

NEWS

Swansea Affair – Second Lecturer Resigns

In the News sections of *RP* 56 and 57, we reported on the escalating row in the Philosophy Department at University College Swansea, centred on allegations of malpractice in the examination of the M.A. in Philosophy and Health Care. We also noted the formation of the *Swansea Three Defence Committee* to support the lecturers whose continuing requests for an independent enquiry into the Centre for Philosophy and Health Care had led to fears of their victimisation. As the dispute has become increasingly public, with considerable coverage in the national press (see right), such fears have unfortunately turned out to be well grounded.

The beginning of the most recent series of events dates back to October 6th last year when *The Guardian* published an article under the heading 'LECTURERS ALLEGE PRESSURE TO INCREASE NUMBER OF STUDENTS LED TO FAILURE TO CHECK PART-TIME M.A. COURSE AT UNIVERSITY OF WALES – UNIVERSITY TO HOLD ENQUIRY.' In the course of the article, Anne Maclean, one of the five lecturers from the Philosophy Department who signed the original request for a formal enquiry, was reported as saying: 'It is outrageous what is going on. If we cannot stop this, then it is not worth anyone of academic integrity staying on in academic life.' As a result of this remark, she was suspended by the Principal of the College, and a joint committee of representatives from the College Council and Senate was established to examine the case for her dismissal. The charge: that she had attacked both the academic integrity of her colleagues and the reputation of the College itself. (While the University is responsible for the maintenance of academic standards, it is the colleges that employ academic staff. Hence the bizarre situation in which a member of staff following University procedures for making complaints about academic standards can be subject to dismissal proceedings brought by a college, on the basis of making the complaint.)

It is usual for the subjects of a complaint to be suspended while the complaint is being investigated (in this case, Professor D.Z. Phillips, the Head of the Philoso-

phy Department, and Donald Evans, the Director of the Head of the Philosophy Department, and Donald Evans, the Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Health Care). Here, however, it worked the other way around. Under growing pressure from the College, and without any significant support from the A.U.T., Anne Maclean resigned; thereby becoming the second casualty of the affair. Almost immediately, the other two lecturers at the centre of the controversy – Colwyn Williamson and Michael Cohen – were suspended: Williamson, under threat of dismissal; Cohen under threat of a three year ban on criticising the College.

Anne Maclean resigned. But unlike Geoffery Hunt before her – who left the previous academic year on grounds of his lack of confidence in both the Head of the Philosophy Department and the Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Health Care – her resignation had certain unusual features. For not only was she effectively forced out by the grossly unjust threat of dismissal, but the terms of her 'redundancy' (at least, as revealed an unsigned draft document) expressly forbid her:

- (i) to take any legal proceedings or make any claims against the College and/or the University of Wales or their officers, servants or agents in respect of alleged cause or causes of action
- (ii) to comment on or publish comment or criticise the College, the Centre, the University of Wales and/or its officers, servants or agents, whether publicly or privately
- (iii) to keep the terms of this agreement and its antecedent exchange of letters confidential.

It is this kind of ban which the College now seems to be attempting to extend to Williamson and (more temporarily) Cohen.

It is hard to think of a clearer example of the infringement of academic freedom. As Professor John Griffith has written with regard to the dismissal proceedings against Anne Maclean: what we are seeing is 'the reaction of an authoritarian institution which seeks to defend itself by silencing its critics.' In so doing, it is not only violating the need for academic freedom recognised in the 1988 Education Reform

Act section 202 (2) (a), it is also clearly interfering with the education of students.

Thus, whilst Williamson and Cohen remain suspended, pending the outcome of the Enquiry finally announced by the Vice-Chancellor (and promised nearly a year ago), the students they have taught will have to sit examinations for their courses set by staff who did not teach them. Nor, contrary to all examining procedures, will Cohen and Williamson be allowed to take part in the marking of these papers. It is rumoured, for example, that Williamson's Political Theory students will be subjected to an examination set by Professor Phillips, with whom he is in dispute, and whose own approach to politics may in all fairness be described as significantly different from Williamson's. How this can be fair to the students concerned, is hard to imagine. (Phillips, incidentally, is said to have had *Radical Philosophy* 56, with its initial report on Swansea, temporarily removed from the library.)

Support for Cohen and Williamson from outside the University of Wales is thankfully, growing. (The Philosophy Departments at East Anglia, Kent and Liverpool, for example, have given them their unanimous backing.) But with doubts about the character of the Enquiry, and the College's responsiveness to its results should it not like them, remaining, it is vital that the pressure is kept up. In particular, supporters are requested to help encourage the A.U.T. to take a proper interest in the affair, and behave accordingly.

Contributions to the Campaign should be sent to the **Swansea Three Defence Committee** at: 17 Bristol Road, Brighton BN2 1AP. Cheques should be made payable to the *Academic Standards Fighting Fund*. (It is hoped to launch a National Campaign For Academic Standards and Academic Freedom, to provide help for others experiencing similar problems in the current educational climate, next year.) Pamphlets, by John Griffith and Cohen & Williamson are available from the same address. More pamphlets are forthcoming.

Peter Osborne

ACADEMIC STANDARDS UNDER PRESSURE THE CASE OF SWANSEA

Prifwrdd Cymru
The University of Wales

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr M. Cohen and Mr C. Williamson
Department of Philosophy
University College, Swansea
Singleton Park,
Swansea,
SA2 8PP

Dear Mr Cohen and Mr Williamson:

Re: "English Course in Philosophy and Health Care"
N.B. "English Course in Philosophy and Health Care"
I have your letter of 1 May.

The Vice-Chancellor has asked me to inform you of the decision to set up a Committee of Enquiry into the allegations concerning academic standards on the M.A. course in Philosophy and Health Care at Swansea. The composition of the committee has not yet been decided. It is expected that the committee will have been set up by the end of the month. All the papers which have been referred to the University and which have been determined that additional steps are required will be made available to the committee.

Yours sincerely,
Secretary

backing students' wins lecturer row plagiarism

MICHAEL COHEN COLWYN WILLIAMSON

Don fights to expose truth of low university standards



College suspends 'outspoken' lecturer

Western Mail 23 Nov 1990

Whistle blower: Mauckan was suspended after voicing criticism

Allegations of plagiarism and low standards are causing ructions at Swansea.

Western Mail 30 November 1990

Lecturer backed by petition

South Wales Evening Post 7 Dec 1990

College that's riven by resentment

Swansea lecturer agrees to resign

Michael Cohen (left) and Colwyn Williamson, accused of disrupting academic life at University College, Swansea.

£2,000 bill sent in plagiarism row

Western Mail 12 Dec 1990

Campus protests lecturer suspension



STUDENTS PROTEST at the mass meeting at University College, Swansea.

THE GUARDIAN
Saturday March 23 1991

Inquiry into 'undeserved' degrees

Student demo at city's university

The Sunday Times 9 December 1990

THE 22 March 1991

PARATAXIS: MODERN WRITING

Parataxis: modernism and modern writing is a new journal devoted to the critical rethinking of modernism and the publication of contemporary writing.

At a time when the concept of modernism has come to seem merely historical, and when the critical vocabulary of modernism itself has been collapsed into that of postmodernism, Parataxis aims to provide substantial discussion of the legacies of modernism, while refusing to characterise modernism as that which is simply past.

The journal will appear three times a year: the first issue in Spring 1991.

The editors welcome ideas for potential contributions. These and other enquiries should be sent to the editors:

Simon Jarvis, Sidney Sussex College,
Cambridge CB2 3HU

Drew Milne, Department of English,
Edinburgh University, David Hume Tower,
George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JX

RIGHTS IN CHINA WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

An International Conference
on Rights in China

Friday and Saturday, 21-22 June 1991
at

The School of Oriental and African
Studies, University of London

Organised by June 4th China Support
Group and The Contemporary China
Institute, SOAS

Sessions on: The Concept of Rights in
China; Censorship and Propaganda; East-
ern Europe, the USSR and China; China
and the UN.

For further details, please write to:

Rights in China Conference
c/o The Contemporary China Institute
SOAS
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

RESIGNATION FROM THE COLLECTIVE

Because of pressure of work, Martin Barker has resigned from the *Radical Philosophy* Editorial Collective, on which he has served since 1977, including a long stint as reviews editor.

Readers may remember his articles on 'Kant as a Problem for Marxism' (RP 19); 'Racism: The New Inheritors' (RP 24); 'Empiricism and Racism' (RP 33) and 'Mass Media and Ideology' (RP 46).

Martin's editorial skill and energy is now being focused on the new Magazine For Cultural Studies.

Members of the editorial collective will miss his incisive and sometimes controversial interventions in our debate. And all of us are grateful for his many years of hard work.



Dear *Radical Philosophy*,

I suppose a book as consciously against the stream as my *Socialist Reasoning* can expect hostile and tangential reviews, and perhaps I should not expect that, in a single paragraph on it, any of the three main arguments of the book should be mentioned – viz. that the analysis of capitalism is the argument for socialism, that this is logically kosher since facts can imply values, and that classical Marxism must be revised to show the vital place of issues of peace, ecology and thoroughgoing democracy in that argument today. But David Archard's claim (in 'Friends and Enemies of Liberalism', *Radical Philosophy* 57, p. 32) that the book is 'mainly directed at the left' is grossly misleading. All its criticisms of the left are to be found on about 10% of its pages, and, I hope, couched in language a good sight more comradely than that habitually used by post-Marxists against those of us who believe in class politics.

Andrew Collier
Department of Philosophy
University of Southampton

Dear *Radical Philosophy*,

I regret but am not too surprised that Andrew Collier objects to my review of his *Socialist Reasoning*. He does himself describe two of his six chapters as 'mainly aimed at utopian currents on the recent left' (p. 175). However, my main argument was not so much that his book argues with the left, as that it argues on the left. In choosing to show how we should argue for socialism Collier presupposes rather than presents a case for socialism. My own feeling – which is not necessarily rooted in 'post-Marxism' or a scepticism about class politics – is that this kind of attitude is a luxury political philosophy cannot at present afford.

David Archard
Department of Philosophy and Politics
University of Ulster at Jordanstown

Dear *Radical Philosophy*,

Thank you for the obituary of Louis Althusser, written by Gregory Elliott in *Radical Philosophy* 57. Lyrical, short and profound. I would dedicate the following lines from François Villon to our 'doux maître à la science pure et dure':

Je congnois que pauvres et riches,
Sages et fous, prêtre et lais,
Nobles, vilains, larges et chiches,
Petits et grands, et beaux et laids,
Dames a rebrassés collets,
De quelconque condition,
Portant atours et bourrelets,
Mort saisit sans exception.

Pretentious maybe. But there are more people around who deeply feel his loss than one might imagine.

Andrew Coates
Ipswich, Suffolk