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Welcome, Freshmen, to the Battle. The battle is for an education, and no matter what you think that should be, it won't be easy. This is your unofficial orientation, what the catalogue won't tell you, a short history of a few of the many unhappy battles for freedom at George Mason.

Dr. Reed was the last president of GMC. He attempted to suspend all male students not wearing ties and to force the faculty to take role and police dress code violations. When students struck and better than a third of the faculty threatened resignation, the University of Virginia in Charlottesville ignored it all. It was not until "Dr." Reed's academic credentials were shown to be outright forgeries that he was asked to resign.

Lorin Andrew Thompson was appointed "temporary" Chancellor of GMC and confirmed by the Board of Visitors, a group of conservative professional citizens scattered from southern Virginia to Boston. They have complete legal power over who rules Mason and how, but they are busy and inexperienced, and so they generally accept the recommendations of President Shannon in Charlottesville. Usually, Chancellor Thompson makes the policy; he's old, but he's not senile. His PhD is in Psychology, and don't you forget it, he's past master of the changed subject and the delayed decision. This history is of his regime.

In the following cases, no distinction is made between dismissal and "failure to renew contract." It all amounts to getting fired.

Larry Leftoff was a popular instructor of mathematics who was dismissed over widespread student and faculty protest for the official reason that he was not actively pursuing his doctorate. His official defense was that he considered devoting his time to teaching his students more important. The students suggested he be given a sabbatical, a leave without pay to complete his studies, but Chancellor Thompson refused, declining to give any reasons. It is known, but cannot be proven, that something else was involved. A professor who is still at Mason, and must therefore remain anonymous, made a secret report to the administration presumably to Dean Krug, the Chancellor's for-right-hand hatchet man, about a student party attended by himself and Mr. Leftoff. At this party, according to his secret accusation, students were smoking pot, and when the peace-pipe came to Larry, he did not refuse. He was not known to the students as a user of drugs, but as a rare instructor intensely concerned with winning the trust and confidence of his students. Whether this was the proper way to win that trust, or even if he actually committed the terrible crime, can be debated until doomsday. The fact is that he was never informed of any charges against him and never given a hearing, due process, or an opportunity to reply to the charges against him.

Dr. James Shea, a philosophy professor from Cornell University, taught several years at Mason before being dismissed this last year. The official reason was his "grading procedures," that is, giving too many A's. Very few of his colleagues on the faculty rallied to his defense, they still believed the way to make students "work" (learn) was to make them buckle down in fear by marking them down, flunking

many, especially early in the semester. No one seriously believes, however, that grading was the real reason for Dr. Shea's dismissal, because ungraded courses are permitted, and he was willing to have his courses so designated. The real reason was easy enough to see. He began to pal around with students, grew his hair long and wore blue jeans to class. He stopped lecturing and requiring papers on Plato and Aristotle and adopted the Socratic method of asking questions, encouraging discussion and even showing movies in class about the computer society, hunger and the Vietnam War. He often spoke to large crowds of students in the quadrangle not even enrolled in his classes about the morality of war and the importance of free discussion. He became a pacifist and publicly burned his draft card. He was arrested and charged for activities in aiding deserters and draft resisters to escape to Canada. He supported the student strike over the Cambodia invasion - Kent State massacre. He restrained the radical students from violence. He ate no meat. He wore no leather. He respected all life. He was a "dangerous" man. He now heads the Washington Peace Center and teaches at the College of the Potomac and in Maryland. Their gain, our loss. Many of us disagreed with him, but he made us THINK. Chancellor Thompson seems to value other things in a professor more.

William Tsow, (still listed in the catalogue with Dr. Shea, check it yourself) was an Oriental gentleman who taught Asian History. No modern history of Southeast Asia would be complete without reference to British, French and American presence there, but some student objected to his Oriental viewpoint, and complained to Dean Krug. Rumor has it that the complaining student was the middle-aged wife of a Pentagon General, but this has not been proven. Neither has the offensive remark ever been made public. In fact, the official explanation for his last minute dismissal was "budgetary reasons." Chancellor Thompson has stated many times how essential honorable conduct and speech are in our University. We are known throughout the country for our successful honor code, that same honor system recently studied by Air Force Academy representatives sent to Charlottesville to find out why it works. One reason might be the honorable example set by such men as President Shannon. Since Chancellor Thompson has said the reasons for dismissing Mr. Tsow were entirely financial, and since Chancellor Thompson must be an honorable man, we accept those reasons. But, no member of the teaching staff was paid less than Mr. Tsow, not one. Perhaps the Chancellor thought that, in today's world, Asian History was not so important as, say, Tennis. He did not dismiss the tennis or golf instructor for "budgetary reasons." Perhaps he thought that the future voters and citizens of America could best understand the mess we are in in Indo-China by developing our tennis serves, or by shooting in the low 80's on the golf course. That was his honorable choice, because no replacement has yet been found to teach Asian Studies, although the position is still open.

If you intend to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, notice that you must have six hours of "non-western studies." Since Mr. Tsow's dismissal you haven't much to choose from. If you can find room in the remaining non-western study course, "Religions of the Orient," you can learn about Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism from southern American Christian ministers who studied them in seminary.

They surely know more than the Oriental Mr. Tsow (Tzow).

Perhaps the Chancellor might waive the non-western study requirement and allow us to substitute a course he feels the college can afford, like Chorus, or Drawing. If the rules forbid substitution, perhaps we could have a course in Oriental Tennis.

These are not the only cases. You will hear of others. Upper-classmen will tell you. SAFE (Student Association for Freedom in Education) will tell you. You may see examples before your very eyes. There isn't room to detail them all, all the ones who went down in vigorous protest. From the quiet departures of instructors in 1966 to the recent resignation of Registrar Tannenbaum, there have been many who quietly left their positions without protest. Some out of fear, some out of conscience, many felt it useless to attack the system, and simply moved on to other work they could perform in good conscience. For every martyr you hear complaining, there are several quietly escaping to greener pastures, their records unmarred by controversy.

At the end of the Spring semester last year, student-faculty outrage reached a climax. At a series of "Chancellor's Teas," usually boring, poorly attended affairs, faculty members and student officers openly accused the administration of punishing disagreement, downgrading academic quality and racial discrimination in hiring and admissions. All three accusations were denied. Each week attendance mounted, and so did evidence to the contrary. Black students (less than half of 1% of the student body) got up in open meeting and told how they had been required to produce letters of character reference that no present white student could recall ever having heard of. Director of Admissions, Aebischer was accused by several faculty members of habitually using, in private, words like KIKE, HIGGER, and SHEENY, (whatever that means.) When he denied ever using such terms he was called a "liar" by an administration member who claimed to have heard for himself. These weekly confrontations became so heated and well attended that classes had to be cancelled. The auditorium overflowed and the proceedings had to be carried by closed circuit television to other lecture halls. Accounts were carried in the Post, Star, and Sun. Admissions Director, Aebischer, and Dean Krug stopped attending, Krug due to high blood pressure and Aebischer because of foot-in-mouth trouble. Only the suave Doctor of Psychology, Chancellor Thompson could take the heat, and even he, not very well. He kept stalling for time, he knew exams and summer vacation were near. When the students dispersed, he knew he wouldn't have to answer for his actions. He stalled cleverly and with great coolness on the matter of race. He finally promised to remove the picture requirement and the race question from the Application for Admission Form. (Say, Freshmen, were they on your application?) He flatly refused to employ student recruiters to go to black high schools, even though HEW would pay 80% of their expense, and one student spoke of several "volunteers." A black minister from the Office of Economic Opportunity got up and threatened to have funds from Health, Education, and Welfare cut off if GIC didn't change its unofficial race policies. HEW contributes heavily to keeping Mason going. Chancellor Thompson promised to "investigate the matter."

Out of these meetings was born SAFE, (Student Association for Freedom in Education), a small collection of studious, moderate students openly for academic freedom. They held private strategy meetings where they pre-planned "spontaneous" questions from the floor to catch the Chancellor in contradictions and control the explosive meetings. They ignored the race question and concentrated on faculty dismissals. The student government offered to pay Mr. Tsow's salary out of its own funds but were turned down. A series of student demands were presented and denied. The Chancellor refused to answer any more questions at the last meeting before exams. Students occupied his office, non-destructively but noisily, until he agreed to come out and answer questions. SAFE had completely lost control, only Dr. Shea prevented trouble.

On that angry day, the Chancellor showed what a master psychologist can do. He had Dean Turner's office issue student housing questionnaires at the entrance of the lecture hall. The forms asked for student opinions on the type of dormitories to be built. Only those students angry and concerned enough to attend the confrontation instead of studying for exams received the questionnaire. Obviously, the purpose of the questionnaire was not to get general student opinion, but to make it appear that the administration respected student opinion and was responsive to it. The frustrated students attending the meetings were the ones polled. A general opinion would have been sought by mail.

The second psychological trick quieted the students and made them feel they had accomplished something. He promised to set up a faculty committee to investigate the matter of faculty repression and to make recommendations, particularly about whether to keep or dismiss Mr. Tsow. The day after the students left he called a faculty meeting and said that he would not be bound by the committee's recommendations. Everything would be as it was.

Faculty opposition collapsed. A week before, at a packed faculty meeting, a surprise move had been taken to vote "no-confidence" in the Chancellor's administration. Were the opposition to carry the vote against him, he would likely be replaced. The anti-Chancellor forces counted heads and found they had a slim, six-vote majority. The Chancellor could count too, and found a parliamentary technicality to suspend the meeting, and the vote, for a week. In that week the word went out to department heads and from department heads to faculty how they had better vote. Raises, promotions and dismissals were not actually mentioned, but some of the faculty rebels could not find the courage to attend the second meeting. Pro-administration votes were recruited from non-faculty non-teachers within the administration itself and from the library staff. Thompson won a narrow, tense victory.

Now, from here:

The administration believes it can ignore the students a while longer. Some of the concerned students have graduated. The incoming Freshmen are believed to be ignorant. Some of us know otherwise. Every year the Freshman class is better educated than the one before, takes less time to find out what's happening, and to care about it.

SAFE wants GMC to adopt the procedures of the AAUP (American Association of University Professors) which are in force in nearly every major university in the country, including U. Va. at Charlottesville. At least, this would be a step forward up to mediocrity. AAUP procedures protect professors from dismissal without cause if, and only if, they have been teaching in one place long enough to have seniority, or TENURE. While the professor with tenure is protected from fear of political dismissal, the student is not protected from poor teaching. We are the paying customers and we demand the protection guaranteed any customer who pays for a service. We come to learn. Rather than the inadequate protections of the AAUP, we should propose an entirely new system, unique and first at GMC, to be a model for all schools that value learning first. First, sometimes new young professors are the most exciting and original and deserve the same protection as the older professors. The best way to get professors to teach is to reward those who actually do. Princeton Testing Service and others provide standard tests which could give some measure of how much students learn from different teachers. Grade teachers, not students. Only those who do not teach must go. The biology department already asks students to rate teachers. This is a good start.

We want our diplomas to mean something more than just sitting quietly in our seats and saying what is expected of us. We should be able to think for ourselves and fight for our beliefs. For progressive educational purposes, does not the right to KNOW ~~superior~~ the right to be happily ignorant? Take the time to think about it--and do something about it--before you prepare to graduate into the silent majority.