



Wells Keddie, associate professor of labor studies (at left), addressed some 1,200 students (at right) who rallied for his cause after he was denied tenure in June 1971. Collegian photos

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—Wells Keddie

# Keddie, Farr:

## Student voice in decision-making an old, sad issue

By DEBBIE SHEER  
Collegian Staff Writer

The 60s and the days of activism faded along with the Vietnam war, leaving a few small groups to fight for more student participation in University decisions.

This year such groups became concerned with the non-renewal of Jo-Ann Farr's teaching contract. But in 1971, before the onset of post-war apathy, a stronger group rose with objections to the dismissal of Wells Keddie, an assistant professor of labor studies.

On June 21, 1971, an inter-departmental committee composed of five tenured liberal arts professors officially denied Keddie tenure. This meant that he would teach only one more year.

Keddie challenged the decision without success, left Penn State and has taught at Livingston College, part of Rutgers University since 1972.

He teaches the same type of courses he

taught at Penn State: Theories of the Labor Movement, American Labor History, Conflict Revolutions, and economics, but with one large difference. Within two years at Rutgers, Keddie became a tenured faculty member.

At Penn State, Keddie had been rated highly by students' teacher evaluations and by the department head of labor studies. Nevertheless, the committee evaluated his teaching performance as partially favorable and partially unfavorable.

His work in continuing education was favorably assessed. The committee report also evaluated his publication, research, scholarship and professional growth unfavorably and said his service to the University was considered minimal.

One professor who served on that committee preferred not to discuss the subject, saying, "The matter is a closed

matter as far as the University is concerned."

He also said he would not divulge the criteria he used in contributing to the decision and did not know what criteria others had used.

At the time of the decision, Keddie supporters issued a fact sheet that included lists of what they thought should satisfy the committee's criteria.

According to this report, Keddie published two articles, two mimeographed labor education textbooks and a research report for the Labor Studies Department during his six years at Penn State. He also prepared a mimeographed survey on steel workers which was used by the 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth.

Eight non-University activities were listed under Professional Growth and Scholarship.

Under service to the University, Keddie served on five Liberal Arts college committees or sub-committees,

three of these for two consecutive years.

He also served as a faculty advisor for two groups, one for a year, the other for four years, and three other on-campus activities also were cited.

Keddie and his supporters protested the decision, accusing the committee of bias against Keddie for his outspoken views on the Vietnam war, Penn State's involvement with the military and other issues.

"Away from Penn State, at least away from State College, there were a lot more people who share my opinions than I had imagined," Keddie said in a recent telephone interview. "Even those who were my opponents took the time to listen to what was being said and what was being done."

At Rutgers, Keddie is also an elected University Senator from Livingston College, and the faculty recently elected him to a search committee to choose a new dean of labor studies. He said he would never have been elected to either

of these positions at Penn State.

Once the faculty committee at Penn State had decided against Keddie's tenure, only University President John Oswald had the power to reverse the denial.

On March 15, 1972, after a rally and a petition with 9,589 student signatures, one with 120 signatures of Keddie's students and endorsements from five student organizations, Oswald denied a tenure review.

The protestors presented the case before State Secretary of Education John C. Pittenger, who said he found no procedural violation. Then, on Nov. 20, Keddie filed charges in U.S. District Court to win tenure and collect \$70,000 in damages from the University.

Hearings started in February 1973, and in February of 1976 the case was dismissed in U.S. Middle Court in Harrisburg. The ruling said the courts "will not serve as a super Tenure Review Committee."

"Had I had any money, I would have

appealed that decision," Keddie said. The law firm representing him had already invested \$26,000 of time into the case without expecting payment, Keddie said.

He also said he's pleased with his work now and that although in 1972 he preferred to stay at Penn State, he doesn't waste time thinking about what might have been.

Keddie said he likes Rutgers because unlike Penn State, it takes pride in having a varied faculty.

But in many students' eyes, times have not changed significantly enough to give students a voice in Penn State's administration. Although the bases for the Keddie-Farr dismissals were different in terms of their contracts, the results were the same.

Petition drives, rallies, publicity campaigns and increased demands for student participation in decision-making all met solid administrative opposition and failed.

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