

John R

4 Feb 85

Members of the Governance Committee of the English Department
(Profs. Alan Gribben, Rolando Hinojosa, Wayne Rebhorn)

Dear Colleagues:


I will not be attending the Thursday afternoon meeting at which the opinions of our assistant professors will be given your gravest attention, but wish to comment nevertheless on your governance proposal.

It has the virtues of its limitations. In this department we have been so accustomed of late to unctuous hypocrisy that it is something of a relief to encounter such naked contempt for democratic principles. True, your "Objectives" page begins with a commitment to friendliness only to conclude with an ugly attack on the department or more as the group solely responsible for our dispute last year; but this page does not seem part of the main document and I am quite ready to dismiss it.

The main document takes us back to the good old days of Heads rather than Chairs, giving the Dean's appointee authority to rule on all important questions, to determine the membership of all important committees, and to submit recommendations on the salary increases of an Executive Committee composed mainly of full professors. The EC is to be elected by a "simplified" system stripping minority interest groups within the department of the protections for which the Hare system was devised. (It is interesting that a colleague in our Government Department is at present trying to explain to the Austin City Council why the Hare system is superior to both single-member and at-large voting.) Page 3 of your document dithers on at some length about the multiple-stage election process, presumably to assure us that the recommended election will be democratic and to enable the Dean to call the EC a "representative" body. Dust in the eye. The real intention is to permanently disenfranchise most of those now teaching our basic courses--the work that the Centennial Commission identified as absolutely essential to the University if it is ever to achieve true greatness.

The internal politics of the English Department, even if it is among the largest single-campus departments in the world, may seem small potatoes to outsiders. But you know that this is not the truth. Your proposals would cheat thousands upon thousands of Texas students in order to preserve the privileges of a highly favored group within the department faculty. The Dean, no doubt, will support you; his well-known view of "realities" conveniently rules out any vigorous attempt on his part to redress the continuing bankruptcy of our composition program. Those of us opposing the antidemocratic, nonprofessional drift of this academically central department can only hope that higher authorities will pay attention. Meanwhile, my suggestion to the committee is that it dissolve, in ignominy.

Sincerely,


Neill Megaw
Professor, English

cc: HB and the Exec. Com. Dean King, Pres. Flava