

CE 20

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Dear Sir,

I would like to make the following comments upon the Committee's definition of freedom of speech and arrangements for dealing with contraventions of this principle as defined. While appreciating the university's concern over this particular issue I feel that the definition as proposed for adoption lacks clarity and is entirely arbitrary. I would ask the Committee to bear in mind the following:-

a) the inadequacy of the legal definition upon which the statement depends. We all know that despite Powell's public pronouncements and the subsequent events that he cannot be charged under law for incitement to racial hatred or prejudice. If we are to be morally responsible let's not fall back on "The limitations imposed by law" for they are clearly inadequate

b) the legally enforced contraventions of academic freedom. This has well been brought out subsequently to the Porton Down affair when it was discovered that many 20% of the papers were not published since it would have been detrimental to the "national interest". The connections of several universities with Biological and Chemical Research has also been brought to the public attention and the inadequacy of financing for research well demonstrated.

c) the fact that members of the university were prevented from attending the meeting addressed by Doctor Finch from Porton and that it is extremely unlikely that he would have accepted an invitation to address a meeting in which the moral and ethical issues of Research into

biological and chemical warfare ~~research~~ could have been discussed.

. d) the arbitrary and discretionary powers that are left with the university disciplinary procedures.

Bearing these considerations in mind I would like the Committee to consider including in the definition the following provisos:-

a) that all meetings held in the university should be advertised well in advance and that if any objections are raised by any group in the university that these should be considered by the organisers.

b) that speakers will normally be expected to answer questions and suitable provisions made in a meeting for raising questions and discussion ^{made} before a meeting is closed.

c) that all members of the university will be allowed to attend any meeting called by a society or department in the university and that entry will not be restricted in any way.

d) that the organisers of a meeting will be subject to reprisals if any of the above are contravened.

e) that in the review of the disciplinary procedures the additional powers that the university body as a whole may or may not wish to enforce over and above the limitations of the law be fully defined and delimited such that each member of the university will be fully aware of the consequences of contravening the principle.

With reference to the Forton Town affair I would like to draw to the attention of the Committee a fact of which they are probably fully aware but which I feel cannot be over-emphasised. The result of the demonstration in this case was to explode the whole issue of biological and chemical warfare research into a national issue and debate. Various pressures had previously prevented the full publicity and discussion of this subject in the wider society of which we are a part and that **It**

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was these pressures as well as the dubious actions of the Chemistry department which largely determined the strategy which had to be adopted in this particular case. We can attempt to defend the principle of free speech here at the university but if we are to accept our wider responsibilities we cannot expect that everyone will necessarily comply until such a time as there are viable alternative means of ensuring public discussion.

*Susan Lowday
(3d yr. Sociology)*