

measure of segregation, is the distinctly American way of achieving a practicable biracial *modus vivendi*. The markers along King's highway read *African example, Black nationalism, Civil disobedience*—an ABC which leads to

political *Dissolution* in America as in Africa. The route of the Freedom Riders looks like a fine blacktop in Ghana, but in the All-American, Miss-America Magnolia State of Mississippi that road is closed.



COUNTERATTACK

THE INTEMPERATE EDUCATOR

by

RUSSELL KIRK

AT A WELL-REPUTED private university, not long ago, a faculty committee was selecting the people to be invited as guest lecturers during the next year. One member of the faculty suggested the name of a famous professor of philosophy, Dr. Sidney Hook. This scholar is a forthright Marxian socialist, long associated with American "liberal" and "progressive" causes. But Dr. Hook also happens to be a courageous anti-Communist, opposing the presence of Communist teachers in the colleges—not simply because he disagrees with them, but because they are conspiratorial agents, discrediting the Academy and deliberately violating professional ethics.

Yet the dean of the faculty at this university angrily vetoed that suggestion. "What?" cried the dean. "Hook? That Fascist reactionary? Why, he's against academic freedom." The dean—not himself a Communist—was all in favor of academic freedom: liberty, that is, for anyone who does not deviate from the dean's private convictions. There are no real enemies to the Left, the dean thinks, and any heretic who believes so should be anathema.

Nowadays the social opinions of numerous American college and university teachers are held with a defiant rigidity. Though these scholars may praise complete freedom of opinion in the abstract, still if someone advances an argument running counter to their political prejudices, they reach for bell, book, and candle. Having known some

hundreds of professors on fifty or sixty campuses, I venture here to describe this professional intemperance, and to suggest its causes.

Writing to me about a certain "liberal" conformity in textbooks for courses in American history, a distinguished historian of science observes, "Someone ought to analyze the reasons why an entire class of scholars, teachers, and workers in the field of American history should think so much alike. The situation resembles unpleasantly the pre-revolutionary conditions at the Russian universities of Tsarist days, where faculty and students formed a hostile falange against the regime. That our American government should seem in the same position as the Tsar, is very depressing."

My correspondent, born in Eastern Europe, once was a Communist, and knows American campuses well. Though there may be some measure of hyperbole in his comparison with the Tsarist universities, it remains certain that many professors are profoundly discontented with modern American life, and endeavor to arouse a similar dissatisfaction among their students.

"He that lives in a college, after his mind is sufficiently stocked with learning," Edmund Burke wrote while he was still a young man, "is like a man who, having built and rigged a ship, should lock her up in a dry dock." Now I submit that the principal threat to academic freedom in the United States comes from drydocked minds: the

minds of ideologues within the walls of the Academy. Some men who spend their lives within the Academy grow mellow; but others turn sour. The minds of such have been drydocked, and that in rather a mean and ruinous dock. They put one to thinking of Wordsworth's lines:

"The good die first;
And they whose hearts are dry as
summer dust
Burn to the socket."

Theirs is the glory of Cyrus P. Whittle, the Yankee schoolmaster in Santayana's novel *The Last Puritan*: to demolish famous reputations and to expose as shams the most cherished traditions of our culture. Too many professors feel that they have been invested with the prophetic afflatus; and, having discarded theology and morals like so much antiquated rubbish, they are thrown back upon the dreary resources of Twentieth-Century nihilism. To feel one's self a prophet, but at the same time to insist "I am, and none else beside me," is to indulge a dangerous mood. For lack of anything better, such a professor often turns to some "political religion," some ideology, as a substitute for the traditions of civility and right reason.

II

MOST FACULTY MEMBERS, according to Dr. George N. Shuster, President Emeritus of Hunter College, have been sincerely dedicated to their profession. But their taste for a kind of secular religion also has tended sometimes toward gross intolerance. As Dr. Shuster writes, "Many have been or are sons of rabbis or ministers of the Gospel who have preferred secular learning to the lore of Scripture. These have given to the universities and colleges they

have served a very special impulse to achieve innovation and even reform. Perhaps they are primarily responsible for a quality which no one can dissociate from the American campus and which is virtually unknown in Europe—a characteristic to be defined on the one hand as an almost belligerent addiction to freedom and on the other as a commitment to a 'liberal position,' not quite a dogma but almost one, which assays the Devil according to the degree of his 'conservatism.'

Nowadays, the bundle of liberal or radical quasi-dogmas of the bellicose professor usually is some variety of socialism, though often called "liberalism"; sometimes it goes so far as Communism. But this choice of allegiance is almost accidental, dictated only by the climate of opinion in our time. In another age and country, the secular preacher in the college, the professor whose mind is in the sour drydock, might turn to Fascism, or anarchism, or Lord knows what.

The disease of our time, Edmund Burke said of his own era, is an intemperance of intellect: That is quite as true in 1961. An intemperance of intellect, which Burke called "the cause of all our other diseases," provokes the present controversy over academic freedom. Zealots of various persuasions have been attempting, sometimes with good intentions, to convert the higher learning into an instrument for "social reconstruction," or for instilling "integration with the American democratic way of life," or for "remaking human nature." Usually their endeavors are intemperate; for it is intoxicating to try to transmute Wisdom into Power. So far as academic freedom is endangered today, that freedom can be preserved only if we hold fast to an old principle:

that the aim of education is the improvement of the human reason and imagination, for the individual's own sake. The Academy gained its peculiar freedom because the Academy was temperate. If the Academy becomes tipsy, blown about by every wind of doctrine, filled with professors who prefer power to wisdom, people eager to adore the idols of the marketplace—why, then the Academy will have lost its principle of temperance, and soon will lose its liberties.

This intellectual intemperance is not confined to colleges and universities: in some ways it is worse in the public schools, for decades suffering under what Professor Harold Clapp calls "the stranglehold on education"—that is, the domination of the National Education Association hierarchy, with its muddled zealotry for the obsolete doctrines of John Dewey and his disciples.

Nearly everyone in these United States favors academic freedom—in the abstract. But the tendency of democracies to seek virtual unanimity of opinion, at every level of society, which Tocqueville saw at work long ago, continues to operate in America. For many people nowadays, among them professors, "academic freedom" means perfect liberty to agree with their opinions. So long as the alleged violation of academic freedom is against a latter-day "liberal," a number of these gentlemen are ready to protest vehemently. But if the unfortunate is a conservative, or an old-fangled liberal, or even an anti-Communist Marxist—why, what do deviationists like that need freedom for?

III

I OFFER a few examples. Some months ago, the faculty senate of Michigan

State University voted to protest against the provision of the National Defense Education Act which requires loyalty oaths from students accepting loans from the federal government. The vote was four hundred against the loyalty oath, one in favor of the loyalty oath. That obdurate one professor was reprimanded by the university authorities. And doubtless many of the four hundred talk anxiously about the "menace of conformity" in America.

Mr. William Buckley, Jr., editor of *National Review*, was invited to speak by Washington University, St. Louis. Before he arrived, and during his visit there, he was libelously vilified by a professor of English, who denounced him as a "Fascist," and scourged the university authorities for presuming to allow a man so notoriously opposed to radicalism to speak in a university hall. The terms employed by the learned professor would have been rather strong for the Communist *Worker*.

A Michigan county superintendent of schools held a teacher-conference on Communism, inviting reputable speakers who described the menace of the Soviet system. For this temerity, some of the leading lights of the public-school educationist hierarchy in Michigan endeavored to prevent the superintendent's holding any more conferences, and otherwise to cause trouble for him with state authorities.

At a college in New York, in 1959, a teacher of German was anonymously accused of having been a member of the Nazi party, fighting against the Russians during the Second World War. Members of the faculty gave this news to the newspapers and organized protests against their colleague. The professor of German resigned, though he had not been accused of introducing

dangerous ideas into his classes, or of being a totalitarian nowadays. No sooner had he resigned, than some of the very people who had denounced him demanded that the American Association of University Professors investigate the college administration, arguing that acceptance of the professor's resignation constituted administrative discrimination because of a teacher's old political associations! The aim of the 'liberal' professors in this case seems to have been to use the episode as an excuse for allowing communist and fellow-traveling professors to teach without challenge. With such scholars, the exercise of academic freedom is all a matter of whose ox is gored.

IV

WELL, real academic freedom is a right or privilege enjoyed by scholars in institutions of higher learning. The theory of academic freedom is that the search after Truth involves certain risks: for truth is not always popular in the marketplace, and there are opinions and fields of speculation which cannot prudently be discussed in the daily press, or in public meetings. Academic freedom is intended to give the scholar a measure of security against arbitrary interference with his study and teaching — although such security can never be perfect. Now every right we enjoy has some corresponding duty. The obligation which corresponds to the right of academic freedom is this: the scholar must be dedicated to the conservation and the advancement of the Truth. He must be the guardian of the wisdom of our ancestors, and the active thinker who reconciles permanence and change in his generation. If, failing to fulfill those responsibilities, he becomes a secular

propagandist, an ideological indoctrinator, a man in love with power, then he falls derelict in his duty, losing his sanction for the peculiar freedom of the Academy. He ought to be, in fine, a man of temperate intellect.

But nowadays, according to the poet and scholar Ludwig Lewisohn, it is "the conservative professor and student, the religious professor and student" who are a forlorn and persecuted remnant. And Dr. Morton Cronin, writing in *The New Republic*, ironically says that *some* conservatives are tolerated on American campuses — so long as they are quiet, not vexing faculty meetings with their obsolete opinions. These gentlemen, Dr. Cronin adds, are the Uncle Toms of Academe; they must content themselves with murmuring that "they're not ashamed of being black."

One liberal professor has grown somewhat disquieted at the intolerance of some colleagues: Dr. Ralph Gilbert Ross, at the University of Minnesota. Writing in *Commentary*, he says that a faculty committee, of which he was a member, refused to promote a professor on the ground that he once had said something in favor of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Mr. Ross himself is no admirer of the late Joseph McCarthy; and he adds, uneasily, that perhaps this discrimination may be justified by the argument that anyone who sympathized with Senator McCarthy was stupid. But the episode affected him disagreeably. It well might. When disagreement on current politics is made the index of stupidity, not much scope remains for academic freedom.

At a municipal college, a professor with many publications to his credit was due to receive permanent tenure. A faculty committee objected to his

candidacy. (Most of the committee members had not published much, so that one is tempted to think of Aesop on the fox and the sour grapes.) But their charge against their colleague amounted to an accusation of personal immorality. When pressed to be more specific on an indictment similar to that brought against Socrates, they replied that the candidate was "against democracy." What did they mean? Well, the committee said, sourly, the professor had written some unkind things about that great democratic educator John Dewey. One is left to assume that academic freedom means the liberty to agree with Dewey. In this affair, despite the efforts of the faculty committee, the college's president sustained and promoted the "immoral" professor. I doubt not that several of the committee members believe that Voltaire was a great fellow; and they are willing to die for — their own monopoly of the classroom.

Their discrimination against the academic dissenter is not purely political: it extends to questions of religious belief. In some colleges, the established professorial orthodoxy is quite as intolerant of religious conviction as the medieval Church was intolerant of heresy. At a fashionable women's college, faculty members are cautioned by the administration not to "get involved" in students' religious societies. The Roman Catholic scholar is the worst bugaboo of such educators, but in diminished degree this hostility may extend to every variety of Christianity, excepting—and then grudgingly—only the more enthusiastic advocates of the "Social Gospel." A "liberal" scholar of this stamp frequently equates Communism and Catholicism as "totalitarian movements," arguing that the Catholic

professor ought not to be admitted to the Academy because he is "committed to dogmas," is "not his own master," and so is unable to "pursue the truth wherever it may lead." (All truth, you know, leads to secularized "liberalism.")

A priest in Detroit, for instance, though attached to a municipal university, was rebuffed by a professor of sociology, who refused even to argue with him in print, "because Father M—lacks the necessary scholarly disciplines." That the priest happened also to be a Doctor of Philosophy of a secular university was brushed aside as irrelevant: every priest, the implication ran, by nature is an obscurant.

V

AND SOMETIMES this discrimination is sectional, or regional, in character. The seaboard states of the Northeast, in the view of some orthodox Twentieth-Century "liberals," are the repository of learning and enlightenment; while the wicked South is the pit of blackest reaction and ignorance. If the doctrinaire liberal never has been south of Mason's and Dixon's line, his righteous prejudice is so much the stronger. He doesn't need to *see* the South: to go there would turn his stomach, he knows. He has read about the South in Mr. Erskine Caldwell's romances, and has beheld it depicted on Broadway; and that's evidence enough. If someone interjects that the most flourishing school of American writing today is Southern — why, the impudent heretic must be a Fascist and a racist.

An English friend of mine, new to this country, suggested to Northern liberal acquaintances that he might enroll at Duke University. "What?" they murmured, scandalized. "Duke? That's

a *Southern* university." Such contempt sometimes extends, though not so strongly, to the Middle West. These states, an Eastern ritualistic liberal knows, are the Bible Belt, the abode of the late Joseph McCarthy, and a cultural wasteland. Even scholars of outwardly tolerable views, if they have emerged from this desolation, may be suspect as corrupted by prairie bigotry, until they have demonstrated their loyalty to ritualistic liberalism by signing the approved petitions against nuclear armament, South Africa, and the like.

But above and beyond politics and religion and region, the all-embracing conformity exacted by the ritualistic liberals is conformity to the doctrine of "non-commitment." A scholar, these gentlemen argue, ought to be committed to no firm point of view about anything. Though he ought to pursue Truth, he never must embrace her. His mind, like that of John Locke's infant, ought to be a blank tablet, so far as first principles of morals and politics and taste are concerned. He should doubt all things, for the sake of doubting; he should demolish old prejudices in students' minds. Nothing is settled, or ought to be; the function of the university is to "destroy all barriers to the questing spirit of man." At one state college, certain professors of education, sociology, and psychology — dedicated "liberals" all — drew up an elaborate set of tests to be administered to all entering freshmen and all graduating seniors, for determining their "value preferences" and "environmental prejudices," and how efficaciously the college does its good work of eradicating stubborn opinions acquired from tradition and family instruction.

One question in this set was the inquiry whether the student believed that

"it is wrong for a brother to have sexual relations with his sister." The student who replied "yes" was classified, so far as this question went, as inclined toward irrational prejudices. Not that the liberal professors favored incest on principle; they were in favor of nothing on principle; they simply aspired to "give the student an open mind" and "set free the inquiring rationality." When the tests were analyzed, they found, presumably to their sorrow, that graduating seniors left college with the very prejudices they had entertained as entering freshmen: the college had failed in its mission.

Whether the liberal professors really act upon this absolute relativism is another matter. At an Ohio university, a decade ago, some of these scholars proposed that all members of the faculty be required to vow that they would teach only by "the empirical method." This, it turned out, meant the philosophical and social principles of John Dewey. Only after heated debate was the proposal defeated. In politics, the ritualistic liberals affirm, a scholar ought to have no commitments — except, that is, to democracy and liberalism. Strong affirmation of faith in democracy and liberalism isn't commitment; it's merely The Truth. And who defines democracy and liberalism? Why, a faculty committee of latter-day liberals. Who else could?

At one great university, a conservative scholar was proposed for an appointment. No, never, said the doctrinaire liberals: he's committed to a Point of View. They wouldn't for the world think of depriving him of his right to express that Point of View — except at their university. Some brave soul suggested, at this moment, that the faculty already included several eminent

men of the Left. "Nonsense!" said the majority; commitment in that direction — well, it's harmless, anyway.

These instances are almost numberless. Last year Dr. Glenn Campbell was appointed to the headship of the Hoover Institution, at Stanford University. Members of the faculty promptly inquired of him whether he shared many of the views of the Institution's founder, Mr. Herbert Hoover. When he replied in the affirmative, the faculty senate — by a small majority, it is true — voted that they disapproved of his appointment. Fortunately for the cause of real academic freedom, it was not in the faculty's power to remove him.

VI

HERE I HAVE SET DOWN some fragmentary evidence of the malady of the intemperate educator. Upon many American campuses, the prevailing climate of opinion remains — if modified — still a quasi-collectivistic liberalism, among faculty politicians and those energetic persons who push themselves to the chairmanships of lecture-committees and tenure-committees. There is a wonderfully illiberal liberalism. The most charitable view a dispassionate observer can take of these gentlemen is that they do not understand the meaning of their own favorite word 'liberal.' At a Wisconsin college, some young instructors objected to having any known conservative speak on the campus, because "this is a *liberal arts* college." Conceivably they really were ignorant that political liberalism is something much younger than the liberal arts; unaware that the liberal education which John Henry Newman praised is something quite different from the partisan social liberalism which Newman detested. But ignorance is a

poor excuse for a professor.

A gentleman with much experience of our universities observes to me that many professors really are not interested in true academic freedom, however great an outcry they may make about alleged threats to their right of free expression. What some professors mean, when they say "academic freedom," is academic power. They do not truly desire to conserve or extend truth, or to teach a body of knowledge to intelligent students. What they really desire is the authority to bend their colleagues and their students to their own will. They want to compel their colleagues, and their students, and the world at large, to submit to some particular ideology; and even that ideology is not so important to them as the sense of power which accompanies the opportunity to propagandize, to indoctrinate, to remould society and human nature radically.

Most of us are too fond of power. Harder to repress than lechery or gluttony or avarice, this lust for power is the strongest of vices. But the scholar professes to have given up his claim to power in favor of the service of truth. And so a professor lusting after power, under the cloak of academic freedom, converts liberty into license. Such a power-topsy professor is not truly seeking freedom either for himself or for others; he really wishes to impose his own will and opinions, without much scruple, upon whomever he happens to have under his influence.

I am not saying that this vice of intemperance afflicts *most* American educators. The majority of them are tolerant enough, interested in their discipline rather than in power. Nor am I saying that intemperance and the power-lust are peculiar to *American* professors; as M. Raymond Aron suggests in his book,

The Opium of the Intellectuals, this situation has been at least as bad in the French universities; and I have met at Oxford colleges certain influential professors who are quite as politically dogmatic and impatient of contradiction as are their American counterparts.

I am saying only this: on many of our campuses the belligerent political radical or anti-religious zealot has an influence out of all proportion to the numerical strength of his clique. It is up to the Academy to regain its own order, justice, and freedom.

We Pause To Remark

We like the review, in just three sentences, of one of the contemporary pedagogical masterpieces, by a confused but determined teacher. The book, she said, sets forth the following striking and important truths:

1. Individually, the individual needs to satisfy his individual needs.
2. Basically, the basic problem of the basic individual is to find a basic for his basic needs.
3. In order for the learner to learn a learning experience, the learner must first experience the learning experience.

What we cannot understand is how on earth our grandfathers ever got an education from teachers who did not understand such simple and fundamental principles.

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But there is no reason why we should rest on our laurels, even today. So we welcome the pamphlet, *Quest For Quality*, issued by the Government Printing Office. It is described in the GPO release as: "A report summarizing research designed to compare the effectiveness of independent study and the more traditional methods of college instruction as they are related to student learning; and describing some of the new curriculum patterns which are being inaugurated to improve instruction. 1960, published 1961. Catalog No. FS 5.250: \$0016." And the price for all of this scientifically distilled wisdom is only fifteen cents.

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And under the influence of the geniuses in the top echelons of the National Education Association, the self-improvement of Education by the Educationists is unceasing. Typical subjects of the theses for which brilliant newcomers into this highly honored field have won their Master's or Doctor's Degrees in Education have included the following: *Characteristics of Principal Officers of Parent-Teacher Associations of Pennsylvania in Relation to the Efficiency of the Association*; *A Survey of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Physical Education*; *Effects of Coaching on Acquisition of Skill in Basket Ball Free Throw*; and *The Direction of Public School Relations in Cities of the United States*. Of the last thesis the abstract in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* is itself summarized by Albert Lynd, in his *Quackery In The Public Schools*, as follows: "The conclusion seems to be that centralized organizations are likely to be centralized, while decentralized organizations are likely to be decentralized." And the *Encyclopedia* itself quotes the brilliant and serious summation of the work of one researcher: "Desirable professional attitudes toward teaching must be inculcated in institutions which prepare teachers so that a professional attitude may be developed in prospective teachers." Could anything be fairer?