

Letters

Hawaii: Freedom and Rights on the Academic Scene

Let us attempt to place the case of University of Hawaii's political scientist Oliver Lee in perspective ("University of Hawaii: Turmoil after president's surprising resignation," 1 Mar., p. 961). I think we will all agree that the purpose of a college or university is to train today those who will be the community's leaders tomorrow. Perhaps the most important thing these young people can learn is responsibility, for that is the only quality all leaders must have. To teach this, university professors must exhibit a sense of responsibility, not only toward the student and the learning process, but toward the community as a whole. In pursuit of this goal, they may and should question or oppose certain trends in society, but not advocate or sanction lawlessness which would destroy that society. The community, as represented by those who provide financial support for the university, will enforce this requirement by one means or another. At private colleges, the alumni do so; at state-supported universities, the legislators and ultimately the taxpayers do. This is not a moral question, but one of pragmatic politics: no system can survive long by subsidizing those who would abolish it.

A wise state university administration recognizes this fact and does not wait for the legislators to cut its budget; when it gets angry telephone calls from the constituents of those legislators, it examines the situation and, if corrective action is required, takes such action. The University of California learned to its sorrow the consequences of failing to do so. The University of Hawaii apparently considered that "a massive number of phone calls" indicated that by continuing to employ Lee it was not fulfilling its function in the community. As a political scientist, Lee should understand this. That he does not is evidenced by his statement that "even a state university should be able to withstand these kinds of pressures." Politics is the most pragmatic of man's occu-

pations and, in a democracy, is based on the idea that people will get what they want.

I lived in Honolulu from 1964 through 1966, and heard Lee interviewed several times. If the AAUP is going to conduct a formal investigation of this matter, the videotapes of his television appearances should be entered into evidence. I think they will demonstrate clearly that his public statements were characteristically lacking in a sense of academic responsibility.

In an era when there is too much emphasis on "freedom" and "rights" and not enough on the responsibilities entailed by those rights, it is a shame to think that the University of Hawaii may be censured for standing up for responsibility. However, even that would be acceptable if the AAUP would concurrently define a basic standard for academic responsibility, an abbreviated guideline similar to the legal profession's Canon of Ethics, which would help to preserve and maintain the moral integrity of the academic community.

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One Day in the Country Is Worth a Month in Town

The article by Spilhaus "The experimental city," (16 Feb., p. 710) was interesting and stimulating, but as an American living in England for a year, I am conscious of the fact that not all people like to live in cities. Here large numbers of people live in villages (populations, say, 1000 to 3000) and towns (20,000 to 30,000). They work in local shops and small businesses, and industrial plants in the towns. Most villages are within 10 or 20 miles of a town (many of the towns originated as central market areas in the Middle Ages), and the people find sufficient culture and entertainment available. In addition they have the joys of country living. I imagine most of them wouldn't dream of moving to a city, even an experi-

mental city of the type envisaged by Spilhaus, to live in cubicles and be whisked about in pods.

I write because it seems to me that as long as planners are willing to think in radical terms, and are willing to consider large-scale movements of population, they should give thought to a wide variety of types of living. Most Americans, I suppose, live where they do because they have no choice, and planners and architects should consider the possibility of providing some choice.

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Sociology Stretches Its Goals

Rogers' thought-provoking article "Public health asks of sociology . . ." (2 Feb., p. 506), presents two challenges which are familiar to those of us who are sociologists working in medical settings: (i) help find preventable factors in the etiology of chronic disease similar to the infectious agents which have been found in acute infectious disease; and (ii) help find the position of health in the structure of human values and goals in order that public health organizations may rationally plan for optimal health. It may be that the tasks are impossible because of the nature of the phenomena.

Sociologists usually think in terms of necessary, sufficient, and contributory factors with respect to the "causation" of a given phenomenon. For example, most infectious agents are necessary but not sufficient to result in illness. There are "carriers" of most such agents who do not manifest the clinical symptoms. However, the disease can be prevented if the necessary condition can be eliminated. Some diseases may have no necessary or sufficient "causes" but are only probabilistic depending on the presence or absence of contributory factors. For example, cigarette smoking is neither necessary nor sufficient to produce lung cancer but apparently is a strong factor in increasing the probability of lung cancer. Thus, lung cancer can be reduced, but not eliminated, by the eradication of cigarette smoking. The degree to which one can reduce the incidence of such a disease depends both on the degree of influence of the contributory factor and the degree to which one can control the factor. If the effect of the strongest contributory factor is of a low