

11_19_25 Rally in Defense of Free Speech

(live stream here:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1182910257096351

I've been rereading Dalton Trumbo's essay on the House Unamerican Activities Committee titled the Time of Toad. The toad is based on Emile Zola's comment that when he got up in the morning, the first thing he did was purchase, taste and swallow a whole toad. That allowed him to recognize and deal with the events of the day.

In that light, I want to give a recap of what's happened with our long time TSEU member Tom Alter. It's a toad.

Sunday, September 7: Tom Alter speaks at an online revolutionary socialist conference from his home. In his talk he calls the US government "blood thirsty and profit-driven." Tom suggests that this is NOT a time for revolution but for organizing.

- **The next day**, Karlyn Borysenko a fascist embracer and maker of click bait, circulates her recorded excerpts of Tom's speech on right wing social media. It goes viral.
- **Two days later**, Tom is fired by President Damphousse of Texas State University for "advocating for inciting violence" and for "advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government." Tom's lawyer through AAUP/AFT files suit for violation of due process.
- **Two weeks later**, Hays County judge agrees and forces a review of the termination.
- **Monday, October 13:** After saying they've reviewed the case, Texas State terminates Tom Alter a second time for "serious professional or personal misconduct." Tom appeals to the Board of Regents.
- **November 19, 20** the TX State Board of Regents are expected to respond without allowing Tom any form of representation.

And meanwhile we -- labor unions and historians and central labor councils and students and professors and good-hearted people have come to the defense of Tom and others under attack from the government, not only in Texas but across the country. We've rallied, demonstrated, signed petitions, written letters, created a national committee to defend Tom, but, most important, we've used this attack as a platform to keep organizing.

Free speech means nothing unless it's exercised. In his Beyond Vietnam Speech in 1967, Dr. King called his government "the greatest **purveyor of violence** in the world" and

said, "I cannot be silent." The first amendment includes our right to hear those words, to print them, to associate freely with those who might quote them. It's the basis of civil rights and labor movement organizing. And we simply must defend those who exercise it for the benefit of all of us, like Tom and Caleb and Rich and others.

The German Nazi attack of the 1930's on higher education began with a purge of professors and students, then substituted university administrators who were Nazi sympathizers for those who were not, then removed curriculum that didn't promote Nazi ideology. There's a toad that we recognize here, whether we've eaten one for breakfast or not.

I think we must stop thinking of free speech as the freedom to express different and sometimes polarized points of view – conservative and progressive. Instead, we should think of ourselves as a resistance movement against an attack on higher education by fascists in government. We should think of ourselves as those who exercise free speech, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly in order to help build a world that supports the needs and dreams of the vast majority of workers.