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Retirement

This final chapter may be pointed and brief. There is no need to enter into the personal aspects of retirement, vital as these are to the individual professor. On this point, only one observation will be made. Academic men have an advantage over most others, in that their interests may well persist into later years. Wide reading and research may "carry on," if only they have acquired some momentum by the age of retirement. And if there is no momentum of this sort, the professor—unless incapacitated—will have no one but himself to blame.

The retired professor, it is true, must depend on a meagre income unless he has private funds. And this income will be fixed and so constantly threatened by monetary inflation. Relatively, however, the pensions now provided by annuities are somewhat better than in the recent past. This prospect is particularly valid for the younger faculty, since the University has increased its contributions to the annuity premiums.

The age of retirement at the University has for some time been fixed at seventy years, except in the School of Medicine where it is sixty-five. Incidentally, it does not follow that—if clinicians are unable to continue beyond sixty-five—pre-clinical professors are likewise incapacitated at this point. At present, "lab-men" in the medical faculty must pull out five years earlier than do similar persons in the Graduate

faculty. We would think that this distinction should be eliminated.

The age of retirement has many implications for educational policy. It ranges in most American universities from sixty-five to seventy, so that Pennsylvania permits a maximum length of service. Most faculty members, for understandable reasons, would have the age limit remain where it is. And this or any other fixed age is much easier to administer than is a flexible system. In the recent past, a few professors were carried on beyond seventy, but not always with happy results.

Ease of administration, however, is about all that can be claimed for a fixed, uniform retirement age. Everyone knows that such an age is unrealistic—that it is only an average which has no necessary bearing on the individual. The adoption of a flexible limit, on the other hand, is—in our opinion—more than worth the cost it may entail in time and effort.

We would therefore suggest that retirement should be required of some men at as early an age as sixty-five, with the expectation that many men will continue beyond that. This will permit of the removal of “dead wood,” which, otherwise, is imposed on students—and carried on the budget at maximum salaries—for five long, additional years. Age sixty-five is the logical time for earliest retirement because annuities then become available. If a university were truly affluent, it might even pay it to “buy off” some men at sixty, but this expense could rarely be undertaken.

Meantime, many men who are still qualified may be reappointed at sixty-five, to the benefit of the University as well as to themselves. Such reappointment could be on a year to year basis, but might well be made for three and then for two years, or even for a flat five years which would carry them to seventy. Beyond that it does not seem wise to go since

many men, if they continue past seventy, lose the capacity to judge when they should stop. In the rare case in which a man over seventy is clearly active and useful, a special post in the University—but not a continued professorship—may be found for him.

In dealing with professors who are between sixty-five and seventy, the possibility of partial or “gradual” retirement should not be overlooked. The man himself would sometimes prefer, say, a half- rather than a full-time teaching load. But the University should be free to appoint on such a basis in any case, if it seemed best. It is absurd to assume, as at present, that a scholar is fully capable until he reaches a certain age, and then becomes completely incapable immediately thereafter.

All decisions anent retirement should be shared by administrators and by the appropriate faculty personnel committee. At least a few individuals, if retired before seventy, will feel aggrieved. One can understand this but should not be intimidated by the prospect. And the situation is better if the decision to retire a man has been concurred in by his peers. He cannot then blame it on a particular administrator.

A flexible program of this sort is fair to the scholar and fair to the University. It preserves for the latter the services of those who are still fit and removes those who are not. It can even preserve services in proportion to the degree in which these are really available.

One last comment may be made, concerning the professor's relation to the University *after* retirement. The title of *emeritus* is an honorable one and implies certain minor privileges. However the *emeriti* sometimes feel somewhat lost or neglected, and it seems only fitting that—after long service—their University should do all that it can to make them feel that they are still part of the family. Occasionally, it is possi-

ble to allow a retired man the use of an office or of a "lab," though the active staff clearly has priority. The University might even give outstanding *emeriti* honorary degrees, since scholars are less likely to secure such recognition—in their own institutions—than are other groups in public life.

On the departmental level, professors might well consult retired members or invite them to occasional meetings. All too often, however, the retired man is largely ignored by former colleagues, as if his cumulative wisdom could no longer benefit anyone. Perhaps the *emeriti* should form a club of their own in self defense, though the writer has never heard of such a body at Pennsylvania.

The point here is not that the University should feel obligated to give tender and loving care to all its retired staff. Other institutions or arrangements are developing for which such services are more appropriate. But the University does owe the *emeriti* reasonable consideration, and the latter could be of some service in return.