

t u f times

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VICTORY

ADMINISTRATION BACKS DOWN ON FREE SPEECH ISSUE TUF NOW AN "AFFILIATED" GROUP AT UH/CL

It was a long time coming. In April, 1981, TUF asked then-Chancellor Alfred Neumann to be allowed to meet on campus and use university facilities free of charge. Neumann's response, after consulting with UH attorney Pat Bailey, was negative. The grounds? There is a Texas state law against collective bargaining by public employees. Since TUF supported collective bargaining for this group, allowing TUF to meet on campus would be to recognize collective bargaining and would thus be illegal. Our sentiments, not our actions, made it impossible to recognize us.

If this "reasoning" makes no sense to you, it made no sense to us, either. But it was UH policy for more than three years. Meanwhile, TUF guilds everywhere else in the state were meeting without difficulty, even at the infamous San Jacinto College. Clear Lake TUF asked new chancellor Thomas Stauffer to reconsider the university's retrograde stand; he refused. In spring, 1984, our Clear Lake Guild decided that the situation had become intolerable and that the denial of our basic rights of assembly and free speech had gone on long enough. Members of our Guild voted to bring a lawsuit against the university unless it allowed us to exercise the same axiomatic rights as other faculty and many student organizations. TFT-TUF attorney Barry Odell wrote to Chancellor Stauffer on May 8, 1984, and threatened legal action, saying, in part, that "there is no justification whatsoever for your refusal to grant the Guild the status it has repeatedly requested." Odell concluded: "This letter constitutes the Guild's last request that you grant it university organization [status]. In the event that you have not done so by May 28, 1984, legal action will be taken against you, Mr. Bailey, and the University."

It worked, and quickly. On May 21, 1984, Scott Chafin, Assistant University Counsel, wrote to Odell, saying, in part, "please advise your clients that their organization can expect to receive the same privileges accorded to other organizations of faculty similarly situated." Rather than submit to a lawsuit it could not win, the University has now allowed us to meet on campus and to use the university mails--hence you received this issue of TUF TIMES in your post office box, not in your faculty suite.

Clear Lake TUF regards this development no so much as a victory for us as for the entire faculty, in fact, the entire university, including the administration. What can we learn from our successful effort? That faculty can win if they are organized and persistent, clear and consistent. Getting organized is the way to advance university faculty in Texas.

Moreover, we congratulate the administration for yielding to common sense and reason. Freedom of speech and assembly are in their best interest as well as ours. As an affiliated organization of responsible academicians we will continue to work for the best interests not only of the faculty but of the university as a whole.

----- SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE "UPGRADING" OF UH/CL, PARTICULARLY ITS FACULTY.

One of the things that seems to have upset UH/CL faculty recently has been an implicit, sometimes almost explicit, commitment on the part of the administration to "upgrading" the faculty. Most of this commitment has appeared in administration efforts to change promotion and tenure procedures, in talk about "terminal associates," and in the sharp axe wielded in hiring and firing decisions by the Vice Chancellor and Provost and the Chancellor.

Much of this upset, which has led to a significant decline of morale among faculty members in the last two years, might have been avoided, and might still be rectified,

with a couple of actions by the administration. First, faculty need to know far more explicitly than the new draft document, despite its assertions (page 1) reveals, about what will be expected of them for tenure and promotion. Are we talking about books? articles? What is outstanding teaching? Specifically what "excellent colleges and universities having comparable teaching loads and levels of resources"? And who will make promotion and tenure decisions? At most outstanding universities and colleges, for instance, control over hiring and firing and promotion lies almost completely with the faculty in their collective identity, even though legally the final authority rests with the president or chancellor or board of regents. Will our top administrators continue to make most of the tenure and promotion decisions? Will they continue to intervene frequently in hiring decisions? The faculty needs explicit information along these lines.

Faculty morale also needs a sense of a more thoroughgoing examination of its quality in order to be reassured about its own "upgrading." Normally an institution would dedicate the first one or two years of self-study, particularly of its faculty, to an examination of existing strengths and weaknesses and then make an explicit commitment to fostering strengths and dealing with weaknesses. So far, however, we have had upgrading but do not know what we are upgrading, or to what end. The administration needs to put much of the whole question of hiring, tenure, and promotion on hold until it examines the existing faculty in much greater detail. Where are we outstanding? Where are we good? Where do we need work? This, of course, requires at least a substantial investigation of the purpose of each segment of the university and an examination of programs in light of that purpose.

UH/CL's administration should have started its six-year plan with an investigation of what the university is before listing 100 things it might be. It still ought to do so. Some of those 100 things might already be, some might be easy to implement, some might be impossible to realize. Only a poor housekeeper starts cleaning before knowing what needs to be cleaned. Only a poor scholars start studying before they know what they want or need to study. Only poor administrators change things before learning what it is they are changing. Determining what we have and are before changing it would have the distinct advantage of providing a solid basis on which to develop appropriate directions for the campus' development over the next decade while tapping faculty expertise in areas they know and keeping morale at a much higher level. Any management textbook will tell you that employees, which in the university includes faculty, feel much better about "upgrading" if they know that those who are upgrading know something about who they are, what they do and have done, and are interested in involving them in that process.

Bruce Palmer