

FACULTY RESOLUTION OF DECEMBER 14, 1968

PREAMBLE:

At its meeting Wednesday, December 11, the faculty, finding demands 3, 4, and 5 of the BSU unacceptable, noted that: "Acceptance of these demands would compromise essential principles of academic freedom." In finding demands 3, 4 and 5 of the Black Student Union to be unacceptable, the faculty is sensitive to those facts of Black experience in America that have caused the BSU to make these demands: the long and ugly history of oppression of Black people, the suffering, the provocation, and more relevantly, the scandalous failure of American scholarship and education to pay sufficient attention to the achievements and lives of Black Americans. The faculty's support in principle of a Black Studies program at Reed recognizes these facts; and the intensity of the feelings of Black students in a predominantly white college.

The grounds for rejecting the last three demands rest on the deep commitment of the faculty to other principles, namely, academic freedom and the functioning of Reed as a community rather than as a collection of competing interest groups. While these principles seem at this moment to be in conflict with the concern of Black students at Reed for an education relevant to their lives and needs, the faculty is convinced that the conflict is not a necessary one. Minorities are especially protected by the safeguards on all of our freedoms. Moreover, the faculty desires that Black students and Black faculty share completely in the life of this community.

II. THE MATTER OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic institutions pursue the truth. That is their goal and justification. That pursuit involves making judgments in terms of evidence and rational argument. Academic discourse is, therefore, neither propaganda nor indoctrination. That is because it has no ulterior functions. Its only function is to say what is true as best as evidence and argument can determine it. "Academic freedom" refers to the fact of such truth-seeking and the conditions which make it possible. It identifies the liberty to study, to investigate, to present and interpret, and to discuss ideas concerning all branches and fields of learning. There is no such liberty unless there be no limitations whatever on any of these activities other than those imposed by generally accepted standards of scholarship.

Academic freedom is thus as important as the truth it preserves. It is also as fragile as it is important. It is constantly subject to the pressures of a society pursuing special and conflicting goals and wielding power to achieve them. The demands are always heavy that the academy be slave to the political and ideological concerns within society. Everyone is eager to use it because indoctrination

and propaganda are most effective when garbed in the institutional cloak of interested learning. Accordingly academic freedom is preserved only when qualifications for membership in an academic community are professional and truth-seeking, and so entirely removed from any other considerations which, if used, could convert academy into propaganda factory.

To say that a faculty member is judged on his professional qualifications by his professional peers is to say he will be judged in the light of matters relevant to the pursuit of truth. It so introduces a barrier between the academy and society which makes it possible for him to introduce views which are critical, unpopular, even reprehensible to the constituencies of power outside the academy. Professional criteria must be applied if that is to be possible, and the criteria are hollow if they are not properly applied by professionals. Otherwise the views of the academy are open to control by whoever can muster the power. And that is why minority groups have a special stake in academic freedom. They are the most vulnerable to improper pressure within and without the academy.

Reed College is committed to the vital importance of academic freedom. This is because it is committed to education. There is in this matter nothing to compromise, nothing to give away. There is no such thing as a moderate commitment to the pursuit of truth and to the conditions of academic freedom which make it possible. Accordingly, Reed College as academic institution is defined neither by its plant nor its people. It is defined as academic institution by its educational goals. It is therefore preserved by its commitment to academic freedom and destroyed at once by the slightest compromise of that commitment. There should be no doubt that if a choice should ever be made between whether Reed College must go down or surrender academic freedom, the choice must and will be for it to go down.

This is not empty rhetoric. Within its brief history the Reed College faculty has experienced numerous assaults upon its own academic freedom made by various pressure groups from within the public at large, by a committee of Congress, by a former president of the college, and by former members of its own board of trustees. It has resisted with fierce determination these assaults in the past. We can do no other than to resist this present assault with equal vigour even though it came from our own students whose interests we believe to be both well-intentioned and intensely sincere.

The Reed Faculty Constitution was designed to protect the basic principles of academic freedom. Article IV, Section 1, of the Constitution provides:

"Each faculty member has individual freedom of inquiry and expression, in research, in publication, and in the teaching of his subjects and courses. Academic freedom and responsibility are here defined as the liberty and obligation to study, to investigate, and to discuss facts and ideas concerning all branches and fields of learning. No limitations on such freedom shall be imposed other than those required generally accepted standards of responsible scholarship and research."

The provision of academic freedom must be accompanied by faculty appointment, promotion, and tenure procedures designed (in part) to secure and to protect the exercise of that freedom. The principle is implemented by the articles of the Faculty Constitution following:

Article III, Section 1: "An individual shall be appointed to academic rank solely on the basis of his educational qualifications and record, evidence of his teaching ability and performance, evidence of competence in research and scholarship in his professional field, evidence of his personal and professional integrity, and promise of continuing development in his scholarly and teaching competence and performance."

Article IV, Section 3: "No individual shall be excluded from initial appointments to academic rank, from continuation of appointments, or from academic tenure nor shall any individual have his appointment terminated before the end of his stated term or have his academic tenure terminated because of his views or associations."

Article V, Section 1: "(a): "Termination of the appointment of any faculty member on academic tenure or of any other faculty member prior to the end of the term of which he was appointed, shall be only on the basis of: Academic cause, which means service falling significantly below the standards which the College may reasonably expect of a person holding the academic rank attained as such standard is defined according to the criteria set forth in Article III-2."

The foregoing constitutional provisions are concerned with principles and criteria for the making of personnel decisions. The following provisions have to do with the bodies making judgments in accordance with these criteria.

Article III, Section 5, of the Constitution states: "Procedures for the evaluation of a faculty member for reappointment, promotion in rank or salary, and granting of academic tenure shall be agreed upon by the President, the Faculty Advisory Committee, and the Faculty."

The current procedures at Reed provide that personnel decisions shall be made by the President and the Faculty Advisory Committee. No department or division may, by itself, make these personnel decisions. It is the case that no other constituents of the College, including the Board of Trustees or students, intervene in the making of faculty personnel decisions. This is so, even though the Board of Trustees has the power to do so.

DEMAND III: This proposition includes a demand for ". . . ABSOLUTE control (by the BSU) in the selection of the Black Faculty for Black Studies." It also includes the statements that: "No Black professor will be removed without BSU permission. (and) The faculty we choose will be academically and culturally qualified to relate the material, stimulate thought, and provide insight. Any professor hired who fails to do this will be dismissed." These demands create the

Black faculty member as an unequal, second-class academic citizen who is without due process. And as a result, they violate the guarantees in other sections of our constitution and by placing the faculty member at the mercy of his students, violate also the principles of academic freedom.

DEMAND IV: "We want control of the curriculum until there are enough Black professors to take over the job."

This demand is not in accord with Article I, Section 3, which provides: "That faculty, in cooperation with the President, is charged by the Board of Trustees with the fundamental responsibility for the formulation, revision and continuous review of educational policy. The Board of Trustees shall make no alteration in the basic educational policy of the College without a prior and full review by the Faculty."

Matters included in the curriculum are at once sensitive to, and elicit, the very political pressures which the principles of academic freedom are designed to combat. To grant this demand, therefore, would be to invite a curriculum oriented to ideology rather than truth and to place the responsibility for decisions regarding the curriculum in the hands of those least protected against political pressures.

DEMAND V: "No courses dealing with peoples of African descent will be taught at Reed without BSU permission." To accede to this demand places in the hands of the BSU a power for censorship which is absolutely incompatible with academic freedom. Censorship which is designed to protect a special view or position more often than not leads to the censorship that will be used to destroy that view or position.

III. THE MATTER OF COMMUNITY

Reed College is an academic community, not a collection of academic interest-groups. In this among other ways it differs from New York University or San Francisco State College, where autonomous colleges or departments co-exist under an umbrella administration.

It was not only in the spirit of academic freedom but also in the spirit of community that the first Board of Trustees delegated to the President and the faculty as a whole, control of both curriculum and personnel. The sense was then, and remains now, that bodies of knowledge are inter-related and inter-acting, and that a person in one part of the College touches the life of a person in another. In this context we may read again Article I, Section 3 and Article III, Section 5 of the Faculty Constitution (see above).

The continuing conception of the College as a community cannot be overemphasized. It explains Reed's unusual practice of not allowing decisions on personnel or on curriculum to be made by individual departments or even divisions. Curricular changes begin with departments and divisions but ultimately must be approved by

the Educational Policies Committee, a community institution, and then by the entire faculty; and decisions on personnel -- hiring, promotion, tenure, firing -- are made by the President and the Faculty Advisory Committee, a body elected by the entire faculty. The President and FAC collect information for their deliberations from all relevant portions of the community; serious attention is given to student appraisals of faculty. Special weight is given to the special competence of a particular component of the College -- the advice of a particular department on a course in that department or on the ability of a faculty member in that department has a very considerable impact on the final decision about that course or faculty member -- but the decision itself is a faculty-wide decision.

BSU demands 3, 4, and 5 are therefore unacceptable because they are inconsistent not only with the ideals of academic freedom but also with the conception of the College as an academic community.