

I hope you will understand why it ~~therefore~~ came as a great surprise to me to learn that you had decided to terminate my association with this department.

Official notification of the decision came in a letter from Professor Miller which state that the financial emergency in the University made any alternative impossible. Since that time, however, I have learned that the weight of the negative decision was borne by considerations of essentially three charges brought against me. These charges apparently led the committee to reverse its earlier assessment of my performance and to conclude that my capabilities as an instructor were low and that my potentials as an archaeologist that would bring credit to the department, were poor.

Apparently the charges were that 1) my teaching of the Method, Theory of American Archaeology course was "shallow," 2) my Ph.D. dissertation and research were "not going anywhere," and 3) my interests within the field were "too narrow." It is my contention that these charges are ill-founded and that the information used to assess them was incomplete, inaccurate, and irrelevant to a valid assessment of my performance.

With respect to the first charge, regarding my teaching ability, I wish to say that procedurally the use of reports concerning a course taught during my first year to evaluate my performance during a second year seems questionable, particularly after I had been informed that my first year of teaching had been highly satisfactory. If the committee ~~had not known~~ that the course was given during my first quarter here, in the fall of 1969, then I wish to correct this misunderstanding.

The particular complaint about this course was that it was shallow. Apparently this assessment was based on the comments made to another staff member by a "few" students. During the first quarter I received no feedback from other faculty members which might have helped me work out any shortcomings, particularly with respect to gauging the depth at which I could expect to level out with the capabilities of the typical Minnesota undergraduate. While the policy of the department has very explicitly been to allow instructors to judge the depth and content of their own courses, I still feel that the lack of any sort of orientation or assistance for the new professor, who is left to work out things "on his own" is a tradition which ill-serves both students and the department. While it is regrettable that students complaints concerning my course were not referred to me, personally, I find it appalling that any difficulties I might have had during that period would be used to judge me two years later.

Far from receiving any negative feedback, however, the committee's decision to continue my appointment for a second year gave me every reason to believe I was doing well. Many comments I received from students after completion of the course were also favorable. In an attempt, ~~however~~, to remove consideration of my record from the realm of hearsay, I would like to draw the committee's attention to the results of the three student evaluations which I have submitted. While it is difficult to place any assessment of the results on an absolute scale, I do believe that if they are arranged chronologically they suggest that my teaching skills are improving.

The second charge against my performance was that work on my thesis was not progressing. This can hardly be upheld in light of the fact that my dissertation is based on the mapping of over 24 sq. km. of the jungle ^{and ancient settlement remains} in and around Tikal, Guatemala, which produced nearly 57 meters of hand drawn maps, the first of which went to the University Photographic Studios in March of this year, and the last of which was completed in June. This was the result of two years of steady work which was being carried out not only by myself, but by two student assistants and by my wife who worked three full days a week for over a year.

The first draft of the dissertation itself was presented in late August to my chairman Dr. William R. Coe, who expressed general satisfaction with the work and made some helpful suggestions for modification. I am currently working on a second draft which should be finished soon. I have every reason to believe the dissertation will be completed by December of this year.

As to the charge that my interests and research are narrow, I would like to request that the Tenure Committee carefully consider what the definition of "varied interests" might be. Even a brief look at my Curriculum Vitae should suggest the diversity of my interests. Furthermore, an examination of my publications and papers should indicate that my interests are not only broad but even interdisciplinary. The Tikal Sustaining Area Project, which I directed at Tikal during the period of 1965 through 1968, integrated the results of one of the largest mapping projects to be undertaken in the Maya lowlands, with extensive surveys of vegetation, soils, and topography. All this is part of a larger study of the subsistence, settlement patterns, and cultural ecology of the ancient Maya of the southern Lowlands.

These studies can be contrasted to my publications and papers on the excavation and mapping of a defensive earthwork

system, jungle survey techniques, post classic polychrome ceramics, experimental archaeology as a technique for the investigation of "fossil" behavior patterns, and the origins of Maya civilization. As further evidence of diversity I might also point out that I am working on an analysis of Mexican legends with John Ingham and a paper on the looting and destruction of Mesoamerican archaeological sites for the annual meeting of the AAAS in Philadelphia this December.

Recently I have also begun work on an interdisciplinary project ^{which} in collaboration with a Canadian geographer, Alfred Siemens, ~~which~~ focuses on the investigation of newly discovered ridged fields and canal systems on the Rio Candelaria in Campeche, Mexico. The Mexican government, through INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropologia y Historia) has only this year granted me a concession to the archaeological rights for this region of Mexico. A preliminary report on work accomplished at sites in the region is already in press and appears in my Curriculum Vitae.

Here in Minnesota I was able to take a course in Palynology last spring in the Botany Department to assist me in interpreting the archaeological record as it is revealed in lake sediments. As a direct result of that experience I have started work on the analysis of a pollen core and conducted an interdisciplinary course on paleoecology with Herbert Wright and John Bradbury of the Geology Department.

On the basis of the considerations presented above I wish to contend that the charges presented against me at last springs meeting of the Tenure Committee were ill-founded. Furthermore, I wish to request that the Committee reconsider my case and, given that it becomes financially possible, rehire me on a two-year contract for 1972-1974.

Respectfully yours,

Dennis E. Puleston