

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF BACTERIOLOGY
BERKELEY 4, CALIFORNIA

March 29, 1950

Dear Sol:

I should have written before now, but my stomach heaves whenever I begin to think about what our faculty has done. I'll condense the tale as best I can. All through the past months, the issue of the Regents' policy was carefully sidestepped by the faculty, because it has always been obvious that the faculty would split on this. Of course the radical non-signers realized clearly that the policy was the paramount issue, and that the oath was principally if not exclusively objectionable because it constituted an implementation of that policy, but for tactical reasons they didn't want to clarify this. We hoped, by getting rid of the oath without talking about the policy to avoid just what has now happened. Unfortunately the Regents were also aware of the relative significance of oath and policy, and a few hours before the last senate meeting they suddenly brought overwhelming pressures (both direct and indirect) to bear on the faculty big-shots to get a statement of support for the anti-communist policy. Accordingly, several anticommunist resolutions were unexpectedly presented in the senate, and the most influential members of the faculty rose one after another to urge favorable action as "the only way to prevent destruction of the university". I think if the issue had been thrashed out in debate earlier, we'd have made a more favorable showing; but the senate that day was in no mood to debate the policy on its merits (the "sign by Apr. 30 or be fired" ultimatum was fresh in many minds) and opponents were actually shouted down on the floor. It was one of the ugliest exhibitions of mass hysteria that I've ever seen. As you know, the Senate has now voted 4 to 1 to support the anticommunist policy. Regent Meylan (Hearst's attorney) hailed it as an event of national importance, and I agree. In effect we have opened the way for similar moves in every university in this country. The matter was summed up with aphoristic terseness (if not elegance) by a philosopher: the faculty didn't want to be crapped on by the regents, so they decided to crap on themselves.

The issue of the oath is still unsettled, and the big-shots who put over the policy are now mobilized for a mock-battle on it; having given away the substance they are now apparently willing to fight to the last non-signer (conspicuously absent from their ranks) to save the shadow. However, I fully expect the regents to rescind the oath or provide the suggested alternative (a statement of their policy on the back, or anus, of the new contract forms). Actually I would now not object to signing the oath, since there's nothing in it to which I can't personally subscribe. I'd have held off forever if I'd thought that we could thereby defeat the introduction of a political test into the university, but now that the faculty has approved of a discriminatory policy, I don't really see how they can object to any method, however silly or ineffective, of implementing it.

For days after the senate meeting I felt bruised; it had a really profound effect on me. In the past I've always been proud to be an intellectual because although I realized that as a social group we had many obvious weaknesses - we might be hopelessly inefficient in the ordinary affairs of life, thoroughly at variance with the superficial moral tenets of our society, even often physical cowards - I thought that we did at least

possess the capacity to see a basic issue when it arose and hit hard in such a situation. This, to me, was the social justification of the intellectuals in a culture, namely their ability to function as guardians of its basic values, alongside of which their actual creative contributions were secondary, since these contributions only had significance in relation to the whole structure of the culture. It's mortifying to have been so grossly in error, and my esprit de classe (or intellectual snobbery, if you prefer it) is thoroughly crushed.

Speaking as an expert on oaths, it seems to me that everything beyond clause 1 in your state oath is redundant, but I don't find anything basically objectionable in it. I enclose my letter from Sproul with oath attacked for you to compare. I've marked on the oath the extent of the State Oath, which the Regents incorporated as clause 1. Please return, as I want it for a keepsake.

About my own future I'm profoundly undecided and confused. The battle with the regents is no longer important, and I won't leave for that alone. This year I've at last assembled nearly all the equipment we need for research, and in the summer we are getting the needed space for it upstairs, as a result of the transfer to naval quarters of Kruegers ONR wet dream. However, we're still as far as ever from getting a microbiology curriculum, and I've come to feel that this can never develop in the existing department, where the situation is already tense and will become explosive on Mike's return. This means that we can't train students decently. The inadequate training wouldn't matter if we were content to tackle easy things, but I want now to explore the hard problems, and for this must do the experiments myself if were to get on. Unfortunately I can see less and less chance for this. I'm an inefficient worker, and academic duties, though certainly not overwhelming by ordinary standards, take about all the time I can give to work. To do any research myself on the hard problems, I'd need one semester completely free of teaching to waste time productively thinking about things. In view of all this, the sensible thing to do would be to leave, but I still can't bring myself to face it. I hate the thought of exchanging the Bay area for a mess of cornfields, and in addition I'm very fond of Mike, who would be completely stranded if I went. In other words, if there's the faintest chance of doing anything constructive at Cal, I want to stay. This led me a couple of weeks ago to shove in an application to the Cancer Soc for a long-term fellowship, to be spent principally working full time here on our program. I'd have to resign from the faculty if they gave it to me, but at least I could stay for a while with what we've got. However, my application can be disqualified on many grounds and they probably won't approve it. The only alternative here would be drastic concessions from the administration on the future development of microbiology, with as a minimum the establishment of a small separate department (we could do wonders with a few good people). I hesitate to play this gambit, however, since it would entail exposing the departmental conflicts and failure would leave me without an exit. I can get pretty powerful support from such outside people as Barker and Krak, but of course there would be bitter opposition from Krueger et al. Before venturing, I'd like to have one or two impressive offers from elsewhere, and of course the Lilly award would be manna from heaven. Would you be willing to make me a good offer, with the understanding that I'd use it as a crowbar for getting microbiology established at Cal? If both these outs failed, I think I could take the cornfields. It's obvious that you've got the best department in the country now, and the prospect of working with

you all would make up for a great deal. Treffers wants to look me over for Yale and while I'm not interested in what they've got there I'm planning to go east next month for a mutual inspection and could stop off on the way back to talk to you.

The above remarks probably reflect my confusion pretty accurately. There are so many conflicting issues that I haven't been able to straighten it out for myself, and for this reason I hate to do anything decisive, although decisive action is obviously called for. Science has taken a complete beating since November, so there's nothing to report on that front.

Yours,

Roger

Stander