

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Interdepartmental Communication

Bravo! Bravissimo!
Alfred de Grazia

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty and Student Representatives
Department of Politics

FROM: Alfred de Grazia

DATE: 13 February 1974

Our last department meeting ^(yesterday) carried in its even tenor some notes that I think are worth recording for what they reveal of the need for vigorous and representative government within the University.

1. It was made clear that the report of the Personnel and Planning Committee of 5 men on the tenure of Professor Bertell Ollman contained, despite many merits, a suppression of the positive qualities of Professor Ollman in respect to citizenship. As you know, I regard Marxism very much as I would any of a dozen important schools of political thought, nor would I teach Marx without teaching Pareto and von Mises. Still, however he may appear to anyone else, to me Professor Ollman has for years displayed 3 positive qualities of university citizenship, even when an ordinary professor might have been kowtowing in order to obtain tenure. He has exhibited high civic courage, a perception of the basic inadequacies of university governance, and a

keen sensitivity to the ideals of many students who have sought to gain an education without losing their self-respect.

2. The practice of soliciting secret appraisals of professors up for tenure obviously was causing disturbances of conscience among some faculty at the meeting. Secrecy tends to corrupt any governing process. There is little need to resort to a practice smacking of lettres de cachet when ample and different sources of evidences of fitness for tenure are available. What need there may be for secrecy is vitiated by the need to combat secrecy in the governing process wherever and whenever possible. I do not believe that we promote the morals of others, either, by inviting them officially to engage in secret correspondence.
3. Dean Stuart has informed us that we must restrict the use of the xerox machine in our offices to a minimal level determined by the needs solely of the administrative end of the Department. Once again we see how academic work is subordinated to bureaucracy. It is revealed that this most useful machine was allocated the sum of \$1800 for the year, whereas the four departments concerned have been spending that amount per month. What kind of planning skill is it that could have figured that our Department of some 60 professors, staff, assistants, and student organization leaders, and the perhaps hundred other individuals eligible for its use in another three departments, would need to xerox only some two hundred sheets apiece per year for all their administrative, academic, and other university-connected work? This memorandum alone is requiring 200 sheets.
4. Professor Cooley reported to us that a million dollar excess in electricity bills would throw the University into a deficit this year and that the administration is expecting that at best a 6% increment will be available to improve salaries, and further that this money is being sought by department heads as a patronage or merit fund to be used at their discretion. As I asserted, the generally

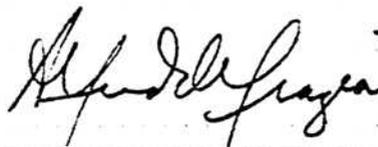
poor financial situation of the faculty, if it is to be alleviated by such a small sum, should be alleviated straight across the board per capita. Only if the University can be induced to expend over 8% for salary increments should any funds go to patronage/merit increases. Moreover, the inordinate and discriminatory imbalance of salaries that puts down the Politics Department as a whole should arouse our strenuous objections.

5. Dr. Cooley further indicated that there is no relaxation in the administration's policy of concealing needed budget information. The budget and expenditures of universities should be public, as are the figures of the government. A person consenting to serve on advisory committees dealing with significant decisions may be abetting this unconscionable practice that has been hateful to representative government for 700 years. An "advisory role" on such important matters is in the first place Ottoman, not American; and when the basic data on the matters concerning which advice is to be given is withheld, then the role is a masquerade. This Department is composed of persons all of whom are presumed to know something of budgets and administration; if it does not exercise some leadership on matters so obviously within its competence, is there not an implication of hypocrisy in its teaching and a neglect of its responsibility in respect to the University community?
6. A sentence in the committee report on Professor Ollman's tenure conveys the impression that his civic behavior has injured the Department as a whole because of the anger of the authorities. Punishing a group for the disliked behavior of one of its members is so repulsive to effective and democratic administration that any evidence of it should be brought forward, and severely and publicly censured by the Department.
7. The Department approved, despite several obvious flaws, a motion seeking to assure proper attendance at oral examinations. This new rule is one more example of piling rule upon rule in the effort to solve problems of human relations that require

judgment and cooperation on the spot. It is regrettable that the one Department that should be most aware of the idiocies of bureaucracy, whether in China, Moscow, Washington, or New York City, should nevertheless proceed in its own affairs along the bureaucratic track.

8. The question of dealing with so-called core courses was raised, but only with some difficulty, since the Department is still reluctant to face facts concerning the well-deserved collapse of consensus on such courses in political science. The core courses survive as political footballs and patronage devices. They aggregate students in certain areas and thin them out unwarrantedly in others. They impede a progressive and well-structured education in political science as they do in economics, psychology and other fields. It is to be hoped that the Curriculum Committee will refuse to tinker with these and other useless and impeding practices and confront the need for a drastically simpler mode of organization and evaluation. Students (and professors) need to be treated as individuals with personal needs and capacities. My proposals on the subject, now several years old, are still accessible to discussion.

9. Yesterday's meeting, like all of our meetings, and like many events in the operation of the University, affords new proofs of the need for reform if N.Y.U. is to survive and advance, academically and financially. The University needs a "loyal opposition" within its government. Persecution and discrimination against the development of such an opposition, wherever and whenever it occurs, should be denounced and resisted. I am personally convinced that a new theory of education, with an academic organization suited to it and necessitated by it, can produce and save a net sum amounting to millions of dollars per year. There should be no question of personal animosities; I know of no "bad guys" in the University. What is required is bold cooperative action targetted upon the central sources of ineffective management and academic stagnancy. The system should be drastically changed, without delay.



Alfred de Grazia