

Committee A Statement on Extramural Utterances

The statement that follows was approved by the Association's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure in October 1964. Its purpose is to clarify those sections of the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure relating to the faculty member's exercise of freedom of speech as a citizen. In 1989, Committee A approved several changes in language in order to remove gender-specific references from the original text.

The 1940 *Statement of Principles* asserts the right of faculty members to speak or write as citizens, free from institutional censorship or discipline. At the same time, it calls attention to the special obligations of faculty members arising from their position in the community: to be accurate, to exercise appropriate restraint, to show respect for the opinions of others, and to make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution. An interpretation of the 1940 *Statement*, agreed to at a conference of the Association of American Colleges and the AAUP held on November 8, 1940, states that an administration may file charges in accordance with procedures outlined in the *Statement* if it feels that a faculty member has failed to observe the above admonitions and believes that the professor's extramural utterances raise grave doubts concerning the professor's fitness for continuing service.

In cases involving such charges, it is essential that the hearing should be conducted by an appropriate—preferably elected—faculty committee, as provided in Section 4 of the 1958 *Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings*.¹ The controlling principle is that a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member's unfitness to serve. Extramural utterances rarely bear upon the faculty member's fitness for continuing service. Moreover, a final decision should take into account the faculty member's entire record as a teacher and scholar. In the absence of weighty evidence of unfitness, the administration should not prefer charges; and if it is not clearly proved in the hearing that the faculty member is unfit to continue, the faculty committee should make a finding in favor of the faculty member concerned.

Committee A asserts that it will view with particular gravity an administrative or board reversal of a favorable faculty committee hearing judgment in a case involving extramural utterances. In the words of the 1940 *Statement of Principles*, "the administration should remember that teachers are citizens and should be accorded the freedom of citizens." In a democratic society freedom of speech is an indispensable right of the citizen. Committee A will vigorously uphold that right.

Note

1. Section 4 provides:

The committee of faculty members to conduct the hearing and reach a decision should either be an elected standing committee not previously concerned with the case or a committee established as soon as possible after the president's letter to the faculty member has been sent. The choice of members of the hearing committee should be on the basis of their objectivity and competence and of the regard in which they are held in the academic community. The committee should elect its own chair. (AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*, 10th ed. [Washington, D.C., 2006], 13.)