



Various factors influenced Regents

by PAUL CRIST
Member, Innocents Society

The decision of the Board of Regents to fire Professor Rozman is controversial. Their decision was difficult, and surrounded by a variety of influences.

Some, including the Board of Regents, have concluded that Professor Rozman's actions were "highly inappropriate for a teacher." Others have clearly concluded that the action of the regents was "inappropriate" or "disappointing," as did Henry Holtzclaw, chairman of the Special Fact Finding Committee.

Among the factors which could have been of influence were 1) the emotional rhetoric of those agreeing with Rozman's position and of those disagreeing with it, 2) the force of the Spelt's Commission report, 3) the impact of the Holtzclaw committee report, 4) the inconsistencies of the two reports, 5) conservative political pressures from the Unicameral and others, 6) an overriding sense of responsibility on the part of the regents to the people of Nebraska, and 7) questions of individual conscience by the individual Regents.

However, in the final analysis, the Regents acted in "good faith" to their responsibility. As reasonable men they were forced to make sense out of the inconsistencies between the Spelts Commission report and the Holtzclaw report. They rejected the emotion and the political pressure. In their opinion "the interest of Dr. Rozman and of the University will be best served" by terminating the relationship of the two.

The Regents acted as objectively as possible. Their

primary concern was to serve the best interest of the University.

This is not to say that Rozman is either guilty or innocent of "inappropriate activity." Presumably that will be a matter for the court.

Although Rozman has suggested that the Holtzclaw report exonerated him, that the Regents acted politically, and that he is being used as a scapegoat, "there is considerable room for reasonable men to disagree. And reasonable men have disagreed. Perhaps the courts will exonerate him, perhaps they will not. This is to be seen.

Two commissions have studied the May, 1970, activities and reached some differing conclusions. Even so, many questions remain unanswered about Rozman's conduct. Did Rozman by his conduct willfully disobey reasonable directives by remaining in the M & N Building? Did Rozman act reasonably to help effect a compromise at the time of the M & N occupation? Did Rozman exercise prerogatives inconsistent with appropriate conduct of faculty members? Was his position—that the University adopt a sympathetic political statement (sympathetic to his position and those of the other students occupying the M & N Building) - unreasonable and intolerant?

Other questions are as posed concerning the action of the Board of Regents. Was the decision wise? Is it in violation of the precious concept of academic freedom?

These questions are as of yet not satisfactorily answered. As a matter of conscience and responsibility, the regents have acted. Their decision is a good faith decision, and should be respected as such. However, it remains clear that reasonable men can and will disagree.

'We're not ogres who live in castles'

--Robert Raun

by KELLEY BAKER
Former Editor

It is not difficult to understand the Board of Regents' decision not to rehire Dr. Stephen Rozman but it is difficult to comprehend their treatment of the Special Faculty Fact-Finding Committee. That Rozman was being used as a scapegoat has been generally accepted but few people believed that the Board would abuse the Committee as it did.

Spelts credibility gone

Rozman's troubles began when the Spelts Commission Report cited him for "inappropriate conduct." Russell Mattson, a member of the Spelts Commission, admitted to Rozman and the Committee's attorney that Rozman had been singled out because a witness had told him that Rozman called one of President Soshnik's speeches a bunch of "crap." This same witness refused to testify before the Committee and it was conclusively established that the witness was in error.

The mistake and many others that have come to light over the past few months have destroyed the credibility of the Spelts Commission Report. Testimony was never recorded. Many important figures, including people mentioned in the report, were never questioned. No files were kept and no one can tell who testified or when or where anyone testified. All that remains are the attorney's handwritten notes.

Decision in December

The Regents were prepared to fire Rozman at their December meeting but an eleventh hour compromise was forged by several highly

respected faculty members. As a result, the Special Fact-Finding Committee was established to separate the truth from all the myths that surrounded Rozman's actions.

The Committee's report is an impressive and cogent document which expressed the unanimous conclusion that "Dr. Rozman was not guilty of inappropriate actions during the week of May 4."

The Regents' treatment of the Committee and Rozman severely damages their own credibility. It is worth noting that they never accepted the report as they have many others--they merely "acknowledged their appreciation." Had they trusted the Committee they would have quoted from its findings but the findings didn't fit the fate the Board had in mind for Rozman.

The Board alluded to (but never stated) the findings of the Committee as the eleventh of twelve points in their resolution. It is doubtful that the Regents ever had any intention of coming to any verdict other than guilty and the Committee's findings were an embarrassment that had to be avoided. In one sense, the Fact-Finding Committee's time and effort were wasted because the Regents ignored them, but in a more important sense, they were invaluable in showing up the Board's insensitivity to anything but its own desires.

Continual distress

The Regents must find it a source of continuing embarrassment that the justifications for their decisions not to hire and not to rehire prove fallacious. Earlier this year, after months of secrecy, they released four reasons for refusing to hire Michael Davis as an instructor in philosophy.

Of the four, two were later disproved and the president of the Board admitted that they were not sure of a third when they made their decision. That left only the reason that Mr. David had conducted a one-man sit-in in the Michigan Administration Building.

Ultimately, the only reason left to the Regents for not rehiring Dr. Rozman is the fact that he too was involved in a sit-in.

Applies to everyone?

Point 11 of the resolution that the Board approved unanimously cited Rozman's refusal to leave the ROTC Building "when directed to do so by the administration" and his failure to "cooperate with the administration efforts to secure the evacuation of the building after it had been determined on the morning of May 5, 1970, that the action of the students had become disruptive to normal University operations..." They concluded that such actions "are not approved by this Board and will not be condoned in Dr. Rozman's case or in any other case."

Point 4 of the same resolution stated that the Board "will not tolerate action which disrupts or which threatens to disrupt the educational activities of the University...without regard to whether those acts are committed by students, faculty, administrators or outsiders." Presumably, then, the wrath of the Regents will be directed against all of those who occupied the ROTC Building after the injunction was filed--a list which includes tenured faculty and an associate dean as well as untenured faculty and a large number of students.

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Telephones: editor: 472-2588, news: 2589, advertising: 2590. Second class postage rates paid at Lincoln, Neb.

Subscription rates are \$5 per semester or \$8.50 per year. Published Monday through Friday during the school year except during vacation and exam periods. Member of the Intercollegiate Press, National Educational Advertising Service.

The Daily Nebraskan is a student publication, independent of the University of Nebraska's administration, faculty and student government. Address: The Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.