adequately detailed minutes or summaries be circulated to all members of the Senate, and posted for the benefit of all other Department members, of any and all Executive Committee meetings and/or meetings of EC subcommittees considering the problem, which bear upon the actions taken late this spring and during the summer on the reappointment at full or reduced time or nonreappointment of Lecturers with one semester or more of service in the Department. I request that this information be in Senate mailboxes and posted no later than July 6, 1984.

I formally request also that the Senate be informed candidly and in adequate detail as to any discussion by the Executive Committee of any perceived "illegality" or dismissible frivolousness in the proceedings of the called plenary meetings of the Department this spring on the Lecturer problem--meetings at which you presided and on occasion ruled on the propriety or impropriety of voting by certain ranks on certain issues. I make this additional request because it has come to my attention subsequently that many younger colleagues believe the actions on reappointment or reduced-time reappointment or non-reappointment later taken simply swept aside as nonbinding the policies and procedures voted upon at those meetings. If to your knowledge the actions later taken by you as Chairman and by the Executive Committee did not in fact ignore or seriously distort the policies then approved by the Department, it is clearly your responsibility to explain the facts to all those colleagues who spent so much time and gave so much anguished thought in order to arrive at policies and procedures which would be best for our students and for the Department. No pressure of other duties can excuse your failure to supply clear and adequately detailed information on decisions, at least seemingly adverse, taken after such prolonged and intense debate.

I believe also that the Chairman and EC owe the Department an apology for failure to conduct an election for Department Ombudsman. This is another serious omission in what some perceive as a steadily declining system of intradepartmental communication.

In closing, let me confess that I do not relish having to write you about these matters in this tone. Several younger colleagues believe that you and an inner group of confidants in the Executive Committee are taking actions (1) to disenfranchise Lecturers by placing them on a reduced-time basis, and (2) to punish those who spoke out against the brutal--as I think--proposals of the Executive Committee. Your professed respect for AAUP policies--as you explain them--do not fully convince them. Or me.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neill McGaw".
Neill McGaw
Professor and Department Senator