

To the Community: a secret and unexpected meeting was suddenly called by the dean of the Faculty on Tuesday in his office---an unprecedented if not improper procedure---ostensibly to talk about FEPC business. In fact it was to present and promote a statement to the Trustees that certain individuals wished to circulate among the Faculty as if it had in truth originated with the FEPC. Since Tuesday, with intensive lobbying on the part of those individuals, the statement has been accumulating names---sometimes those of individuals who didn't fully understand what they were signing. All this is a misuse of power and position. The statement about the Futures Committee, purportedly issuing from the FEPC, is nothing other than an underhanded piece of political manoeuvring that seeks to sabotage months of serious work on the part of the Futures Committee on a matter of urgent importance. It was engineered by some members of the FEPC who were already privy to the contents of the Futures Committee report and by others who have, for various reasons, longstanding grudges against certain members of the Futures Committee. The overt purpose of the statement was to ask---or rather to demand---what the Trustees will without question grant anyhow. The Trustees have no wish to impose on the Faculty a proposal no one likes, and any amount of discussion necessary to iron out its difficulties would seem to the Trustees, I am sure, appropriate. If discussion needs to continue until April, of course it will. On the grounds of making this---entirely premature---'demand', however, the statement that accompanies it has marshalled a series of unjust or irrelevant attacks upon the Futures Committee that will seriously prejudice the discussion that will take place next week. That is its real purpose. To have called into question in such a way the formation, the procedure, the competence, the good faith of the Futures Committee six months ago is one thing, but to do this a week before its report is to be made public---and by those who have indeed already read the report---is nothing other than an attempt to defeat a proposal before its contents are known and can be discussed. This is a most reprehensible kind of behavior on the part of any group of people, particularly those who pretend to be scholars capable of and devoted to rational discourse. I myself have no idea what will be in the report of the Futures Committee, and it may possibly be that I will find myself opposed to much of it. If that is the case, I will not hesitate to say so---but only after I have read it and when there is opportunity for discussion. The report is, for any number of good reasons, deserving of serious discussion, and to attempt to defeat it before it is made public, to try and create an atmosphere of panic and prejudice where serious discussion cannot take place, is a scurrilous kind of device that deserves not support from but censure by those members of the Faculty who take such matters seriously. The kind of blindness that looks out only for selfish or divisional interest and not for the wellbeing of the whole is, among other things, a very stupid kind of selfishness.

Claude Fredericks

12 November 1975