

Wright State University

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### Public Debate

Wright State University Student Body

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ALL INTERESTED STUDENTS  
ARE CORDIALLY INVITED  
TO ATTEND AN  
OLD-FASHIONED

PUBLIC

DEBATE

IN

OELMAN AUDITORIUM  
ON

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27 1969  
AT

12:45 P.M.

ALSO FEATURED WILL BE  
SKITS, MUSIC  
AND OTHER  
HIGH ENTERTAINMENTS!

## THE IMMEDIATE CONFLICT INVOLVED

Last Friday Dean Conley informed me that I had violated the following clause taken from the recommended policy and procedures for the granting of promotions and tenure at Wright State University, adopted as official university policy by the academic senate:

"The teacher is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his subject, but he should be careful not to introduce into his teaching controversial matter which has no relation to his subject."

Dean Conley told me that this was a statement not open to interpretation and was perfectly and absolutely unambiguous. He said that, since I had shown a film, "The Columbia Revolt", which was obtained through the audio-visual department, to my mathematics classes during class time that this constituted a clear violation of the students' academic freedom. The above clause pertains to student academic freedom, and its intent is to protect the students from becoming a captive audience for subjects other than mathematics.

The students in my classes voted unanimously to see this film in class, a fact which Dean Conley would prefer to consider irrelevant. He has placed himself in the following absurd position: if a student asks a question which Dean Conley might consider irrelevant, and if the students in the class all want the professor to answer the question in class, and the professor wants to answer the question in class, then in doing so, the professor is guilty in Dean Conley's eyes of violating the academic freedom of the students in the class.

If the film shown had been "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", Dean Conley's reaction might not have been as apoplectically livid. My department chairman gave me permission to show the film in my classes. Later, about an hour before the film was to be shown, he abruptly reversed himself and tried to persuade me, halfheartedly, not to show the film in my classes, but some other time. The relevancy of the fact that the students wanted to see the film somehow escaped him.

I showed the film, then Dean Conley and I talked about this matter and he said that if I showed the film again, I would be violating my contract by not adhering to the provisions of the previously quoted paragraph, and in the process, I would be violating the academic freedom of the students who would be watching the film. Again, the relevancy of the students' wishes in matters concerning their academic freedom completely went over his head. The administration and faculty are evidently to decide when or when not the students' academic freedom has been violated, without so much as even bothering to condescend to ask of the students involved an opinion on the matter.

The paragraph quoted earlier was never intended to maintain a "smooth running department" or to coerce faculty into "fitting into the organization" as Dean Conley has said. Dean Conley should have kept reading. The very next sentence reads:

"Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of appointment."

The Honorable Dean should note that this is intended to protect the faculty from administrators zealously overstepping their delegated authority and restricting academic freedom for the "other aim" of "maintaining a smooth-running department" or trying to intimidate members of the community of scholars into "fitting into the organization."

The erstwhile Dean called a meeting of the entire mathematics department sans one without my knowledge. Dr. Silverman, who was called at his home, was told that it was a departmental meeting and that everyone in the mathematics department had been invited. I happened to run into Dr. Silverman on his way to the meeting and I also went, though uninvited. No one was willing to venture a possible reason for my not having been informed. I thought this unusual, especially since one of the courses of action recommended to the mathematics department by the Dean was the immediate breaking of my contract. If there is anyone who wants more info, ask me.

*Not mine*