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Volume 22 | Issue 1

Article 5

1-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Weitz, Seth A. (2008) "Campus of Evil: The Johns Committee's Investigation of the University of South Florida," *Tampa Bay History*: Vol. 22: Iss. 1, Article 5.

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Campus of Evil: The Johns Committee's Investigation of the University of South Florida

BY SETH A. WEITZ

n his inaugural address given in Tallahassee on January 3, 1961, the new governor, Cecil Farris Bryant, proclaimed to all Floridians, "it is no longer time for Bryant--it's time for Florida. . . . It's time to remember that we are first and foremost citizens . . . and by the heritage we share, to do all in our united power to make Florida the rich material, social, cultural and moral experience . . . it ought to be." This was a profound statement coming on the heels of the tumultuous 1950s, which saw a further divide not only in the nation but in Florida as well over the question of equal rights for African Americans. The previous governor, LeRoy Collins, who was a racial moderate, had tried largely in vain to drag Florida out of the "Old South" and into a "New South" by not taking drastic measures to halt integration as had many of his contemporaries in the Deep South. Collins also pushed for the reapportionment of the state's legislative districts, which often drew scorn from many in rural North Florida.

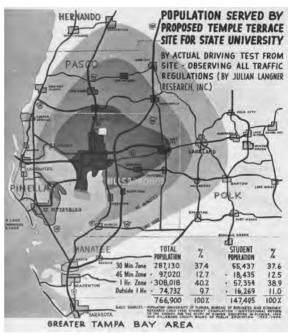
Ironically, Bryant, an ardent and outspoken segregationist and opponent to reapportionment, as governor pledged to unite the deeply divided state. Florida, while a member of the "Solid South," a united bloc of former Confederate states, did not march in lockstep with its Deep South neighbors such as South Carolina or Georgia. Due to its climate, Florida had seen numerous population booms in the late 1800s and early twentieth century that had transformed the once backwater state into a vacation and retirement spot for many northerners. As the twentieth century wore on, more and more emigrants from the Northeast and Midwest moved to Florida, especially South Florida, bringing with them political and social beliefs that ran counter to

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¹ "Inaugural Address, January 3, 1961," box 250, item 3, Allen Morris Papers (cited hereafter as Morris Papers), Special Collections, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

the "Old South" value system treasured in North Florida. Conservative Democrats from rural North and Central Florida recognized as early as the 1880s that their lifestyle would be challenged in the future by those they referred to as "outsiders."

The conservatives had placed safeguards in the 1885 state constitution meant to ensure that the North Floridians would maintain control of the state legislature in spite of the imminent population growth of South Florida. By the end of the 1950s, the North Florida Democrats, known as the Pork Chop Gang, were already employing ignominious tactics in order to keep power. In 1956, they



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Graphic showing the service area for what would become the University of South Florida. USF would draw students from both urban and rural areas, which would cause some friction on campus and in the Florida legislature.

created the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (FLIC), which was also known as the Johns Committee after one of its founders and key members, state senator Charley Johns. After the U.S. Supreme Court had outlawed segregation in public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the FLIC looked to halt integration by discrediting the NAACP by linking the organization to communism. When this failed to produce the desired results, they next looked to homosexuality on the campuses of Florida's universities, instituting what they deemed a moral crusade while linking homosexuals to communism. This was a ploy to maintain their power by discrediting any and everyone whom they felt was a threat.²

For an in-depth study of the FLIC, see Stacy Lorraine Braukman, "Anti-Communism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1999); Seth A. Weitz, "Bourbon, Pork Chops and Red Peppers: Political Immorality in Florida, 1945-1968" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2007); Bonnie Stark, "McCarthyism in Florida: Charley Johns and the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, July 1956 to July 1965" (master's thesis, University of South Florida, 1985). For an in-depth study of the Pork Chop Gang, see Kevin N. Klein, "Guarding the Baggage: Florida's Pork Chop Gang and Its Defense of the Old South" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1995)

Despite holding many similar beliefs as the members of the FLIC and being highly sympathetic to the Pork Chop Gang, if not an actual member himself. Bryant looked to bring an end to the bickering between the regions of the state. As he had mentioned in his address, it was "time for Florida." The new governor realized that he would have to compromise some of his values in order to benefit the state as a whole. He exclaimed, "this day, to fulfill its promise, must see a new dedication on the part of the people of Florida."3 He went on to note that while "the interests of Miami and Madison, of Tampa and Tice, are not, and cannot be



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Florida governor Ferris Bryant is pictured at the groundbreaking ceremony for the University of South Florida. Bryant was a strong proponent of improving Florida's educational system.

expected to be identical . . . there is no compelling reason why . . . the Legislature cannot achieve a harmonious blending of varying interests to develop equitable programs."⁴ While many felt that reapportionment of the legislative districts—a battle that had been ongoing for close to forty years by Bryant's inauguration—was paramount, the new governor believed Florida would never advance in the eyes of the nation without improving the state's educational system, especially the university system. Bryant referred to the early 1960s as the "knowledge revolution" and did not want Florida to be left behind.

A year after Bryant's inauguration, Florida opened its fourth public university, the University of South Florida (USF) outside of Tampa. Prior to the opening of USF, Florida was home to only two public "white" universities, and Florida State University had only been coeducational since 1947. When USF opened its doors to freshmen in 1960, it raised eyebrows within the small rural community of Temple Terrace just north of Tampa. It was not soon after the opening of the institution that disgruntled parents and clergy called upon the FLIC to come and investigate the university for "questionable" teaching practices. The Pork Choppers led the assault on USF, and it

³ "Inaugural Address, January 3,1961," box 260, item 3, Morris Papers.

⁴ Ibid.

became part of what they framed as a defense against communist infiltration into the state's schools. They passed the Stallings-Eldredge Bill, which called for the creation of a new mandatory course for Florida's high schools entitled "Americanism versus Communism." Although this was meant for the high school level, it foreshadowed the battles that took place over the next couple of years in Tampa between the USF administration and parents, who were often aided by the Pork Choppers and the FLIC. ⁵

John S. Allen had been selected by the Board of Control in 1957 to be the first president of the University of South Florida. When Allen opened the new university to students in 1960, the Tampa Bay Area had a population of close to two hundred thousand, and while many of the students came from urban Tampa and St. Petersburg, others hailed from outlying rural communities that shared values with the Pork Choppers. In reality, they were mortified at the prospect of a new public university in a region of the state that was attracting more and more "outsiders" by the day.

Debate over why the FLIC came to Tampa ran rampant during the 1960s, with the *Tampa Tribune* reporting that FLIC was invited to "investigate Communist activities as well as morals, deviations and homosexuality." Mark Hawes, counsel for the FLIC, stated that he was concerned with the teaching practices of South Florida's faculty in general since the students, as a result of the improper education they were receiving, "might be softened to where they might be susceptible to Communistic doctrines or some other doctrines."

Aside from communism, some claimed the committee was drawn to Tampa because of the racially liberal teaching of some of the faculty. One student claimed that her "Introduction to Teaching professor . . . talked quite a lot about integration and segregation and everything, and he is in favor of us having it here . . . I had quite an argument with him . . . about intermarriage." Another student commented on a film she had been shown in one her classes that "showed Negro men and white women together, holding hands, and I remember in one scene she, I believe, took a cigarette from his mouth and started smoking."

Charley Johns, in a letter to Allen, warned the president that his university would soon be under investigation "in regard to the infiltration into state agencies by practicing homosexuals," and in doing so, the FLIC would try to ascertain the "extent of this problem" while performing the undertaking with "a very high level

⁵ Tampa Tribune, April 3, 1961.

⁶ Ibid., May 18, 1962

Testimony Given to the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (cited hereafter as "Testimony"), May 30, 1962, box 5, folder 10, Papers of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee

[&]quot;Testimony"), May 30, 1962, box 5, folder 10, Papers of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (cited hereafter as FLIC Papers), Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.

⁸ "Testimony," May 10, 1962, box 10, folder 12, FLIC Papers.

⁹ "Testimony," May 15, 1962, box 10, folder 15, FLIC Papers.

of dignity." ¹⁰ Homosexuality, communism, and integration were all concerns of the FLIC and the rationale behind their investigations over the past five years. However, the Johns Committee, despite Charley Johns's letter to Allen, was drawn to Tampa largely because of the University of South Florida professor Thomas Wenner.

Wenner, according to the FLIC member and state representative George B. Stallings, was "blowing off about how the university has accepted Negro students and should announce it to the nation." Stallings was appalled and leveled his abhorrence at the comments and his concerns to Johns by stating: "if this guy wants to make such an announcement he should not be salaried in a tax supported institution of the State of Florida I hope that our committee will be able to do something about this bird and his big mouth." Johns agreed with his colleague and alerted his chief investigator, R. J. Strickland, of the possible danger in Tampa by proclaiming, "the next time you are down that way, see what you can find out about this Professor." 13

In the midst of allegations of improprieties, Wenner switched tactics in an effort to shift the focus away from himself. He contacted state Representative Joe McClain and informed him of homosexuality on the University of South Florida campus, referring to the school as a "campus of evil." Wenner remained on the offensive, indicating that there were faculty members sympathetic toward the Soviet Union and that McClain should ask FLIC to come to Tampa to launch an investigation. Wenner, in turn, would be more than happy to supply the committee with a list of professors who harbored both homosexual and communist tendencies. ¹⁵

At the same time, Wenner issued his plea to McClain, a grassroots effort was underway in rural Hillsborough County to ensure that the University of South Florida was not, indeed, a "campus of evil." Jane Stockton Smith, whose son Stockton Jr. had enrolled at USF, led the movement. Jane Smith noted that her son felt that higher education, especially the university system, should encourage not only morality but faith and patriotism as well. ¹⁶ Johns felt the same way in regard to the new school. He also knew that USF would not be the last state university built and opened in Central and South Florida. Johns and his allies were aware of the effort to bring a state university to Miami as state senator Ernest Graham had presented the idea to the legislature as early as 1943. By the time Senate Bill 711 was introduced to the legislature in 1965, Miami was not the only "new" Florida location to have a public university. ¹⁷ The University of Central Florida had been established in 1963 in

Charley Johns to Dr. John S. Allen, November 9, 1961, box 4, folder 13, Papers of John S. Allen (cited hereafter as Allen Papers), Special Collections Department, University of South Florida Library, Tampa.

George B. Stallings to Charley Johns, November 28, 1961, box 2, folder 17, FLIC Papers.

¹² Ibid

Charley Johns to R. J. Strickland, December 4, 1961, box 3, folder 17, FLIC Papers.

Box 4, folder 15, Allen Papers.

¹⁵ "Thomas Wenner Testimony," June 7, 1962, box 5, folder 20, FLIC Papers.

[&]quot;Testimony, Jane Smith," June 4, 1962, box 5, folder 16, FLIC Papers.

www.fiu.edu/docs/brief_history2.htm.



Florida State Archives, Photographic Collection

The four people largely responsible for the creation of the Johns Committee are, from left, Jane Smith, a private citizen from Tampa; St. Petersburg attorney Mark Hawes; William O'Neill, state representative from Marion County; and Charley Johns, who headed the committee. Orlando, and Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, sixty miles north of Miami, had opened its doors in 1964. These developments were a clear indicator to Johns and the Pork Choppers of the inevitable swing in power and influence from North to Central and South Florida. Therefore, the FLIC, acting to advance the interests of the Pork Chop Gang, made a point to attempt to shield USF from liberal and "deviant" infiltration.

As Johns formulated his plans for the new school, Jane Smith, along with three other parents, requested a meeting with Sidney French, dean of Academic Affairs at USF, and alerted French to the "vile approach to sex, destruction of faith in God, and extolling of ideas that are of socialist and communistic origin" taken by the faculty. 18 French dismissed the group as "crackpots" perpetrating a witch hunt and also referred to them as a "pressure group."19 The group had objected to what they felt were "immoral teachings" in the university, mainly in the English Department, where faculty were accused of using profanity and other objectionable language and espousing anti-Christian ideals. Furthermore, the students were offended by the selection of Brave New World, Grapes of Wrath and The Immense Journey in their Functional English course, which they felt were not suitable for young impressionable minds.²⁰ After being shunned by French, a now irate Smith took matters into her own hands and penned a letter and mailed it to fifty families in Tampa chosen because of their reputation as "responsible citizens, interested in the affairs of our community."21 At the conclusion of the letter, she invited them to a meeting at her house. Twenty-five people attended, including the mayor of Tampa. They listened to Smith rail against USF for harboring extremist professors bent on passing their radical liberal views on to a vulnerable generation of America's youth. The meeting concluded with the group voting to formally invite the Johns Committee to Tampa. 22 They determined that they were "up against many weighty problems serious enough to warrant investigation by those with knowledge

¹⁸ "Report by Jane Stockton Smith," box 1, folder 1, John Egerton Papers (cited hereafter as Egerton Papers), University Archives, University of South Florida, Tampa.

¹⁹ "Testimony, Sidney French," May 30, 1962, box 5, folder 10, FLIC Papers.

²⁰ "French, Review of Meeting", box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

²¹ "Report by Jane Stockton Smith," box 1, folder 1, Egerton Papers.

²² Ibid.

and ability to achieve results, namely, the investigating committee."²³ Unbeknownst to the Smiths was the fact that the FLIC had already decided to undertake an investigation at the University of South Florida. Both Strickland and Mark Hawes arrived in Tampa on April 10, the day after the meeting.

The parents were especially appalled at a proposed speech set to take place on the university's campus. Dr. Jerome Davis, a political scientist who had been blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) for his strong left-wing leanings, had been invited to the university to give a speech concerning different forms of government. ²⁴ After it was announced, Allen was bombarded with letters, phone calls, and complaints from around the state, including a letter that stated, "communists were infiltrating the American universities and having a forum to expose college students to communism." ²⁵ Allen, after a visit from Governor Bryant, capitulated and rescinded the invitation, referring to Davis as being too controversial and inappropriate. ²⁶

Many USF professors and students were outraged at Johns, Smith, and her "pressure group." At the center of the disagreement was the question of academic freedom. The Pork Choppers and their allies maintained that they supported academic freedom, as long as this did not include ideas that countered their belief system, which would threaten the supremacy of their values in the state. Six students composed and signed a letter to Allen in which they maintained that the "principal [sic] of intellectual freedom must not be compromised at USF." Allen was not swayed. He had what he felt was the best interest of the university in mind and did not want to draw the ire and wrath of the FLIC.

Allen's decision pushed the USF chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) into action when they decided that academic freedom was at stake. Thus, the chapter president, Donald Harkness, noted their concern and publicly protested Allen's actions. They issued a statement that read, "If in the judgment of an instructor a person not on the university staff can make a unique contribution to the course, we feel that the instructor should be free to invite this person to speak to his class." They also claimed that the "integrity of education demands that it be free from tendentious criticism and pressure from the outside." The parents, feeling betrayed by the AAUP, retaliated:

Because there will be so many organized efforts on the part of outright communists to attack you for refusing to allow a person of such obvious disloyalty as Jerome Davis on the campus, I offer you my gratitude for your

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²³ "French, Review of Meeting," box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

²⁴ "Joe McClain Testimony," June 5, 1962, box 5, folder 17, FLIC Papers.

^{25 &}quot;Sydney Lenfesty to President John Allen," March 17, 1962, box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

²⁶ Tampa Tribune, March 4, 1962.

^{27 &}quot;Donald Harkness, Memorandum on AAUP-USF Chapter Position on FLIC Investigation," March 2, 1962, box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

²⁸ Ibid.



University of South Florida Libraries' Special Collections

General Sumter Lowry of Tampa, veteran of World War I, World War II and Korea, ran for governor of Florida in 1956 and for congress in 1962. Lowry is often characterized as a polarizing figure in 1960s Florida politics.

honest good sense. Believe me, thousands of parents feel as I do; and we aren't organized so you won't hear from us.²⁹

While the FLIC was quietly setting up their operation in Tampa, word quickly spread of their presence in the community. As expected, the AAUP did not warmly welcome FLIC to Tampa but instead of protesting, tried to reach a compromise and soften the inevitable blow to the academic community. They drafted a list of requests and compromises and asked for five concessions from the FLIC.

First, with the investigation of the University of Florida fresh in their minds, they insisted that professors be interviewed on subjects and matters that were considered legitimate by those concerned. Second, they challenged the tactics Johns had employed in Gainesville in keeping the investigation secretive. They requested that the hearings at USF be conducted openly on campus as a safeguard for those interrogated. The AAUP, trying to cover as many bases as possible, also demanded that legal counsel be provided for those interviewed if they so desired and, last,

²⁹ Margaret Jefferson to President Allen, March 1962, box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

that the information gathered in the investigation was not to be published without "mutual agreement between faculty and University." President Allen agreed with the stance taken by the AAUP and decided to meet with the FLIC members before they officially started their investigation. He personally took the demands to the hotel where the FLIC members were staying and chose to formally invite the FLIC to USF. In being proactive, Allen hoped to limit the publicity surrounding the event. Unfortunately for Allen, Professor Wenner had already given an interview with the *St. Petersburg Times* in which he divulged that the FLIC members were in Tampa to investigate homosexuality at USF. Johns refuted Wenner's claim that the professor had been instrumental in bringing the committee to the Bay Area. At the same time, he admonished Wenner for publicizing the FLIC's investigation, stating: "It is a policy of this committee to carry on our activities quietly and with as little publicity as possible." ³²

Other rumors soon circulated concerning the FLIC's presence in Tampa. One dealt with the rabid segregationist and 1956 Democratic gubernatorial primary candidate Sumter Lowry, who hailed from Tampa and was conveniently embroiled in a heated Democratic congressional primary with state senator Sam Gibbons. The St. Petersburg Times charged that Hawes had announced that the hearings would commence on May 28 because that date fell one day before the primary between Lowry and Gibbons. Gibbons had been instrumental in bringing the university to Tampa while Lowry was opposed to the creation of a new university. Lowry was also a member of the Florida Coalition of Patriotic Societies, a right-wing organization that had derided USF over the invitation it had extended to Jerome Davis to speak on campus. Conservatives throughout the Cold War often targeted Davis, who had been blacklisted by the HUAC in the 1950s for "socialist leanings". The Times accused Lowry of using them to taint Gibbons's reputation since he was a proponent of the Tampa school.³³ In denying the charges, Lowry claimed, "I had nothing whatsoever to do with the investigation and knew absolutely nothing about the charges until I read them in the paper."34 Johns put out the fire by announcing that Hawes had provided the wrong date and that the hearings would commence on the May 30, not two days earlier.

Reminiscent of the operation Strickland had run out of the Thomas Hotel in Gainesville, the FLIC set up their Tampa headquarters in room 170 of the Hawaiian Village Motel.³⁵ The investigators quickly gathered from their informants a list of names of students and professors who were alleged communists, left-wing liberals, or

³⁰ "American Association of University Professors, University of South Florida Chapter, Position Paper on FLIC Investigation," May 25, 1962, box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

St. Petersburg Times, May 18, 1962.

³² Tampa Tribune, May 20, 1962.

³³ Ibid., May 23, 1962.

³⁴ Ibid., May 29, 1962.

Testimony," May 8, 1962, box 10, folder 8, FLIC Papers.

homosexuals. Based on this list, which was provided by local high school principals, current and former USF students, "concerned" parents, and faculty members, the FLIC compiled specific questions to ask each "witness" who was to be questioned.³⁶

Initially, as in Gainesville, the investigations focused on homosexuality. The investigators soon focused their inquest on four professors and staff members: James Teske, an educational resources staff member; English professor John MacKenzie; theater professor John Caldwell; and music professor R. Wayne Hugoboom.³⁷ Teske's name had been brought to the attention of the committee by a former South Florida student who disclosed that two years earlier, he and his girlfriend had been invited to Teske's house with other students, where they were offered alcohol and provided with pornographic photographs; he also alleged that MacKenzie had sexually propositioned one of the students.³⁸ MacKenzie was also accused of "performing homosexual acts on students."³⁹ Both Teske and MacKenzie had their contracts terminated, and they left USF, while Caldwell and Hugoboom were suspended. Both chose to appeal their suspensions; Hugoboom did so successfully and returned to his teaching duties.

Caldwell's case was not as simple, and it centered on a student named Charles Hadley, who himself was identified by other students as a homosexual. Hadley had complained to Dr. Margaret Fisher, director of student personnel, that students around campus had wrongly labeled him homosexual. With controversy swirling around him, he married another USF student, Judy Graves. Hadley himself chose to speak to the committee, possibly in an effort to deflect suspicion away from himself. He told FLIC that the problems stemmed from a theater trip to Tallahassee. Supposedly Caldwell had informed Hadley to "stay away" from the theater program because Caldwell "did not want any fairies" involved in his program. Soon after this exchange, Hadley did travel to Tallahassee with the group and shared a hotel room with Caldwell. It was in the room, according to Hadley, that Caldwell made an unwanted sexual advance, telling the student, "If a homosexual friend of mine came to me for homosexual action, I couldn't turn him down."

Caldwell vigorously denied the accusation and insinuated that he shared a room with Hadley in order to keep an eye on a student whom he considered to be a homosexual and also to protect the other students on the trip from any unwanted homosexual advances. The committee also noted that Caldwell consistently made comments and remarks in which he referred to his theater program as being "free

³⁶ Ibid.

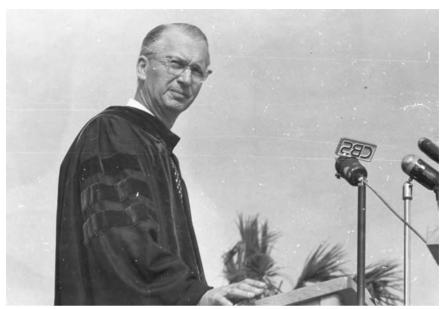
³⁷ H. P. Stallworth to John Allen, June 4, 1962, box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.

[&]quot;Testimony", May 8, 1962, box 10, folder 6, FLIC Papers.

³⁹ Charley Johns, *Report from Florida Legislative Investigation Committee to State Board of Education*, August 24, 1962, box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.

Margaret B. Fisher, "Interview with Charles Hadley," September 14, 1962, box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.

⁴¹ Committee for Evaluating Mr. John Caldwell's Suspension, *Report to President John S. Allen*, August 9, 1962, box 4, folder 12, Allen Papers.



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University of South Florida president John Allen attempted to blunt the Johns Committee investigation, but he also realized any overt actions to stop the proceedings would only make matters worse for the university.

from homosexuals" and "the cleanest theatre in the United States in this regard." Caldwell's defense was bolstered by the testimony of several of his other students who accused Hadley of being a homosexual, one of whom claimed to have once been accosted by Hadley. According to Paul Morton, the student who defended Caldwell, the only reason Caldwell shared a room with Hadley was that they were the only two left without a roommate and did so out of necessity. Caldwell's defense was also bolstered by testimony on his behalf given by his priest and another faculty member in addition to Dr. Fisher. Fisher provided a character analysis of Hadley and described him as "irresponsible", "inconsistent" and "unsavory," noting that Hadley's only character witness, a fellow student, was in jeopardy of failing out school himself, had stolen and destroyed school property, and therefore was an "unreliable witness."

When the committee finally questioned Hadley, he seemingly changed his story and claimed he was not privy to any information concerning "homosexual activities

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Report on Investigation Conducted by President Allen on the John W. Caldwell Case, September 11, 1962, box 4, folder 12, Allen Papers.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



Florida State Archives, Photographic Collection

This photograph, taken between 1953 and 1955, features three Florida governors: former governor Millard Caldwell (1945-1949), future governor Ferris Bryant (1961-1965) and acting governor Charley Johns (1953-1955).

... on campus."⁴⁵ In August 1962, the university reversed its original position and recommended that Caldwell be reinstated. Johns was not pleased with the findings and publicly lambasted the university for *not* taking action against Caldwell, despite the defamation of Hadley. Johns was also miffed at the fact that power had been taken out of his hands.

Caldwell, while vindicated, was not satisfied. Thus, in spite of the overturning of his suspension, he tendered his resignation to President Allen due to "extended and continuing harassment" from the committee. 46 In his public comments, he declared: "I can't take any more. . . . I won't subject myself to further indignities from that man [Johns] and what he's doing to destroy teacher morale at the university" and that Johns would "never give up, but keep on hurting people to save face politically." It must also be known that, in spite of the reinstatement, Allen had privately decided not to extend tenure to Caldwell because he was deemed too controversial, and he

⁴⁵ Confidential Report to President Allen from James A. Parrish on the John W. Caldwell Hearing, August 28, 1962, box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.

⁴⁶ Tampa Tribune, September 21, 1962.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

was expected to continue teaching at USF for only six more months.⁴⁸

The committee continued its investigation of USF, and the initial week of interviews and interrogations also focused on supposed inappropriate classroom discussion and assigned readings. The testimony obtained revealed that many of the female students were uncomfortable with comments made by their male professors as well as the fact that reading material was deemed "trashy" and laced with profanity, and "a great deal of sex [was] brought into the book."

With the conclusion of the interviews at the Hawaiian Village Motel, the hearings moved to campus. To prepare the students and faculty for the expected onslaught from the FLIC, Allen addressed the university, urging them to cooperate with the committee and to remain calm, attempting to assure them that they did not have to answer questions that they deemed irrelevant and unjust.⁵⁰ Despite Allen's reassurances, the students' fears were not allayed, and they took matters into their own hands led by the Executive Council of the Student Association, who obtained the signatures of more than half of the university's students in an effort to halt the proceedings.⁵¹ In spite of the petition, the hearings began in the conference room of the Administration Building. Charley Johns, Mark Hawes, and R. J. Strickland were present, along with committee members George Stallings, Richard O. Mitchell and William G. O'Neill, with Dr. Herbert Stallworth representing the Board of Control.

The first day focused on reading selections from a specific course entitled "The American Idea," and they called its professor, John Warner, as the first "witness." The readings in question were *The Razor's Edge*, by Somerset Maugham, and J. D. Salinger's *Nine Stories*. Johns soon lost his patience with Warner and attacked the professor, assailing him for his choice of assignments. Johns's tirade centered on Salinger's book as he exclaimed: "Doctor, I want to ask you if the literary field has got to such a low ebb that you all couldn't find anything to put in your library but this trash. . . . [W]ill you advise me what is literary and a genius about writing such crap as he just read?" Warner responded to Johns's diatribe by maintaining, "I don't rate this trash myself, sir, and I think that, with more time and studying it and analyzing it with one of our good teachers, you wouldn't either." Senator Mitchell continued the harangue, informing Warner that he had attended the University of Florida in 1950 along with Stallworth and Hawes, and he sarcastically asked the USF professor: "will you tell me how, from 1950 to 1962, this world had changed so much that it is necessary to have such kinds of books as we are talking about as recommended

⁴⁸ Report on Investigation Conducted by President Allen on the John W. Caldwell Case, September 11, 1962, box 4, folder 12, Allen Papers.

^{49 &}quot;Cheryl Beckner Testimony," May 15, 1962, box 10, folder 24, FLIC Papers.

⁵⁰ *Tampa Tribune*, May 21, 1962.

⁵¹ Ibid., May 20, 1962.

⁵² "John Warner, Testimony," May 23, 1962, box 5, folder 6, FLIC Papers.

⁵³ Ibid.

reading, or suggested reading, or as a reading list delivered to the young people of this University? Tell me how in twelve years that has changed."⁵⁴ Later in the day, Hawes inserted the question of morality into the equation. The chief counsel asked if it was appropriate for faculty to influence their students by shoving their own morals down their throats. Warner responded by stating, "Surely we want them [students] to be sound and sane," to which Hawes countered, "When did the University and the educational systems take this over from the homes?" When Warner replied, "I think we have always shared it with the homes," he underscored the greatest fears of the conservatives.⁵⁵

After the first day of hearings, Johns spoke to the media, affirming that the FLIC was "trying to be as fair as humanly possible" with the hearings. 56 Warner saw things differently. The professor penned a "memo" to President Allen in which he voiced his concern and alerted Allen to what he felt were the committee's true intentions. Warner stated, "The purpose appears to be either the usurpation of control of the university from its heads and the Board of Control, or its harassment, demoralization and possible destruction."57 Further, Warner strongly urged Allen to create an investigating committee comprised of faculty members to study FLIC's accusations and findings. Allen complied, and a committee was formed.⁵⁸ However, as the week progressed, the FLIC continued to harass faculty members, including the human behavior professor Henry Winthrop for his use of the words "Christ," "hell," and "damn" in his lectures. The hearings concluded in early June with Johns issuing a final statement to the university. According to Johns, in spite of the Caldwell case: Your [USF] homosexuality is at a minimum. You practically don't have any at this institution at this time, but let me give you some fatherly advice. You can take a hard boiled attitude against it, and keep it out of here, and build an institution that this state can be proud of, but . . . you can't take the attitude you have got. 59

Nevertheless, the Johns Committee was extremely critical of the "other" problems at USF, mainly the "immoral" teachings and materials presented in the classroom by the faculty coupled with allegations of "communistic" leanings on the campus. The report of findings issued by Johns placed the onus on the Board of Control, pushing them into immediate action in August. During the summer break, with many of the faculty and staff on vacation, including President Allen, Johns released the entire text of the investigations to the *Tampa Tribune* without censoring the names of the professors questioned. Johns had previously promised to keep them private until after the Board of Control had met and acted on the findings.⁶⁰ In

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54 Ibid.
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⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Tampa Tribune*, May 24, 1962.

⁵⁷ "Robert Warner, Memorandum on FLIC Hearings," box 4, folder 12, Allen Papers.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Tampa Tribune, August 25, 1962.



Florida State Archives, Photographic Collection

Johns Committee lead attorney Mark Hawes was photographed delivering a speech to a joint session of the 1963 Florida legislature. Hawes, along with other committee members, reported the results of the two year investigation. the release, Johns condemned USF for being "soft on Communism," denounced the faculty for "using anti-religious and pro-communist literature in their classes," and finally announced that the FLIC had "uncovered four professors who were accused of homosexual behavior." In addition to these findings, Johns brought to light another controversy that had plagued President Allen and his school: the debate over Professor D. F. Fleming and his consideration for a position at USF.

Fleming had taught at Vanderbilt University but was accused of assigning readings labeled as "communist propaganda" by the HUAC, and the FLIC maintained that he had subsequently been blacklisted. Allen had approved Fleming's hire and was, then, publicly chastised by Johns for not conducting a thorough background check. Allen immediately rescinded the offer to Fleming despite the fact that Hawes later admitted that the FLIC had been "mistaken" and that HUAC had not blacklisted Fleming. ⁶² In spite of the fact that Hawes had recanted, the incident highlighted a problem in the hiring practices of the university and other Florida institutions.

The majority of the larger state newspapers responded to the investigation by defending the young institution. The local Bay Area papers were adamant in their defense of the school, with the *St. Petersburg Times* maintaining: "Florida higher education has suffered a severe blow by this irresponsible action. No professor of stature would risk accepting a post with our university system while the Johns Committee is in existence." The *Tampa Daily Times* surmised that USF had no more problems than any other university in the nation, while the *Daytona Beach Evening News* charged the FLIC with "acting as a prosecutor condemning a man without a hearing." The editor of the *Gainesville Sun*, whose community had still not recovered from the Johns-led witch hunts less than five years before, sent a letter extending his support, as well as that of his newspaper, to the embattled President Allen. Allen also received letters in support of the school from the presidents of the University of Florida, Florida State University, Jacksonville University, and Florida

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ St. Petersburg Times, August 27, 1962.

⁶⁴ Tampa Times, August 27, 1962; Daytona Beach Evening News, August 27, 1962.

William M. Pepper III to John Allen, September 7, 1962, box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.

Southern College.⁶⁶ Ovra Lee Ice, a minister from the Tampa suburb of Temple Terrace, took his case directly to Governor Bryant. In a letter, he beseeched the governor: "How shall we be able to secure able professors to join this new faculty if they read this scurillous [sic] attack? How shall we enlist students to enter classes here. . . . We must not abet the already growing opinion that Florida is after all a state of crackers."⁶⁷ Bryant immediately responded to Ice, defending his conservative allies by noting, "I have neither the authority to hamper activity because the overall result of the legislative investigations is good." Bryant finished his remarks by stating that he himself was a "cracker" and that he was "not offended by that opinion, but I don't think anything will be done that will destroy the wonderful image that Florida has."⁶⁸

The perception of Florida was also on the minds of others in the state, including the anonymous author of a letter to the editor of the *Tampa Tribune*. The letter lambasted Johns and called on the Board of Control to be the final arbiter in matters concerning the universities by intimating that, if they did not assume control, "the asinine, stone age pronouncements of Charley Johns and his barbarian pork choppers on such matters as philosophy, literature, and good taste, will make a laughing stock of higher education" in the state.⁶⁹

Allen, buoyed by support he had received from around the state, lashed out at the Johns Committee by proclaiming that it had "generated an endless flow of unfair and harmful publicity. It has probed beyond its legislative mandate into the university's curriculum, its choice of assigned reading material, the religious and political beliefs of the faculty, the professional judgment of its administrators, and even into the private lives of its staff, seeking to build the most one-sided and damaging case it could against the institution."⁷⁰

During this "war of words," the Board of Control met to discuss the issues raised by the Johns Committee after receiving twelve volumes and over 2,500 pages of testimony from the University of South Florida.⁷¹ They dealt with four major issues: homosexuality; communist teaching; obscenity in books; and a challenge to students' religious beliefs. Dealing with the question of homosexuality, the board noted that Johns had presumed the "problem not to be of great magnitude . . . at the present time" and highlighted that the board had previously adopted a policy on December 9, 1961, titled "Policy on Morals and Influences."

Studying the section entitled "Attitude toward identified Communist teaching

⁶⁶ All letters found in box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.

⁶⁷ Ovra Lee Ice to Farris Bryant, August 28, 1962, box 148, folder 10, Farris Bryant, Administrative Correspondence (cited hereafter as Bryant Papers), Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.

Farris Bryant to Ovra Lee Ice, September 4, 1962, box 148, folder 10, Bryant Papers.

⁶⁹ Tampa Tribune, August 31, 1962.

⁷⁰ Tampa Tribune, August 28, 1962.

⁷¹ Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Control, September 14, 1962, box 1, folder 2, FLIC Papers.

⁷² Ibid.

and/or lecturing on campus," the board revealed that the "testimony did not reveal any Communists or any Communist sympathizers among the permanent employees of South Florida." They did acknowledge that the campus was not free from "outside" political views and added that they had been "cognizant for some time that its employment procedures throughout the System could be improved," and in this regard, they called for the fingerprinting of personnel to be "implemented in the near future."

The board did not agree with the FLIC's crusade to ban books from college campuses, noting that for them to "establish themselves as a censorship group would strike at the very heart of academic freedom." In addition, they felt the selection of books should remain in the hands of faculty as long as they displayed good judgment by ensuring that reading materials would be "pertinent to the subject being taught; The best available and obtainable; and within the purview of good taste and common decency."⁷⁵ At the meeting, the Board of Control deemed the religious questions raised by the committee to be the most difficult to address but also found that the testimony provided to the group by FLIC did not point to any evidence that students had their religious beliefs compromised by the faculty at USF.⁷⁶ In concluding their report, the board maintained that they were the "proper body to receive, investigate, and take action upon any and all complaints directed toward or against the institutions under its authority."77 They aimed this section at "all branches of State Government" and all Floridians firing an apparent salvo at the Johns Committee and the Pork Chopdominated legislature, whom the board felt had overstepped their bounds. The Board of Control's executive director, J. B. Culpepper, further addressed the problems when he wrote that the board needed to create "plans for protecting the Universities against homosexuality, moral turpitude, drunkenness, profanity in the classroom, personality instability, and other behavior deemed to be detrimental to the institutions."78

In compliance with Culpepper's statement and the board's wishes, university presidents throughout the state became proactive in suggesting and implementing policies to deal with the findings and recommendations. President Allen composed a proposal dealing with the selection of speakers and guest lecturers on university campuses. Allen's final document seemed to defy Johns as he proposed that "controversial" speakers should be invited and allowed to speak on campus on the condition that time was allotted at the end of the talk for questions from faculty and students. He also took a shot at the committee by claiming that further study of communism, fascism, and other "ideologies" should be undertaken to fully understand

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ib.d

⁷⁸ "Board of Control Memo," July 17, 1962, box 1, folder 1, Papers of J. B. Culpepper (cited hereafter as Culpepper Papers), Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.



University of South Florida Libraries' Special Collections

Florida congressman Sam Gibbons, left, was an early champion of placing a state university in the Tampa area. He is pictured here with University of South Florida president John Allen.

them before passing judgment and, more importantly, jumping to conclusions.⁷⁹

The Board of Control issued its recommendations on September 14, 1962. The first section dealt with the selection of faculty and students and broke each down further. The subsection on faculty charged the president of each state university with maintaining a file on each candidate considered for a job containing information required by the Board of Control. The universities would be forced to attach recommendations from the dean or the department or institute head, along with the names of at least two individuals "who have vouched for the candidate and have a personal knowledge of or concrete information as to the qualifications of the candidate; including *academic background, loyalty, attitudes toward communism, moral conduct, and general teaching ability* (emphasis in original)."80 It was also decided that guest speakers and lecturers, the root of one of the controversies at USF, were to be approved beforehand by the president of the respective university. The subsection on faculty concluded with the most contentious policies calling for the fingerprinting of all university personnel by 1963.81

⁷⁹ "Statements of position submitted by the Presidents of the State Universities," September 1962, box 1, folder 1, Culpepper Papers.

⁸⁰ "Implementations of the Recommendations Approved by the Board of Control on 14 September 1962," box 1, folder 2, FLIC Papers.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Following the guidelines set down for the screening and policing of faculty, the subsection on students called for their applications to be bolstered by a letter from a "responsible" official vouching for their moral fitness and character. Each individual university was further ordered to maintain files on students who applied, even those denied admission, for future use by other schools. Section #3 empowered the school to conduct an investigation into students from whom they detected even the slightest indications of "antisocial or immoral behavior, such as communistic activities or sex deviation." Upon uncovering any such impropriety, the official was obligated to report the incident or evidence to the president, who was charged with conducting a more thorough investigation.⁸² The information would also then be passed on to presidents of the other state universities, by way of a confidential memorandum. Any applicant who applied to more than one state institution would not be granted admission until the investigation ran its course. 83 In regard to homosexuality on the campuses of Florida's universities, the board adopted a policy in which the president of each school was forced to file confidential quarterly reports on any incidents and action taken to correct them in "regard to the elimination of sexual deviates."84

As expected, the new policies and procedures adopted by the board were welcomed in the more conservative circles of the state, although some Pork Choppers did not feel they went far enough. At the same time, many liberals lamented the further loss of academic freedom. The new policies were officially approved and lauded by representatives from the state's four public universities; Dr. Fred H. Hartman from the University of Florida, Dr. Michael Kasha from Florida State University, Dr. Thomas Stovall from the University of South Florida, and Dr. Charles Smith from Florida A&M University.⁸⁵

In conclusion, the Board of Control presented its new "Statement on Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities." They noted that Florida could only achieve its "full potential for greatness" with an exemplary public university system and that the faculty and students must be free from outside constraints in their efforts to "cultivate a spirit of inquiry and scholarly criticism and to examine ideas in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence." While seemingly defying the FLIC, the rest of the "Statement" read like a blueprint for conservatism, calling on university employees to "exercise appropriate restraint and good judgment" while also defining their roles as a "citizen" and how they should conduct themselves in a professional academic environment.87 In one breath, the board declared their independence

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ "Statement by Faculty Committee which Participated in Drafting the Statement on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities," December 7, 1962, box 1, folder 2, FLIC Papers.

^{*}Statement of Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities," December 7, 1962, box 1, folder 1, FLIC Papers.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

from Pork Chop and conservative control, only to subvert the declaration in the next statement or paragraph by limiting the true "academic freedoms" of university personnel, all the while maintaining that was exactly what they were protecting.

While the report issued by the board was meant to close the door on the FLIC's role at USF, the damage had been done. The committee's actions had lasting effects on the Tampa school. USF soon found that the lingering doubts over academic freedom raised by the Johns Committee's investigations hurt recruiting of potential faculty members. Candidates openly admitted that they were concerned over the level of control the government seemingly held over the state's universities. USF's director of educational resources, Dr. G. C. Eicolz, notified Allen that a potential candidate informed him of the reservations he had in accepting a job in Florida:

Candidates I interviewed received advice from faculty members not to accept positions at our institution. The reason given was that the Johns Committee investigation was an infringement on academic freedom and the state Board of Control refused to intervene and protect the university.⁸⁸

The Johns Committee's investigation at USF was a partial victory for the conservative attack group; however, the negative responses from around the state coupled with opposition from organizations and faculty members alike highlighted chinks in the conservative armor and spelled the beginning of the end for not only the FLIC but, more importantly, the Pork Chop Gang and their historically powerful grip on the state of Florida. The early 1960s saw the continuation of the shift in power to the southern portion of the state, where more progressive values threatened to undermine the power of the Pork Chop Gang. As the 1960s wore on, the conservatives from North Florida came under increased scrutiny and attacks from opponents, especially in the legislature, which ultimately culminated in the state constitution of 1968 and the death of the malapportioned state government that had been the final redoubt of the Pork Choppers, effectively ending their domination of Florida politics.

⁸⁸ "Dr. G. C. Eicolz, Memorandum on Recruitment," box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.