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Dr. Gail T. Parker, President
Bennington College
North Bennington, Vermont 04201

Dear Dr. Parker:

As you have probably heard, I was on the faculty of Bennington for seven exceedingly happy years. This was a long time ago - I left in 1949, shortly after Fred Burckhardt came in as President. But I still consider myself very much a part of the Bennington community - and altogether the happiest years of the Drucker family were the years we spent in Bennington. So I hope you will not consider me presumptuous if I write to express my strong support for you and for the attempt to change the tenure system into a carefully administered contractual system.

As you may have heard, Bennington did not have a tenure system in 1949 - that is until Dr. Burckhardt took over at the same time at which most of the older faculty left. Before Dr. Burckhardt's appointment, some of us senior faculty members at Bennington had been discussing the problem and had strongly expressed our opinion to stay with a contractual system and not to adopt a tenure system, which we strongly felt would be contrary to the interests, especially of young faculty. This opinion was not heeded - I still believe that it was unnecessary to go on the tenure system twenty-five years back, and that it was a major mistake. A tenure system forces a college or university to terminate young faculty members who otherwise would have to be given tenure. It is no help, especially today when teaching jobs are scarce. It only means that young people simply will not be reappointed if the alternative is to give them tenure. At the same time, it deprives the college of all flexibility. What is needed is the system we used to have at Bennington which, I take it, is essentially what you and the Bennington Board of Trustees now want to re-institute,

a system of contractual appointments with a review of the appointments in plenty of time for a faculty member to find another job, should his contract not be renewed. The only change I might make is to suggest tenure for faculty members who have passed age 55 and who have done a distinguished job, without having become "super-stars". These people, who are often the best people, especially in an undergraduate school, cannot usually find another job. But ~~there~~^{the} number should be exceedingly small in a place like Bennington where, I am convinced, nobody should stay on until he retires - it is the wrong place for older people. Otherwise, however, I would stongly support a system of carefully reviewed contracts, such as you now propose, and such as we used to have when Bennington had its greatest distinction.

I know that the attempt to change the tenure system to what it should be, the system of contractual appointments with careful review procedures and with enough time for faculty members to get another job should their appointment not be renewed (and perhaps an organized attempt on the part of the institution to place faculty members whose appointments are not renewed) will cause tremendous uproar. Faculty members, I am afraid, believe that it is a law of nature that universities and colleges will continue to grow and will therefore be rudely shocked by the contraction of enrollment we can expect for the next five to ten years. But the first college that succeeds in restoring sanity to the personnel policies of American academia will have set an example and will have emerged as a leader. I only hope that Bennington, to which my emotional ties are still so very strong, will succeed in giving American higher education again the leadership which it used to give in its early years.

With best wishes and best regards,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Drucker', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.