



FACULTY SENATE communications committee NEWSLETTER



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DECEMBER AND JANUARY SENATE MEETINGS

Ed Dorman

Chair Fred Murphy reported that President Meredith is not especially fond of across-the-board increases, even when the amounts of money are very small. "He wants to get across the message that, if you work hard and achieve more, you are going to be rewarded." The President believes that this keeps the institution alive professionally. Faculty Regent Evans made a similar report, adding that the total average increase appears to be about 5%, apart from reductions due to the increase in health insurance costs. According to Evans, the President thinks the most important factor in determining merit is teaching, and is also very interested in promoting publication. Evans doesn't think that "scholarship," in the sense of keeping up in your field, will mean very much; he says that "the name of the game is publications."

Fred says that the matter of department chairs or heads is "still in progress." No final decision has yet been made. It appears that it may be quite a while before one is.

The President is concerned to recruit and retain African-American students and faculty members. He is considering bringing superior African-American high-school seniors from across the Commonwealth to Western for one-day visits. He is also, according to Fred, "seeking to assure that, in the future, no black faculty or professional staff member will be allowed to leave the campus without his knowing about it," and having a chance to intervene and persuade the person to stay.

The President hopes that the problem of large class sizes will be alleviated in time.

Rose Davis announced that, at its own request, the Department of Military Science will no longer be represented on the Faculty Senate, and members of that department will not be eligible to fill at-large positions in the Faculty Senate.

Bart White asked Jim Tomes an extensive sequence of questions on the subject of health insurance; Jim answered them. The complete set of questions and answers will be mailed to both faculty and staff.

Jim Wesolowski presented the results of a survey of 33 teaching departments on the subject of part-time teachers. According to the Wesolowski Report, the University employs 550 full-time faculty members, with a 6600 credit-hour work load, and 245 part-time faculty members, with a 1200 credit-hour work load. (There are also 30 early-retirement faculty members, with a 180 credit-hour work load.) The part-time faculty form 29.7% of the total faculty; their work load is 15% of the total work load. Eleven departments (1/3 of the number of departments surveyed) employed 74% of the part-time faculty.

Paul Campbell reported on the COSFL meeting of November 19. He said that all Kentucky state universities, except for the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville, are losing money on intercollegiate athletics. Western, Eastern, Murray and Morehead appear to be losing between one and two million dollars a year, each, on intercollegiate athletics.

Campbell also moved the adoption of the following resolution regarding the University advisement program: "In view of...problems, the Faculty Senate recommends that a faculty/staff advisement committee be established to work on resolving the difficulties associated with the program of mandatory advising, with particular attention to excessive advisee/faculty ratios, and to monitor other advisement issues as they occur. This committee should include faculty representing all the colleges, with special attention to representation of those departments most adversely affected. The Academic Advising Center and the Office of the Registrar should also be represented on this committee. The committee should be directed to present recommendations regarding mandatory advising in time to be put into place before the beginning of the spring advisement period for the fall, 1989, semester." The recommendation was adopted by a voice vote.

In response to "numerous" items in this newsletter which are alleged to have been "gratuitously offensive to many members of the faculty," Fred Murphy moved the following motion, "The Senate absolutely dissociates itself from these offensive items and offers its apologies to all who have been unjustly, unnecessarily, and gratuitously affronted by the contents of the Newsletter. The Senate authorizes the Chair and the members of the Executive Committee to draw up a set of guidelines which must be followed in all future editions of the Newsletter, and the Senate directs that its apology be the first item to appear in the next issue of the Newsletter." Senators Glaser, Veenker, Wesolowski, and Grice spoke against the resolution; in addition to Senator Murphy, Senators Weigel and Vanderheyden spoke for it. A few unidentified senators also made comments on one side or the other. Senator Wright moved to amend the resolution so as to replace it with the following: "The newsletter editor work with the communications committee in the production of the newsletter; each edition of the newsletter print a disclaimer which states that any article dealing with issues other than Senate business is the opinion of the writer, and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Senate; any such article must be signed by the writer; and the Senate pay for the newsletter out of Senate funds." The amendment passed by a voice vote, and the amended motion then passed by a voice vote.

Ron Veenker moved the following recommendations with respect to membership in the graduate faculty: "The graduate faculty review committee make specific recommendations to the individuals whose applications are denied as to the reasons for denial. These recommendations would be forwarded by means of the Graduate School's Dean's letter to the applicant. Western establish a system whereby membership on the graduate faculty is an honor and a privilege. Such a system would require that faculty receive some benefit from attaining such membership...we strongly recommend that applicants for graduate faculty be required to complete the application and not submit a professional vita which requires the review committee to decipher what is or is not relevant to the current application." The recommendations were passed by a voice vote.

Ron also proposed the following recommendation of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Senate concerning the General Education program proposed by the University Task Force on General Education: that the Senate advise the General Education Committee of the Academic Council to consider "the addition of courses in Health/Nutrition/Exercise-Physiology concepts and practices, Computer Literacy, Oral Communication concepts and skills, and Astronomy; and that Category VIII be entitled Fine Arts and Humanities, with the following additional courses (with no hours added to the category): Philosophy, Religion. The recommendation received its first reading.

Chuck Crume moved that the Senate poll the faculty in order to determine whether they prefer (1) the General Education program proposed by the General Education Task Force, (2) the program proposed by the College of Education Committee on General Education, (3) the current General Education program, (4) a General Education program in which each college sets up its own General Education requirements, and that the results of this poll be reported to the Faculty Senate and published. The motion passed by a voice vote.

VIEWPOINTS, ADVERSARIA, TRIVIA

The opinions expressed in this section are those of the author of the piece in which they appear; they do not necessarily reflect those of the Faculty Senate, the Communications Committee, the National Foundation for the Humanities, the Choir Invisible, or any person who might ever run for elective office.

A LOOK AT A LETTER

- ED DORMAN

Although the letter printed, without alteration, below was sent to the Faculty Senate rather than to the Newsletter, the fell spirit of Writing and **Thinking** Across the Curriculum compels me, if not to grade, at least to correct it. It was signed by eleven persons whose names, out of charity, I withhold:

Although the Women's Studies Committee objects to the nonprofessional content of the anonymous article, "Maleness Conference at WKU," in the last Faculty Senate Newsletter, our main concern is that it appeared under the masthead of the Faculty Senate, thus giving it an authority which we hope it does not possess.

The sexism becomes immediately apparent if one changes sex to race, such as "Whatever happened to penis envy?" to "Whatever happened to white supremacy?" or "Genderjabber: How to Substitute Gender for Scholarship" to "Racemace: How to Substitute Race for Scholarship." Surely all Senate members do not share the frame of mind of the writer.

(1) For the definition of the word "unprofessional" as an essential term of abuse for the use of the shifty, see the September, 1988, Newsletter, page 10.

(2) The characterization of the article as "anonymous" is a misrepresentation. It was unsigned, and in every issue of last semester's Newsletter it was clearly stated that every such article was the sole responsibility of the editor, whose name (mine) was printed in the first two issues and was a matter of public record. Faculty members at an institution bearing in its name the title "university," who were unable to identify the author, should consider the possibility that the true source of their discomfort lies in an affinity for a more physical line of work.

(3) (A minor, but intriguing, point) The letter states that the appearance of the article under the masthead of the Senate gives it "authority." Really? With whom?

(4) The arguments made in the second paragraph of the letter are arguments by analogy and must therefore satisfy two conditions: (i) the analogies must be valid ones, and (ii) they must be efficacious - i.e., they must actually demonstrate the propositions they are intended to demonstrate.

(i) The writers of the letter, even at the risk of severe bleeding from the pores, need to learn that, in constructing an argument by analogy, one is not allowed to replace a term with just any other term one would like to use. It would not be correct, for example, to replace "Whatever Happened to Penis Envy?" with "Whatever Happened to the Nazi Death Camps," no matter how effective that might be.

Now "White Supremacy" is not the racial analogue of "Penis Envy." PE is a fantasy of Sigmund Freud's, an illusion bred in a febrile psychiatric cult once fashionable within a certain petite culture and never believed in by a significant number of members of either sex. "White Supremacy," on the other hand, was a condition actually existing, a political and economic reality from which we all still suffer in some way. Neither term is the analogue of the other. In fact, "White Supremacy" is the racial analogue, not of PE, but of "Male Supremacy," a thing which, unlike PE, was no joke. One cannot help suspecting that "White Supremacy" was used only because it is the name of a very bad thing. The technique is well known.

For a racial analogue of PE, we would look first for a speculation, unfounded and never achieving widespread acceptance, but well-known, that blacks envy some anatomical feature of whites Alas. Having to give up on that, the best I can do is the non-anatomical myth of the Great White Athlete, supposedly superior by virtue of heredity to athletes of every other race. It was, unfortunately, accepted by many whites; even so, is "Whatever Happened to the Great White Athlete?" a likely title for a racist talk? The question posed by that title is a mockery of white illusions of superiority. It is not difficult to imagine a black author writing such an article. All this can be transposed easily to gender and the myth of PE.

The writers of the letter then replace "Genderjabber" with "Racemace," apparently thinking that mace is to race as jabber is to gender. (Here, it is not necessary to change the word at all. To jabber is an activity as common to humans of all races as to those of either sex. It is what we do.) Of course, it is not likely that thinking had anything to do with it. "Mace," like "White Supremacy," has bad associations, and that is probably all that was required. And it rhymes with "race."

(ii) In the replacement of "How to Substitute Gender for Scholarship" by "How to Substitute Race for Scholarship" we have, for the first time, a valid analogy. But is it an efficacious one; i.e., is the racial statement racist? Do scholars of any race defend passing off as scholarship something that is not? Is an attempt to present anything as something it is not ever anything other than fraud?

It must be understood that there is here no reference to categories such as affirmative action, which, as I understand it, is an attempt to remedy injustice by assuring fair treatment for those who would not otherwise be likely to receive it. Affirmative action implies no dishonesty. The reference is to talks of the type in which a speaker, having no scholarly expertise in a particular area, delivers an address in that area and wants it to be considered, not only (what might be legitimate) a service, but a scholarly, activity. This kind of attempt, when successful, ultimately cheapens the truly scholarly work done by persons of every race or sex.

The most disturbing feature of the letter (and, on a far lower level, of the numerous anonymous telephone calls I have received) is the willingness to try to make ones own group off-limits (though this would not be admitted) to all criticism. Ordinarily, I would consider it cruel to subject so frail a production to detailed analysis; however, the epithet "sexist" has come to be tossed about far too casually. It is a worse epithet than "communist"; many people have become communists out of compassion for the poor and the weak, but no one is a sexist because of any noble motive. Still, if the word "sexist" were replaced in such charges by the word "communist," the nature of the game being played would be clear enough. It is not a new one.

For a more intelligent response to the Newsletter article, read the following LETTER

TO THE EDITOR

- PAULINE JONES

Your source (for the Maleness Conference article) was indeed unreliable: none of the topics reported for the upcoming conference on maleness and the problems thereof were accurately reported. Apparently your source had a list from the early stages of the planning for the conference, before the focus was narrowed to the concerns of the **academic male**. I enclose a copy of the program, which is complete except for the names of the presenters. These are omitted because the participants wish to remain anonymous to their female colleagues, for reasons that will be apparent to you.

FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MALENESSAND THE PROBLEMS OF BEING MALE IN A FEMINIST WORLD

Maintaining the Position of Academia as the last bastion of White Male Supremacy.

Session 1: Professional Concerns

Self-Publication: A Method of Circumventing Editors Who Have Been "Intimidated" by Feminists.

"A Man of Letters": Maintaining the Scholarly Tradition.

Committee Membership: Gambits to Turn Any Meeting into a Discussion of Football.

Session 2: Hiring and Promotion

Serving on a Selection Committee: Techniques for Hiring White Males Without Incurring the Wrath of the Affirmative Action Officer.

Teaching, Research, Publication, AND Motherhood: Why the Academic Life is too Strenuous for the Female.

The Beard (or other Parts) as BFOQ.

Writing Affirmative Action Reports: Maintaining the Illusion of Equality.

Using PMS as a Weapon Against the Promotion of Women (A Discussion of the Myths and How to Perpetuate Them).

Session 3: Campus Politics

Gender Politics, or How to Elect Representatives Who Can Talk Basketball With the Regents.

Damning with Faint Praise: Discrediting Women's Studies Programs Without Revealing Chauvinism.

Man to Man: Outflanking the Male Feminist.

Child Care Centers on Campus: REAL Mothers Belong at Home.

When the '80's "Coed" Won't Play: How to Avoid Sexual Harassment Charges and Still Make Her Earn Her A.

Session 4: Language Issues

Why Gender-neutral Language is a Threat to MANKind.

Combatting the Threat: He Who Hesitates Becomes a Person.

What Do You Call Her? A Select List of Terms of Diminution for the Woman Who Refuses to be Called a Girl, With Commentary on their Appropriateness for Students, Staff, and Faculty of Various Ranks.

Session 5: The Male Ego

The Male Professor's Mid-life Crisis: Logistics of Divorcing Your Wife, Changing Your Image, and Finding a Child-Woman to Help You Fend Off Adulthood.

"I was ONLY JOKING"- Why No Male is REALLY Anti-Woman.

LOGIC PUZZLES

The logic puzzles in the last issue of the Newsletter were adapted from puzzles given in *What is the Name of this Book?*, by Raymond Smullyan.

SACRED SUBJECTS

It is absolutely useless and absurd to tell a man that he must not joke about sacred subjects. It is useless and absurd for a simple reason: because there are no subjects that are not sacred subjects . . . If it is wrong to joke about a dying man it is wrong to joke about any man. For any man is a dying man; a man dying slow or fast. In short, if we say that we must not jest about solemn subjects, what we really mean or ought to mean is that we must not jest at all. And that is what some of the old Puritan ascetics (for whom I for one have a vast respect and admiration) did mean. They did mean and they did say that one should not joke at all; that life was too uniformly serious to be joked about. That seems to me to be one of the two reasonable and possible positions . . . There is one other possible position, and that I adopt; I say that life is too uniformly serious not to be joked about. . . .

I think we may jest on any subject. But I do not think that we may jest on any occasion. It is really irreverent to speak frivolously at those particular moments at which the seriousness of the matter is being specially and fiercely felt. We joke about death-beds, but not at death-beds

Life is serious all the time; but living cannot be serious all the time . . . In one sense, as has been said above, everything is intense and solemn; but in a more everyday sense there are things which we may be permitted to call frivolous . . . If you wish to be frequently solemn, if you have a continually flowing spring of superfluous solemnity, I beseech you to put your solemnity into these things. In these things solemnity will do no harm.

Observe and imitate the admirable Scotch nation. They joke about their religion; but they never joke about their golf. You cannot be too solemn about golf to be a good golfer; you can be a great deal too solemn about Christianity to be a good Christian. You may safely put into your neckties solemnity, and nothing but solemnity, because neckties are not the whole of your life — at least, I hope not. But in anything that does cover the whole of your life — in your philosophy and your religion — you must have mirth. If you do not have mirth you will certainly have madness.

— G. K. Chesterton