The First Three Years of Radical Presence

Donald W. Katzner

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199765355.003.0007

Abstract and Keywords

The arrival of the radical faculty and the radical graduate students that followed them exacerbated the tensions and turmoil in the Department. In this environment, a new Ph.D. program in radical political economics was developed and the relations between the radical graduate students and the faculty as a whole were begun to be worked out. Later, the tensions in the Department erupted in a major and very bitter fight over the award of tenure to two nonradical faculty members.

Keywords: radical presence, tenure, radical political economics, radical graduate students, faculty, Ph.D. program
At the end of the 1972–1973 academic year, Bowles returned to Harvard. He did not take up his position in the Economics Department of the University of Massachusetts until the fall of 1974 when Gintis accompanied him. However, Edwards, Resnick, Wolff, and Rapping all arrived for the fall 1973 semester. By then, a handful of radical students had also entered the graduate PhD program in economics. During the previous year's recruiting process that led to the hiring of the radical package, word had got out among the students at City College in New York that there might be a significant contingent of radical economists joining the Amherst campus's Economics Department in the near future. This was especially attractive to a number of students who had studied Marxism under Resnick and Wolff and had become very interested in it. Desiring advanced degrees in economics, these students applied and were accepted to several economics graduate programs including that at the University of Massachusetts. When it became clear that the economists in the radical package were actually moving to Amherst, this group of students decided to go with them.

However, in the fall of 1973, the Economics Department was in turmoil. Smith and Sonnenschein were gone. Others had left or were in the process of leaving. Among those who remained, there was a (p.126) sizable group who had opposed the hiring of the radical package and were unhappy even with its partial presence. Simmering in the background were all the tensions and hurt feelings that had been brought on by battles over the previous four years. Somehow, in this environment, the radicals had to be integrated into the Department, the PhD program (there was no MA program of any consequence) had to be revised to accommodate the interests of the new radical faculty members and the new radical graduate students and, at the undergraduate level, major courses and service courses for noneconomics majors from other departments had to be maintained so as to continue to meet outside expectations. It was a daunting task that would involve more faculty departures and more battles, and would take several more years. Moreover, there was no precedent in anyone's knowledge for achieving a balanced department with respect to such diverse and controversial paradigms of economic thought as were now represented in the Department. Nor was anyone aware of how to structure a graduate program that would be consistent with that balance. The process of
balancing, if that was to be attempted, was necessarily one of trial and error, and of working through multiple and conflicting concerns.

There were also matters that the radical faculty had to face by themselves. For the first time in their professional lives they were able to pursue their radicalism full time, in any way they chose, and without hindrance and outside pressure distracting them or pushing them in more traditional directions. How was this to be done? What topics should be considered and what problems should they attempt to solve? What methods should be employed? There were also questions relating to teaching: What should be taught? How should it be taught? What should be the relation, if any, between the various courses in radical economics and between radical and nonradical courses? And, of course, there were matters relating to intradepartmental politics: what to do with the new power the radicals had, what strategies and tactics to use, and so forth. The answers to these and other questions had to be worked out and the absence of precedent, the necessity of trial and error, and the resolution of multiple and conflicting concerns applied here as well. The Departmental PhD program that emerged from these discussions and interactions was a program intensely focused on radical political economy that emphasized the alternative paradigmatic approaches to economics set out in Chapter 1 (neoclassical, Marxism combined with political and social liberalism, Marxism combined with Keynesian macroeconomics, and mutual interaction of all analytical elements). The neoclassical paradigm was represented in a limited way. Only the very fundamental concepts and relations were included. The idea was for the paradigm to serve as a basis for the criticism of neoclassical thought in general and to be available for comparison to the radical political economy paradigms in particular. In addition to certain basic course requirements, two written comprehensive examinations chosen from theoretical fields linked to different paradigms or combinations of paradigms were required. No traditional program of study, like that available at other universities, was offered.

The atmosphere in the radical camp has been described by James R. Crotty, who actually joined the Department a year later and of whose arrival more will be said later. Although
Crotty was writing about the period starting with the fall of 1974, his words apply in spirit to the 1973–1974 academic year as well: 1

It was an extremely intellectually exciting first few years. At that time, none of us had what we thought to be a mature, fully articulated theory of radical political economy. Bowles and Gintis were (p.128) often in transition. Resnick and Wolff arrived in Amherst as traditional Hegelian Marxists but began to shift towards their mutually-constitutive-interaction approach shortly thereafter. Rapping changed his mind weekly. The point is that we were all talking with each other, looking to learn from each other, and all of us were open to change to some degree. Rapping was an incredibly creative thinker, always searching for new ways of approaching economics. He and I had a huge number of wonderfully stimulating conversations about every aspect of economic theory imaginable, and never went over the same material twice. We all felt we were taking part in a common project of great importance—the creation of a new and significant body of knowledge and the first, first-rate radical-political-economy graduate program—things for which we had no blueprint.

The publications that eventually resulted from these activities and interactions were numerous. For example, Bowles and Gintis began to explore

... the difficulties of grounding democratic theory [solely] on either liberalism (due to its tendency to overlook power relations in the economy and the family, and its pre-social concept of the individual endowed with exogenously given wants and capacities) or Marxism (due to its tendency to underrate the despotic potential of the state, and its underdeveloped theory of individual choice) . . . . [Drawing on both sources, they ultimately developed a foundation] for democratic theory based on a political conception of markets and economic organization and a model of individual action and human development in which both choice and social influences on individual development were given prominence.2
This was published as S. Bowles and H. Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community, and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought* (New York: Basic books, 1986). The book “... may be considered a critique of the capitalist economy and an argument for the radical potential of democratic (rather than specifically socialist) demands in a capitalist society.”

At the same time Resnick and Wolff were starting to work out the philosophical and methodological details of their mutually interactive approach to Marxian analysis described in Chapter 1. All forms of economic determinism were rejected, and they eventually applied their approach to obtain a new understanding of the economic firm and a new interpretation of the state in market economies. Their concept of economic class (p. 14) lay at the core of this analysis. In particular, they developed a theory of class and used it to probe the class structure of both the firm and the state. The end result was S.A. Resnick and R.D. Wolff, *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

As a third example of the creativity that emerged from the stimulating environment within the University of Massachusetts at Amherst Economics Department at the time, consider that the year 1974 was one of turmoil in the United States. Richard M. Nixon had resigned the U.S. Presidency on August 9 and the U.S. economy was experiencing significant inflation along with the high unemployment that accompanies recession. It was not so long before that that most economists believed that this simultaneous occurrence of unemployment and inflation was not possible (see Chapter 4). The 1975 Economic Report of the President's Council of Economic Advisers was issued over the signature of its chairman, **Alan Greenspan**, in January of 1975. That report, reflecting the understandings of the economics establishment, attributed the economic difficulties of 1974 to government policy errors and the OPEC oil embargo. Crotty and Rapping disagreed. In J.R. Crotty and L.A. Rapping, “The 1975 Report of the President's Council of Economic Advisers: A Radical Critique,” *American Economic Review* 65 (1975), pp. 791–811, they argued, contrary to the establishment view, that the 1974 economic situation, which they referred to as a “crisis,” was “... systemic in nature and that the [expansionary] macropolicies of the ... [previous] decade were rational and perhaps unavoidable given the political-economic objectives..."
[in part to support the war in Vietnam] and [the] constraints facing the macropolicy authorities” (p. 791).

In addition, there was also considerable intellectual activity among other radical faculty in the Department not mentioned in Crotty's description on pp. 127–128 above, and interaction among radical economics faculty and university faculty outside of the Economics Department. These activities and interactions, along with the activities and interactions described by Crotty, extended well beyond the initial three-year period under consideration in this chapter and, with respect to the omitted activities and interactions, involved new radical hires as they joined the Department. The published output of this other group of faculty members over the extended period included important work on gender economics,4 (p.131) Latin American development,5 and the interplay between politics and economics in American capitalism.6

The radical graduate students had their own issues to deal with. Although there was considerable diversity of opinion among them, many were unhappy with the manner in which higher education was administered. They rebelled against the hierarchy involved and the authority that faculty had over students. In particular, they did not like the subservient relationship that graduate students often had with their mentors. They wanted more choice and flexibility in the courses and examinations that could be put together to build a degree program. They thought that more options for academic recovery should be available if a student failed a comprehensive examination. They passionately believed in the principle that all graduate students should be funded. Partly to achieve these goals, they wanted a greater degree of communication and equity in their relations with the faculty and, as described in Chapter 1, to participate in the making of departmental decisions relating to these and other matters they thought relevant to their lives as graduate students. As a consequence, activism among the graduate students directed toward the achievement of these ends became commonplace within the Department. Indeed, graduate student participation in activism was enhanced when a large group of radical graduate students (much larger than that which arrived in the fall of 1973) was admitted to the graduate program for fall 1974, many of whom were older and were experienced activists. Be that as it may, one of the main vehicles for
graduate student activism at that time was the creation during the 1973–1974 academic year of a formal organization to present, on issues deemed relevant by the graduate students, a unified “graduate student view” to the economics faculty. Called the Economics Graduate Student Organization (EGSO), this organization has played a significant role in Departmental activities and politics ever since.

Before delving into the specifics of these and other events that occurred in the early radical years, two additional matters need to be addressed. The first is the fact that for many years after 1973, practically all graduate students admitted to the Economics Department's PhD program were radical to one degree or another. There was no conscious Departmental effort to turn down nonradical applicants. It was a matter of self-selection. Department policy was to admit the most highly qualified applicants regardless of ideology and politics. Because the University of Massachusetts at Amherst had, at that time, the largest and most visible group in the country of radical economists on its faculty, because its PhD program was unique in its single-minded and intense focus on radical political economics, and because, at the University, one could, therefore, study radical political economy to an extent and depth not possible at other institutions, the University's Economics Department became the top choice among potential graduate students whose primary interests lay in this field. It turned out that these students were, on the basis of generally recognized admission credentials, highly qualified. Many had been accepted for study in graduate programs at the best universities in the country. Thus the quality of the graduate students admitted to the Department was comparable to those admitted to schools like Harvard, Chicago, Princeton, and such. The most highly qualified individuals interested in studying more traditional economics would also be accepted at those better schools and would not, because its strength now lay elsewhere, apply to the University of Massachusetts. Those originally wanting to study traditional economics who did apply to the University of Massachusetts' Amherst Economics Department, and who were prepared to accept the comparative paradigmatic program offered, did not have nearly the qualifications of the radical applicants and could not, therefore, compete with them for space in the graduate program. Many of the students entering the Department's graduate program between 1973
and 1981 (and not necessarily completing the requirements for a degree) went on to have highly successful careers inside or outside of academia. A listing of a few of the more visible names would include Michael Albert, Jack L. Amarglio, Stephen E. Cullenberg, Nancy R. Folbre, Manuel Pastor, James B. Rebitzer, David F. Ruccio, and Juliet B. Schor.

The second matter relates to the arrival of Leonard A. Rapping in the Department in the fall of 1973. Rapping's intellectual metamorphosis is rather interesting. He earned his PhD degree from the University of Chicago and, into the mid-1970s, held a position as professor of economics at Carnegie-Mellon University. He began his career as a relatively conservative economist of the Chicago School. Part of his early work was an analysis of U.S. unemployment and wages between 1929 and 1958. The latter was done jointly with Robert E. Lucas, Jr., the future Nobel laureate who had an enormous impact on the economics profession. While at Carnegie-Mellon, Rapping, like others who turned to radicalism, was, as previously suggested, deeply affected by the Vietnam War. (p.134)
and came to believe that his approach to economics did not help in understanding what was happening in the real economic world. This led him to look around for concepts and perspectives that might provide better explanations. Though hardly a Marxist (in contrast to most other radicals at the time), Rapping was drawn to a number of radical political-economic notions that included a focus on the unemployed, class conflict, and imperialism. It was during this latter period that he was attracted to the idea of the radical package that was being put together in the Department of Economics at the University of Massachusetts. As indicated, Rapping joined the Department in the fall of 1973 (recall that he was offered the position of chair of the Department, but after initially accepting it, he subsequently declined), and in those early years he was considered to be a part of the Department's radical wing.\(^8\) (p.135)

During his last two years at Carnegie-Mellon (after his radical conversion) Rapping supervised the second dissertation undertaken by Crotty (recall Chapter 4) who was finishing his graduate work there while, in the first of these two years, teaching at the State University of New York at Buffalo and who, by this time, had become committed to the radical approach. As indicated earlier, the two men spent many hours together talking about economics, and these discussions continued after Crotty had moved to Bucknell University to teach there for the second year. One of the first things Rapping did upon his arrival in Amherst was to persuade the Department and administration to offer Crotty a position in the Economics Department. Although the provost at Bucknell had promised to support tenure at that university for Crotty the following year, the lure of the radical faculty and graduate students at the University of Massachusetts was too strong for him to resist. And
so, in the fall of 1974, Crotty became an (untenured) assistant professor of Economics on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus. In his first year in the Department, Crotty was a member of the graduate committee, which was responsible for all matters relating to the graduate program and graduate students. Rapping and Marshall C. Howard were also on the committee. Howard, it should be remembered, was a nonradical full professor who had served one year as acting head of the Department in the period before Kindahl assumed the head position. At some point during the 1974–1975 academic year, Jack L. Amariglio, the graduate-student chair of EGSO at the time, came to the graduate committee to complain about the method of assigning graduate-student teaching assistants to courses and faculty members. Such assignments had always been made by the Department, and the complaint was that the existing system of allocation favored some students over others. That is, semester after semester, the same students received the “good” assignments with “good” instructors from whom they could learn, whereas the remaining students appeared to be relegated to the “weaker” assignments and instructors from whom little was learned. The complaint seemed valid to the graduate committee. Amariglio proposed a new system of allocation by lottery that would be administered by EGSO with each assignment subject to the veto of the faculty member to whom the assignment was made. The committee unanimously agreed that the lottery proposal was valid.
worth trying. It was adopted by the full economics faculty on a trial basis, instituted the following semester, and has remained in place ever since. Thus, one small aspect of the graduate-students’ efforts to be involved in departmental decision making had been achieved. They had become responsible for the assignment of teaching assistants. (p.137)

Graduate student activity during the period (with particular reference to that relating to teaching assistant assignments) as seen from the perspective of the radical graduate students has been described by Amariglio:  

We were always meeting in those first years with the faculty. We pressured them to meet with us and we got the meetings. With regard to the allocation of teaching assistants, we told them we did not like the way things were handled. We did not like the fact that there was favoritism involved. That some people were therefore denied the opportunity to teach, which is an important skill that may be needed later. We wanted the right to make the decisions, and we wanted everybody to have the right to teach and be funded. We were constantly meeting among ourselves to discuss the politics of these and other matters—as much as two or three times a week.

(p.138)
Thus, the first three years of radical presence in the Economics Department were marked by what was, at least from a radical perspective, considerable progress. Research programs in the three radical paradigms described in Chapter
1 were developed and beginning to be explored. A unique radical graduate program leading to the PhD degree was set up. (The specific discussions relating to the inclusion in a limited way of the neoclassical paradigm as one of the alternative paradigms in that program will be described subsequently.) A unique role for the graduate students in departmental administration was granted with respect to the allocation of teaching assistants to courses and faculty. All this was accompanied by the intense intellectual interaction and debate that characterizes the near perfection within a university community described in Chapter 1. The nonradical faculty, however, were not yet participants in that near perfection.

Nevertheless, in spite of or maybe partly because of what the radicals referred to as progress, the tensions in the Department that had now been festering and occasionally surfacing over many years once again came to the fore during 1974–1975 academic year. Granting to EGSO the responsibility for assigning teaching assistants to courses and faculty may have caused some unhappiness among the nonradical faculty, but if so, that unhappiness played only a minor role. The main explosion occurred over personnel actions. In the fall of 1974, assistant professors Michael H. Best, Che S. Tsao, and Arthur W. Wright were scheduled to be considered for tenure and promotion to associate professor. Best, as previously indicated, was radical; Tsao and Wright were not. The Department personnel committee consisted of the entire economics faculty, but, according to Department rules at the time, each person up for tenure could decide if he wanted the entire economics faculty or only the tenured economics faculty to participate in his tenure decision. Either way, the relevant committee, which made the first recommendation to the administration on these cases, had substantial numbers of radical members. And the academic standards for promotion and tenure adhered to by radicals were to some extent different from the standards subscribed to by nonradicals, not only because their view of what was meaningful and significant in economics was different, but also because they believed that teaching was a component of considerably greater importance. Because, on the basis of those standards, the radicals all voted in favor of tenure and promotion for Best and against tenure and promotion for both Tsao and Wright, the votes of the personnel committee (in its relevant form)
were strongly positive for Best and so weakly positive for Tsao and Wright (that is, there were enough negative votes) that the granting of tenure to the latter two by the administration was problematic. Some nonradical economics faculty members, with their different standards for tenure and promotion, thought these negative votes to be politically motivated. In particular, such a conviction prompted Vaclav Holesovsky, a nonradical faculty member in the Department who had struggled against Communism as a Czechoslovakian citizen in Eastern Europe, to complain in a letter to the New York Times (February 23, 1975) that the negative votes on the personnel committee were exactly that:

The experience in the Department of Economics of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where radical economists occupy a commanding position among tenured faculty and in decision-making bodies, has shown that they are ruthless in pursuing the goal of denying tenure to qualified colleagues and creating vacancies available for hiring economists of their own ilk.

All three positive personnel committee recommendations were upheld by the dean's-level personnel committee with strong positive votes. Department Chairman Aitken and Dean Alfange also supported tenure and promotion. However, with the substantial numbers of negative votes at the Department level, Provost Gluckstern questioned tenure and promotion for Tsao and Wright. At this point, 21 out of 22 of the full-time economics faculty members in residence signed a petition urging the University administration to support the Department's decisions granting tenure and promotion in all three cases. Aitken and Alfange added further memoranda in support of Tsao and Wright. Nevertheless, Gluckstern still recommended against tenure for them. However, after conversations with a number of people involved in the Tsao and Wright tenure deliberations at the department and dean levels, the chancellor of the Amherst campus, Randolph W. Bromery reversed Gluckstern's recommendation, and all three faculty members were given tenure by the board of trustees and promoted to associate professor.

A number of plausible elements possibly played into this reversal. First, it is unlikely that the chancellor would have reversed the decisions of the provost without strong support
for Tsao and Wright from the Department chairman and the
dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences. That
support was unequivocal and vigorous. Apart from the fact
that the two believed that tenure and promotion for both were
well deserved, they may also have been concerned, like some
nonradical faculty, that the negative votes on the Department
personnel committee might have been politically or
ideologically motivated, even though, as previously noted,
different standards could have explained the same result.
Political or ideological motivation, of course, is exactly what
Alfange and the administration thought had interfered with
respect to the two Departmental recommendations of denial of
reappointment of Best when Kindahl and Rottenberg were
Department heads. Now the worry, possibly shared by
Bromery, might have been that the same (p.141) thing could
be happening but this time coming from the other side. Many
years later, in e-mail correspondence (May 2, 2008), Alfange
wrote:

... I was particularly concerned that personnel decisions
in the Department not be based on political or
ideological considerations. I had pledged to the
Department that I would make every effort to insure that
the fears expressed by Professor Holesovsky would not
become reality, and I regarded it as essential that the
radicals be prevented from practicing reverse
discrimination if they should be inclined to do so. I do not
recall whether I saw reverse discrimination as a factor in
the Tsao and Wright cases, but surely it could have been
perceived that way, and I knew it was vitally important to
avoid that perception.10

In addition, two radical faculty members on the Department
personnel committee (the same two in each tenure case) had
second thoughts about the weakly positive votes on Tsao and
Wright, coming to believe that they were mistakes and that the two
men deserved tenure. These views were communicated to Bromery.
Thus, although the two earlier denials of reappointment of the
radical Best by Department nonradicals had been reversed by
the administration partly out of fear that the decisions were
politically or ideologically motivated, the same fear may have
played a role in the chancellor's decision not to uphold
Gluckstern's support of the negative votes by Department
radicals on the tenure and promotion of nonradicals Tsao and
Wright. But regardless of whether politics or ideology figured
into the casting of those negative votes, the clash of differing standards for tenure and promotion adhered to by the two sides was a major hurdle that the Department was, at that moment, unable to overcome. In spite of the granting, in the end, of tenure and promotion to all three faculty members, the bitterness left by this disagreement was considerable and the tensions in the Department were as great, if not greater, than those of previous years described earlier.

Return for a moment to the development of the unique graduate program in radical political economy with its alternative paradigmatic approaches. In the discussions out of which that program emerged, the issue of the role of neoclassical economics in the graduate program was intensely debated among the radical faculty. The primary point of contention was standard microeconomic analysis. On the grounds of its irrelevance, from the radical perspective, to understanding economic reality, the case was made for its complete elimination. But those in favor of retaining it as an integral part of the PhD program argued that the Department would not really have a graduate program in economics without it. Nor would the economics profession be likely to recognize it as such. Since microeconomics was taught to undergraduates at virtually every university in the country, the Department's PhD students would have difficulty finding academic jobs if they were not certified to teach the subject at least at the very elementary levels. Moreover, because the Department's graduates would probably reject microeconomic theory entirely and spend at least some portion of their careers criticizing it, as part of their training as scholars they, of necessity, had to know something about what they were rejecting and criticizing. It was also important that they be able to compare microeconomic theory to the theories of radical political economy that they were studying. The arguments to retain microeconomics won the day, and all graduate students were required to take courses and pass examinations in that field. (p.143)

In spite of the agreement to retain microeconomic analysis in the graduate program, there were still substantial problems to be faced in teaching it. First, the graduate students often tended to be hostile to microeconomic theory and, in their hostility, to make life somewhat unpleasant for the instructors teaching it. The students frequently asked questions and challenged the answers on grounds that went well beyond the
boundaries of what a normal course in microeconomic theory, even from a leftist perspective, set out to do. They also questioned what was being taught and what was being left out. They did not see why they had to learn material that seemed totally irrelevant to them, and they had to be repeatedly reminded of its importance by the radical faculty. Second, with faculty movement into and out of the Department as a result of the constant tension and turmoil over the years, the instructors teaching microeconomic theory at the graduate level were constantly changing. Because different instructors emphasized different things, and since those instructors wrote the comprehensive examination in microeconomic theory, the changing instructors made it difficult for graduate students to determine what they should learn and to pass the comprehensive examination in that area. Lastly, during this period the instructors teaching the subject were generally at less than full rank and were not known primarily as microeconomic theorists. As a result, they were unable to command the respect of the graduate students. Clearly, an instructor was needed who would remain in the Department for several years and who the radical graduate students would see as having the same stature as the radical faculty. That instructor would have to have an acknowledged commitment to microeconomic theory. He or she would also have to be a full professor in order not to reinforce the impression that microeconomic theory was not especially important to the PhD program. Therefore, early in 1974, the Department began looking for such a person. (p.144)

Sometime at the start of 1975 I received a phone call from Department Chairman Aitken asking if I might be interested in the position. In those days, I was known mostly as a microeconomic theorist, was a lecturer in economics at the University of California at San Diego, and was looking for a tenured appointment at full rank. The Department in Amherst had heard of my availability from Sonnenschein who still had connections to the Department through faculty members he met while he was at the University of Massachusetts. At the time of Aitken's call, I was expecting an offer with tenure from the Economics Department of the University of Illinois at Chicago. But I preferred to live on the East Coast, and the idea of a small New England town was very appealing. I knew nothing of radical economists and radical political economy. After visiting the Amherst campus and gaining some idea of
what radical economics was about, I began to realize that some work I had been doing on methodology might have application in the radical political-economy context, a realization, as will be described in the next chapter, that a few years later actually bore fruit. While on campus, Aitken had told me about the tensions and turmoil in the Department. He painted a rather optimistic picture suggesting that much of the difficulty was now over and I, perhaps through naivete or because I wanted to, bought into it. Evidently, I had become quite interested in the position at the University of Massachusetts. When Aitken called me to indicate that a tenured full-professor offer, having been approved by the Department, was in the works, I told him that I would accept it provided it came before I had to respond to the University of Illinois offer that I had received a few weeks earlier. The official offer Aitken referred to was communicated to (p.145)

me over the telephone just in time, and I took up my position in the University of Massachusetts’ Economics Department the following September of 1975. I arrived in Amherst to confront a decidedly complex situation. Department faculty members were outwardly friendly but seemed to be gingerly treading on eggshells in their relationships with one another. There were thinly covered-over tensions lurking just below the surface and raw wounds that no one wanted to reopen. The recent exodus from the Department of nonradical faculty had continued, and those who had stayed or not yet left (Tsao and Wright would also be gone soon) did not want another tumultuously bitter

Donald W. Katzner, May 1989, photograph by Randall Bausor. (From the collection of the author)
year like 1974–1975. The graduate students, too, were calm and cooperative. Outstanding microeconomic theory problems in the graduate program were resolved in the fall by providing one course and a comprehensive examination for the large number of second-year-and-beyond students who, for one reason or another, had not yet satisfied their microeconomics requirement. The first-year students had their own first-year microeconomics course in the spring. Both courses and the comprehensive went smoothly. I actually enjoyed teaching these courses and, as I indicated in Chapter 1, found the questioning of the students both interesting and stimulating. That year I also served as chair of the Department's personnel and executive committees. But nothing of any consequence ever came up.

However, one significant matter did arise in the Department during 1975–1976. Aitken, who had had his fill of Departmental turmoil and politics over the last three years (one as administrative officer under Alfange, and two as Department chair) and was facing difficult personal problems, submitted his resignation from the chair position effective September 1, 1976. Glen Gordon, another political scientist who was replacing Alfange and serving as acting dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, appointed a search committee to find a new chair. All major viewpoints in the Department, including those of the radical and nonradical faculty (and their subfactions) and those of the graduate and undergraduate students, were represented. The administration was tired of the fighting within the Department, and the number of full-time faculty members had shrunk to a dangerous low while undergraduate enrollments had soared (as the administration had hoped with the hiring of the radical package). The Department was told that, if it could resolve the internal differences that had created so much difficulty in the past, it would be given as many as ten new positions to fill, with at least one at full rank. In this offer a number of faculty members perceived an implicit threat: If the Department could not put its act together and overcome its internal problems, the prospect of breaking up and disbanding the Department might be considered in which the radicals would be moved to the Political Science Department and the nonradicals transferred to what was then called the School of Business Administration. The unique radical PhD program in economics would be terminated. This threat,
whether real or only imagined, was taken seriously, especially by the radicals. As previously described, they had something in the Economics Department that they considered to be extremely important and exciting and that did not exist anywhere else. They thought that if the Department were to be broken up and disbanded, they would lose practically everything they had gained in moving to the University of Massachusetts.

The search committee's report was completed and approved by the Department and Dean Gordon in the spring of 1976. However, with the considerable and long-standing tensions in the Department, the committee recognized that it had to do much more than just that for which it was charged. Accordingly, the introduction to its report states:

. . . because of unique problems within the Department whose basis extends well over five years in the past, the Committee realized that it had to do more than simply choose a chair—it had to create an atmosphere of trust and respect among faculty and students and it had to unify the Department around the new chair.

Thus, in addition to selecting a new chair, the committee placed specific faculty members in administrative positions and on committees within the Departmental committee structure and set out rules and plans that would make it unnecessary for the radical and nonradical factions to fight over the new hires. As things turned out, the committee's work was largely responsible for making it possible for the Department to overcome its historical turmoil and tensions during the following few years. (p.148)

The most important recommendation of the search committee was that, out of the ten new hires, three were to be from the area of radical political economics and seven were to be more traditional economists. This meant that, after all new positions were filled and all expected departures (including retirements) occurred, the Department faculty would be composed of 40 percent radical and 60 percent nonradical economists. Although there was no official characterization of the qualities that defined a radical economist as distinct from a nonradical economist, the particular classification of each faculty member present at the time as radical or nonradical was understood and accepted by everyone in the Department. The search committee report also stated that, were faculty departures to occur in the future, radicals would be replaced by radicals and nonradicals by nonradicals. Equally important as the 40
percent–60 percent division, it was implicit in this arrangement that all new hires for radical positions as well as tenure and promotion decisions relating to radicals would be controlled by the radical faculty with full support from the nonradical faculty, and that the nonradical faculty would have similar control and radical-faculty support with respect to nonradical positions and personnel decisions relating to nonradical faculty. These provisions effectively eliminated the clash between differing standards for personnel actions that had plagued the Department when Best, Tsao, and Wright were considered for tenure and promotion almost two years earlier. Generally, the search committee’s assignments to departmental administrative positions and committees achieved an appropriate balance of radical and nonradical faculty. In particular, the personnel committee, which was to be combined with the executive committee and would deal with all important Departmental matters including hiring, was to contain faculty representatives of all major departmental perspectives. No (p.149) graduate students were placed on any committee.\(^{12}\) However, the search committee expressed the hope that communications between faculty and students would be sufficient so that student objectives and concerns could be heard and explored. (Nevertheless, graduate students would be invited to attend, on a regular basis, certain committee meetings in later years.) Perhaps because I was new and, therefore, contrary to other economics faculty, had none of the historical baggage relating to past battles in the Department, and perhaps because my newness permitted me to speak comfortably with everyone, I was asked to be Department chair:

It was a flattering offer that, for obvious reasons, I had no choice but to accept. However, the job was not going to be easy. Somehow, in spite of the simmering resentment still harbored by many faculty, the Department had to demonstrate that it could run its affairs in a unified way without coming near to or crossing into the territory of self-destruction. The blueprint had been created by the search committee. It was now time to make it work. \(\text{(p.150)}\)

Notes:

(1.) From a document attached to e-mail correspondence dated June 8, 2006, as edited by me. Reproduced here with permission.

(3.) Ibid.


During this period, gender economics was concerned mostly with the characteristics of work performed by women—unpaid or domestic work not counted as part of national income, and paid work from the sale of labor time which was (and is) included in the calculation of national income—and the comparison of the latter to paid work performed by men. The comparison encompassed the analysis of wage disparities that arose when similar or identical paid work is done by a woman instead of a man.


(6.) M.H. Best and W.E. Connolly, *The Politicized Economy* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1976). At the time, Connolly was a faculty member of the University's Political Science Department. The book cited was based on the idea that thoughts and action interact, each potentially inducing change in the other. This approach to the analysis of real phenomenon, although overlapping with the Resnick-Wolff mutually interactive paradigm, is distinct from, and lies substantially outside of the four paradigms described in Chapter 1. Although never a part of the cross-paradigmatic debate within the Economics Department, it could be thought of as a separate paradigm on its own.

(7.) Opinions differ about where to place Rapping on the political/ideological spectrum. The use of the phrase *relatively conservative* to describe him during his early years reflects that ambiguity. It merely suggests that before his radical
conversion, Rapping was more conservative than most radical political economists.

(8.) It should be noted that by the mid-1980s, Rapping had become disillusioned with radical political economy and had moved back in the direction of his original political-ideological stance. See immediately preceding note 7.

(9.) Edited from a conversation with me on June 15, 2006. Reproduced with permission.

(10.) Reproduced in slightly modified form with permission.

(11.) This was initially intended to be a visiting (full) professor position. But because I had permanently left my previous full professorship at the University of Waterloo and was not, therefore, visiting from anywhere, I was given the title of lecturer.

(12.) During these early years, the graduate students debated among themselves whether they should push for representation on faculty committees, and they decided against it. At that time, they desired to maintain their independence, and did not want the Department to be able to say that a particular committee decision was favored by the graduate students because a token student representative was present when the decision was made. Later on, however, their reluctance to serve on faculty committees changed considerably.