

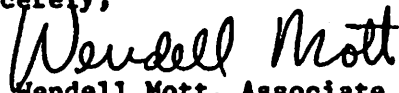
When anyone is disenfranchised, other dangers arise. Power wielded by an authoritarian minority is grossly inefficient. Because people are cowed into silence, leaders don't get the expertise and perspectives they need. The organization loses its self-corrective mechanism. Small problems become big problems. The entire system is imperiled. History is littered with such wrecks. The reason the American system is the most efficient on earth is precisely because all of its constituents---Congress, the president, the courts, states, individual citizens---are guaranteed a place. Each is surrounded and protected by a set of rights. They can't destroy each other. Like it or not they have to work with each other. As maddening as the system is, its great glory is how we correct problems while they are still comparatively small and manageable. Corporations, universities---all organizations---need the jostling of vigorous and committed constituents if they are to succeed. The Ferris Board should not be afraid of faculty, students, townspeople, and administrators who have enough independence to speak out. It should welcome such a community.

Strangely, the Ferris Board seems disdainful of such encounters, and the debate they entail. Former Chairman, Bruce Parsons, once offered to debate the issues, then backed out. For three years faculty have tried to negotiate. Our team totaled 116 years' experience in classrooms; the Board sent a lawyer with no academic experience. Board members have refused even to systematically go over key issues with Mike Ryan and John Kane, our two most knowledgeable faculty. Board meetings are preoccupied with physical plant issues. As critical as these are, there is a disturbing absence of attention to academic issues. Our president even prides himself on ducking the chance to find common ground between his own faculty and the Board!

It's time for friends of Ferris to speak out against a controlling minority on the Board that is destroying the University. This is above all an academic institution. Taxpayers did not intend it to be a \$1.14 million feeding trough for outside lawyers and a \$100 million fund for contractors....at a time when faculty requests for books are rejected for lack of funds. Unless we get our educational priorities right this once proud university will be a mere shadow of what its founder intended.

There would be no need for a faculty union, or a strike, if the Board accepted a community where each constituency is protected by a set of rules, not the caprice of a few. The Board of an educational institution should not be afraid to discuss academic issues with its own faculty! It's that simple. Let's work together.

Sincerely,



Wendell Mott, Associate Professor
of Political Science