

The Listening Post

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Loyalty Oaths in California—A Progress Report

THERE was a gusty sigh of relief last fall when California's University Regents jettisoned their nationally advertised oath requirement. But maybe we had better read the fine print, too.

The action did not restore the non-signers to their places. It affects only current and future employment.

Anyway, it left in force—in the University, the state colleges, and public schools—a legislative oath requirement Governor Warren has called more stringent than the other. A number of its non-signers, also, remain away from their accustomed places.

Both groups have gone to the courts for reinstatement. Last spring the California appellate court directed the University to return its non-signers to the ranks of the faculty. Their cases—joined with the cases from the public schools and state colleges—have now been taken over by the Supreme Court and await its decision.

Whatever that decision, further action awaits. For the proponents of test oaths are going to the electorate this year with two constitutional amendments. Of these, the one in substance substitutes the oath now specified by the Levering Act for the traditional oath of office. It is generally assumed that it will pass. Except in limited circles the whole oath proposition tends to be viewed as water over the dam.

The other provides that no person or organization advocating overthrow of the state or national government by force or violence or other unlawful means shall hold any state office or em-

ployment or receive any tax exemption. There has so far been little awareness or discussion of this proposal; its opponents point to the possibility of subsequent broad interpretation that might equate activity of various unpopular types—with advocating overthrow.

What a detached observer might call an "interesting phenomenon" of all the past year's activity has been the eroding away of long-unquestioned security of professional tenure. As legislators went from bill to bill, it seemed they grew more and more casual about the whole tenure question. A late entry, the Kraft bill, passed without much question by both houses but vetoed by the Governor, was frankly aimed at the discharge of one professor for his personal off-campus affairs; even his critics made no point against his on-campus work.

In the state colleges the hitherto-assumed legal bulwarks protecting tenure were found surprisingly weak when the administration of one college forced to cut faculty, to some extent ignored tenure and seniority in choosing professors to be dropped. The fabric of tradition—a sort of unwritten law—which had previously been strong enough to hold, suddenly looked pretty flimsy.

In the University of California what looked like something of the same drift has appeared. The annual letter of employment, which previously had a matter-of-course implication that the current year was just one of a continuing series of years, has been changed to sound surprisingly like a one-year contract.

And so, many a California educator who a year ago was focusing on the issue of academic freedom is now working on reinforcing the security of professional tenure.

Or is that the same thing, reduced to operational terms?

—Fred T. Wilhelms, professor of education, San Francisco State College, California.

Curriculum Bulletins

Column Editors: Edward A. Krug
Robert S. Harnack

Local Community Curriculum Materials

EMPHASIS UPON school-community relationships in many school systems has led to the development of curriculum materials dealing with the problems, needs and circumstances in local communities. These materials are often written by the teachers and students themselves.

Communities such as Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco have provided examples of locally developed curriculum materials which are valuable instructional aids for students in all grade levels—elementary and secondary. The first five bulletins listed below are representative of similar bulletins developed in other communities.

► Los Angeles City School Districts. *They Founded a City*. Curriculum Division Publication No. 514. Los Angeles, 1951, 62 p.

———. *How They Brought Water to Their Land and Homes*. Curriculum Division Publication No. 515. Los Angeles, 1951, 64 p.

———. *Their Homes*. Curriculum Division Publication No. 516. Los Angeles, 1951, 76 p.

———. *Their Food*. Curriculum Division Publication No. 517. Los Angeles, 1951, 146 p.

In order to assist children in the elementary school in developing an understanding of the historical background of Los Angeles, the curriculum department has supervised the writing of interesting, well-written and well-illustrated texts about the early people

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