Board OKs 7 Profs; 6 Still Await Decision

By Rich Figel and Lisa Burkhardt

The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to reverse their decisions on seven out of 13 faculty members originally denied tenure but tabled action on the remaining six after a three hour barrage of testimony and support from faculty and students that lasted until 12 am Wednesday night.

Reappointed were: Thomas E. Benediktsson of the English department; Edith Kuswael, sociology department; Mark Lyndrop, chemistry department; and Adele B. McCollum, philosophy and religion department.

Three administrative science professors were given conditional reappointment; if they receive their PhDs by the end of next semester -- a qualification for tenure in that department -- they will be reappointed. Those professors are Frederick D. Crowley, Larry S. Goldstein, and Abraham Stein.

Still waiting are: James Boylan, anthropology department; Joseph V. Contessa, environmental, geography and urban studies; Gary Danielson, psychology department; Margaret Duggan, English department; Eva Kantor, psychology department; Margaret Contessa, environmental, geography and urban studies; and Daniel Proser, history department.

One after another, students, faculty and even outside businessmen, lined up to deliver a procession of speeches, some detailing the qualifications and merits of the professors who were denied tenure, some questioning the seemingly contradictory nature of the Board's position on "quality" education, while others argued against the procedures being imposed upon the teachers.

About 65 speakers later the Board took their seats to announce the reappointments and the stage was set -- literally.

Gerald LeBoff, chairperson of the Board since 1967, began by announcing that this would not be a "public performance" and warned that theatrics like the clapping would not be tolerated. But many felt that they were watching a carefully staged performance and the decision had already been made beforehand to table any action until January, when school would be out. And all the speeches and all the applause that followed seemed perfunctory.

According to LeBoff, the decision to reappoint those seven professors was based on "new data," additional information and recommendations from the various departments.

As the list of reappointments was read off -- including the reversals -- a tense silence fell over the audience. And with the reading of Benediktsson's name, they erupted. Some of his supporters stood to applaud the Board's decision. LeBoff suppressed a brief smile as he banged the gavel and asked, "Please..." As each reversal was announced a similar reaction ensued. But then it was over and there were still six who had not been reappointed.

Enter Marconuto Lacatena, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) local representing the State colleges' faculty. He was the first speaker to take the microphone.

Lacatena focused his attack on the broader higher education issues he felt were at stake -- essentially saying that the Board and State were doing nothing to see that their projections of declining enrollments (less students meaning less teaching jobs) did not become self-fulfilling prophecies.

"Pardon me, we're not talking about the direction of higher ed," LeBoff interrupted.

Lacatena responded, "That's what I'm talking about -- the half a dozen who still haven't been recommended for tenure and still must be acted upon."

"Which prompted LeBoff to assert, "The Board does not have to act. If you're requesting the Board to consider..."

As Lacatena finished speaking, nearly all the students wearing ties and jackets, or dresses, and faculty, began to line up on both sides of the auditorium, patiently waiting for their turn to speak. An alumna began to speak and Lacatena headed for the back of the room, smiling triumphantly.

Although speakers often repeated themselves and gave redundant arguments, a few individuals brought out interesting points that usually drew some reaction from the crowd. Others like department chairpersons, confronted the Board with hard facts. Quality education was a common phrase -- but letting quality faculty go was not the way to maintain academic excellence or build upon it, they said.

Peter Freund of the sociology department called for more of a "historical perspective" in Board understanding was to have existed between the employer (Trustees) and the employee (faculty) from the time of hiring.

The ethical question the Trustees must face lies in its justification for changing the custom on 26 of its employees -- five years after that custom has been established. The MONTCLARION is not necessarily accusing the Trustees of an illegality -- unless, of course, it can be proven that a verbal contract existed. Rather, the issue being questioned is the injustice that would be done to the six faculty members not granted tenure after they met the customary requirements.

Whatever the Trustees decide to do we hope that they will correct the misunderstandings that obviously exist between the employer and employees.

The Trustees of MSC left last night's Board meeting with a major decision to make. That decision, however, extends beyond the faculty members who were denied tenure. The real decision that the Trustees must make concerns a question of its own ethics.

In anticipation of the large audience -- altogether some 350 to 400 persons -- the meeting was moved to Memorial Auditorium. As the audience waited for the meeting to start, sporadic clapping began to break out. With only a
Trustees OK Seven Profs

(Cont. from p. 1) decisions. “A good college can’t make policy from year to year. They have to consider past trends and plan longer than two or three years in advance. We have to definitely decide what our institutional needs are.”

Michael Biedoe, a senior political science major, reduced the problem to a contradiction of a “market approach versus a quality approach.” He stressed the excessive waste he has seen in the college, including construction programs and other expenses that take money away from education. Biedoe charged the Board with the responsibility of pleading a quality case in the students’ behalf, stating, “We’ve got to place the importance of quality in our education above the consideration of figures and enrollments.”

Outside businessmen came in to inform the Board of their contacts with Boylan. Mark Schiffman, a representative of a company that prepares statements and suggestions to State and federal environmental organizations, gave strong recommendations from work he had seen Boylan submit as a consultant. “Boylan and his students prepare excellent work for us and Boylan can supervise and prepare quality material. It would be wrong for us to possibly lose him to another state system,” he said. Other students attributed their personal success to Boylan.

As the lines thinned out, Jay Livingston of the sociology department, stood in front of the Board and stared for a moment at the Trustees. “I really haven’t come up here to discuss the good qualities of Dr. Daniel Prosser,” he stated. “I just want to know why? You are all just sitting up there listening to us and saying thank you but you aren’t telling us anything. Why?”

The crowd cheered and several spectators shouted insults at the Board. LeBoff interrupted the demonstration assuring them that the Board had made careful considerations in their decisions. “We have to look at the prospective of the future of the college. Enrollment have declined greatly in the history department,” he said.

“You are demeaning this Board with your statements,” LeBoff added. “We are not cavalier and you are questioning the integrity of the Board.”

On Dec. 1, 13 professors received notice from MSC President David W.D. Dickson that their reappointment for the 1978-79 academic year would not be recommended. Irwin Gawley, Vice President for Academic Affairs, said the main reason was to restrict over-enrollment in order to maintain “flexibility” in the consideration of institutional needs.

Gawley admitted that lines were not being eliminated but shifted to programs of greater enrollment or filled by adjuncts.
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