

SM 3/4/67

Paper 3I

Scholarship

To: Members of Senate

From: K. E. Rieckhoff,
Acting Dean of Science

Date: March 23, 1967

Re. QUESTION OF STANDARDS OF SCHOLARSHIP

In a newspaper article on page 6 of the Vancouver Sun on Tuesday, March 21, 1967, there appeared the following statement:

"There are people at Simon Fraser who hold that the poor image of the school is responsible for its failure to receive its proper share of foundation money and government grants. I don't think this is the case. I think that Simon Fraser faculties, especially the science departments, are getting less than what they deem to be their share of money because of the absence of large numbers of honored scholars.

Simon Fraser is a new school. It has not had time to create from within the kind of top-flight scholarship that we associate with leading institutions in North America."

These remarks were unfortunately made by a member of the faculty of Simon Fraser University, namely Dr. J. C. Leggett, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology (who on the same page of this newspaper is incorrectly identified as "Associate Professor"), thereby lending additional weight and credibility to the statement which clearly reflects in a very derogatory way on the standards of scholarship within the Faculty of Science at Simon Fraser University. While it is obvious that these remarks are intemperate and unscholarly, they also happen to be completely untrue.

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In fact, it can be easily documented that the Faculty of Science of Simon Fraser University has amongst its members many scholars of international repute. Moreover, the bulk of research grants received by the Science Departments of all major Canadian Universities, including Simon Fraser, does not derive from "foundation money", but rather from the National Research Council of Canada. As it turns out, and can be documented, faculty members at Simon Fraser University have received more than the average share of such NRC grants on account of their scholarly reputation. Likewise, the Defense Research Board of Canada has given a substantial number of grants to Simon Fraser scholars, and again these grants are given only to outstanding scholars. I am prepared to document this to Senate if requested to do so.

I consider it my duty as Acting Dean of the Faculty of Science to bring these public utterances to the attention of Senate with a request to undertake whatever steps Senate feels necessary to correct the misstatements and to prevent similar intemperate statements from being made in the future. I do not wish to engage in a public argument on this question and it is for this reason that I refer the matter to the Senate which is charged with being the guardian of the academic standards of this University. I therefore propose that the following motion be passed:

" The Senate of Simon Fraser University expresses its regret that the statements referred to were publicly made by a member of the faculty of Simon Fraser University. It is the opinion of Senate that they are not only intemperate and unscholarly but untrue, and that there can be no question as to the quality and repute of the scholastic standing of the members of the faculty of Simon Fraser University.

Senate instructs the President to communicate the content of this motion to Professor Leggett asking him to exercise better care and judgment in making public announcements regarding the scholarly quality of his colleagues in the University. "

K. E. Rieckhoff

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MEMORANDUM

Scholarships

TO: Members of Senate
Members of the Faculty of Science
Dr. J. C. Leggett

FROM: K. E. Rieckhoff,
Acting Dean of Science

DATE: April 3, 1967

SUBJECT: My memo to Members of Senate, dated March 23, 1967
Re. Question of Standards of Scholarship

Since the above-mentioned memo has been put on the agenda of Senate and has been distributed to the members of the Faculty of Science, Dr. Leggett has made a most gratifying response in a memo dated March 30th which he kindly distributed to all those who have had access to my memorandum. In fact, Dr. Leggett's memorandum shows that all I could possibly hope to achieve by the motion I proposed to Senate has been accomplished.

To be more specific, Dr. Leggett's memorandum clearly indicates that he is quite concerned about the impact of his statements in general and, in particular, on the members of the Faculty of Science and of Senate. The motion I proposed for Senate was intended to bring about such concern. Also, Dr. Leggett does, in fact, admit that his remarks were unscholarly, and in explaining what he means by "honored scholars" he implicitly grants the members of the Faculty of Science equal merit to those of distinguished schools such as the University of Toronto and U.B.C., who likewise have no large number of Nobel Prize laureates in their faculties. He also apparently acknowledges that Simon Fraser Science Faculty is attracting its fair share of research grants.

Nobody could reasonably expect anything else from Dr. Leggett than he has, in fact, put down in his memo. I am personally quite satisfied that in the future Dr. Leggett will exercise more care and better judgment when referring to his colleagues in the Faculty of Science, and I hope and expect that the members of Senate and my colleagues in the Faculty of Science will give the same interpretation to his response.

In the light of the foregoing, I see no need for any debate of or motion on this matter in Senate as nothing constructive could be achieved thereby; and I shall refrain from making the motion I originally proposed.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank members of the Faculty of Science who gave me the benefit of their advice and who lent support to my action on their behalf at the ratio of three to one. I should also like to thank Dr. Leggett for his prompt response and the concern he expresses on this matter.

Kenn E. Rieckhoff

KER:mc

K. E. Rieckhoff,
Acting Dean of Science