

To: Richard Lyman  
From: Bruce Franklin

February 25, 1971

Subject: Political repression

Your letter of February 12th, which informs me that you have decided the time is finally ripe for you to suspend me and move overtly to have me fired, is an interesting historical document, though admittedly an extremely minor one. It shows some very typical characteristics of individuals of your social class during times when you see your material interests in jeopardy. You pretend that your own most self-seeking acts, thoughts, and feelings do not exist, that you are merely serving timeless and transcendent ideals and regulations. Yet in your panic and rage you almost completely ignore the letter and spirit of the very regulations you cite, and trample on the ideals you are supposedly upholding.

*class privilege*

Needless to say, your letter does not mention the genocidal war being waged by U.S. imperialism against the peoples of Southeast Asia. Nor does it mention Stanford University's deep involvement in that war nor the huge profits being raked in from Southeast Asia by the Board of Trustees. From those profits they have given you a handsome salary to live on and a splendid mansion to live in, and you are not about to bite the hand that feeds you. Of course you would like to pretend that you don't know which side your bread is buttered on, so you go on the radio and write other letters to deplore the very war being waged to extend the empire that brings you and your class such luxuries. Do you really think that all that bread and butter falls out of the sky? One part of you is probably that self-deceived. But on some level of your being, you recognize that the existence of conscious revolutionaries on campus is dangerous mainly because of the threat they pose to your oppressive privileges and profits. And that is why you act as you do.

*tenure*

Academic tenure is also a privilege, a kind that is not available to the great masses of working people in the United States empire. When you want to fire workers at Tressider or in the physical plant, you do not have to write letters and make some slight pretence that those people have any rights which you are legally bound to respect. As a matter of fact, you do not have to write any letters at all, but simply delegate the matter to some of your underlings. So the question arises, Why should a Communist professor insist on maintaining the privilege of tenure? The main answer is that we Communists believe that job tenure should not be a privilege of a small minority, but the right of all working people, as it is today in the People's Republic of China. (To many this statement may sound like more "Communist propaganda," but that is mainly because Henry Cabot Lodge and the rest of the U.S. government have been successful in preventing us from hearing the free speech of several hundred million people who know that China is not just an island in the Pacific Ocean.) Furthermore, I believe that I have a political, moral, and even legal responsibility to the students and workers of Stanford University, present and future, not to allow you to deprive them of the ability to hear my ideas and those of other revolutionaries. It also seems to me important to resist by all means the wave of political repression, the new McCarthyism, now sweeping the campuses of the empire; the only significant difference between the recent firing of nine anti-war professors at Fresno State College and this is that the firing of a tenured professor at Stanford will represent a big breakthrough for the forces of repression everywhere.

Therefore I do indeed assert and defend all my rights under the Statement of Policy on Appointment and Tenure, which is part of my contractual relationship with Stanford University. It is necessary to point out that you already have deprived me of some of the protection afforded by this Statement and are now attempting in civil court to strip away most of the rest.