

HISTORY DEPARTMENT DISMISSALS

*Instruct.
Staff Assoc.*

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION:

The teachers and workers comprising the Communist Party Unit of the City College address you for the first time because of the critical situation that confronts us all.

I

Two men in the History Department have been told to look for new jobs at the end of this term. They have been informed that they will be replaced by men at lower salaries. Three others in the same department, one an instructor, have been warned that they will be dropped at the end of next term. Let us recognize at once that these firings, whatever their basis, are fraught with dangers for our organization, the Instructional Staff Association, and for every tutor, instructor, and member of the office and library staff.

The present dismissals are basically an economy move. They represent the form of economy that has been constantly demanded by the real estate groups, who want their taxes lowered, and by the bankers, who are eager to secure their \$500,000 a day interest. They mean economy solely at the expense of the younger, poorly paid members of the staff. For at the same time that these men have been fired, THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND SOME OF THE DEANS HAVE BEEN GIVEN SALARY INCREASES RANGING FROM \$500 TO \$1,000.00. Clearly, while the ultimate purpose is economy, these firings do not effect an immediate saving. These firings are, in short, calculated to ESTABLISH THE POLICY whereby wide pay cuts and dismissals may be introduced.

Several facts prove the present two dismissals are the first moves of what is to become a general policy. In the past, turnover has been characteristic only of the Assistants and Fellows in the Chemistry, Hygiene, and Personnel Departments. But in the past, the Administration had the Ph. D. "requirement" as an instrument for keeping several hundred men in the tutorial rank at low pay. Now that the ISA has destroyed this instrument, and has made advancement in rank and salary easier for tutors, the Administration has seized a new weapon. IT WILL FIRE TUTORS BEFORE THEY GET AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE. Even the Ph.D. and instructorship will no longer be a guarantee of security. Rapid turnover in the lower ranks is, therefore, the policy. In the English Department, Professor Krowl has hinted that it would be a good thing to change tutors every two or three years. In the Physics Department, Professor Corcoran has told his men that at least one man would go at the end of this term--and, he emphasized, not because of any decrease in registration. Finally, Dean Gottschall has stated recently that in the Chemistry Department--where dismissals have been chronic and where some men in their fifth year still receive only \$1400.00--the turnover is not rapid enough.

This policy is as great a threat to the existence of the ISA as it is to every man in the lower ranks. The Administration is out to break our Association. First, having been forced to grant the ISA a slight concession in the way of advancing tutors, the Administration immediately proceeded to slap the ISA in the face by handing heads of departments and deans \$500 to \$1000 increases. Now it is retaliating further by levelling a broad attack on the foundations of whatever security we have had. The Administration hopes thereby to dispel our present confidence in the value and power of the ISA as an instrument for protecting our collective interests. It also, no doubt, hopes that a continually changing staff of younger men will mean a weak ISA.

II.

What is to be our answer? Those who advocate inaction will help two of our colleagues lose their jobs this term. But they do much more. The competence of both men has been admitted by the head of the History Department: he has offered one man an excellent recommendation, and the other, another job. Inaction therefore means accepting the dangerous policy of dismissal on grounds OTHER THAN INCOMPETENCE. It means throwing the doors wide open to the Administrative policy of rapid turnover. It means that we endanger the job of every low ranking man and the very existence of the ISA itself. Let us therefore avoid being wheedled into a course of pussyfooting by bland explanations of these dismissals. Mr. Wisan reported to the ISA that Professor Mead had informed him that the firings were HIS OWN policy, executed for the "good of the department." On the other hand, Professor Mead has definitely informed Mr. Hirsch, one of the dismissed men, that he is a competent teacher and has promised him work in the evening and summer sessions. Furthermore, the contemplated actions of Professors Corcoran and Krowl reveal a peculiar coincidence of "personal" policy among the three heads. Plainly, to trust the conflicting statements of Professor Mead is to lose sight of the issues involved. We cannot secure the reappointment of the fired men, we cannot defend the ISA by relying on such conflicting assurances.

Only the united action of the ISA will accomplish these things. We all agree that no teacher should be dismissed from the College on any grounds except demonstrable incompetence. Both from statements made by Professor Mead that these men are competent as well as from facts pointing to the introduction of a general turnover policy, the History dismissals appear to have been promulgated on grounds other than incompetence. It follows then that we cannot establish our policy as the college policy without challenging these dismissals by action. We propose the following course of action:

1. Pass resolutions demanding that the College Administration and the Board of Higher Education repudiate the policy of turnover.
2. Demand immediate withdrawal of the dismissal notices on the ground that the Head of the History Department has asserted the competence of both men he is dismissing.

3. Demand that the Administration and the Board of Higher Education state their position on tenure clearly. Fight to have them affirm that no teacher who has been employed for more than a year shall be discharged except for demonstrable incompetence, established by a closed vote of the department of which he is a member.
4. Broaden the fight on this question. Call upon the Associations of Brooklyn, Hunter, and the Evening Session for supporting action. Call upon the students and student organizations to support this struggle. Call upon the Faculty to protest this lowering of educational standards. Call upon the Teachers Union to back us in our fight for tenure. Call upon labor organizations whose members suffer similar discriminations under the NRA to support us.
5. Elect a standing Grievance Committee.

We Communist teachers and workers propose this immediate program as the best way of combatting the first attack on our organizations. We propose it because we fight vigorously to defend and promote the immediate interests of the teaching staff. Yet some in the ISA may oppose this program, not because it is incorrect, but because it is proposed by Communists. Such an attack, which disregards THE SOUNDNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR PROGRAM, is clearly aimed to split instead of to unite us. It is an attack on the immediate interests of every one of us, and on the existence of our ISA. Let us defend ourselves and our Association by following this program.

Communist Party Unit
of The City College.

WATCH FOR "TEACHER and WORKER"

Monthly Organ of the Communist Party Unit of The City College. It will take up the problems of all teachers and workers, and strive to develop militant unity among us in the fight against educational retrenchment and for academic freedom and better working conditions.