
Guide to the Edward Alsworth Ross Papers

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Stanford, California

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Note

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Overview

Call Number: SC0110

Creator: Ross, Edward Alsworth, 1866-1951.

Title: Edward Alsworth Ross papers

Dates: 1892-1970

Physical Description: 1 Linear feet

Summary: Correspondence about Professor Ross' dismissal, including resignation letters of faculty departing in protest, news clippings, pamphlets, and pamphlets by Ross.

Language(s): The materials are in English.

Repository: Department of Special Collections and University Archives

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URL: <http://library.stanford.edu/spc>

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Cite As

Edward Alsworth Ross Papers (SC0110). Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Biographical/Historical Sketch

In the late 1890s, sociology professor Edward A. Ross gained notoriety following several years of political activism in favor of the free silver movement, municipal ownership of utilities (including the railroads), and Japanese exclusion. While Mrs. Stanford found his opinions personally objectionable, her main concern was the reputation of the university which, she felt, would be damaged by hasty espousal of political and social fads. The founders had intended the university to be free from the pressures of political partisanship; the apolitical nature of the university was now endangered by Ross's activities. Publicly, Mrs. Stanford affirmed President Jordan's power as defined in the Founding Grant to "remove professors and teachers at will," giving him full responsibility for clearing up the matter; however, privately, she pressed for Ross's dismissal. She disagreed with Ross's economic theories and was indignant about the idea of municipal ownership of the railroads, but she was particularly shocked by his anti-Japanese stand. Mrs. Stanford identified such attitudes with the earlier anti-Chinese movement instigated by Dennis Kearny and its resulting "reign of terror" which had pervaded San Francisco. Ross, she felt, was a racist.

Mrs. Stanford wished Ross to go quietly, as a gentleman; President Jordan surmised that the activist had little intention of doing so. A man whose administrative style had strongly impressed the academic community, Jordan now vacillated between pleasing Mrs. Stanford and upholding his image. After several confused attempts at compromise, which engendered misunderstandings between Jordan, Mrs. Stanford, and Ross regarding the latter's reappointment to the faculty, Jordan finally asked Ross to resign in November 1900.

To ensure public sympathy, Ross promptly issued his version of the dismissal to the press on November 14, 1900. He had been dismissed arbitrarily by Mrs. Stanford, he declared, over the opposition of President Jordan. The actual roots of dissension were immediately blurred by extreme public reaction to the touted issue of academic freedom. The entire matter proved to be greatly embarrassing to the university, particularly to its President. Mrs. Stanford was thenceforth disturbed by the notoriety the university received from the incident. Having assumed that in her absence (she was

traveling in Europe) Jordan would handle the situation discreetly and with dispatch, she failed to understand that Jordan had no control over Ross's continuing press statements. Her trust in Jordan was shaken; following the incident, she increasingly questioned his actions in the areas of salaries, hiring, planned growth of the academic program, and faculty control of student conduct.

For more detail on the Ross Affair, see: Elliott, Orrin Leslie. *Stanford University the First Twenty-five Years*; Mohr, James C. "Academic Turmoil and Public Opinion: The Ross Case at Stanford," *Pacific Historical Review*, v. 29, #1 (Feb. 1970) pp. 39-61.

Description of the Collection

Correspondence about Professor Ross' dismissal, including resignation letters of faculty departing in protest, news clippings, pamphlets, and pamphlets by Ross.

Access Terms

Howard, George E.

Jordan, David Starr, 1851-1931

Ross, Edward Alsworth, 1866-1951.

Shaw, Albert, 1857-1947.

Stanford University. Department of Sociology. Faculty.

Stanford, Jane Lathrop, 1828-1905.

Stillman, John Maxson, 1852-1923.

Wheeler, Benjamin Ide, 1854-1927.

Academic freedom.

Clippings.

Pamphlets

Ross Affair.

Stanford University--Administration.

Papers

Box 1, Folder 1	Jordan, David Starr--statements
Box 1, Folder 2	Jordan, David Starr--statements
Box 1, Folder 3	Jordan, David Starr--statements
Box 1, Folder 4	Jordan, David Starr--statements --Correspondence 1893, 1900
Box 1, Folder 5	Jordan, David Starr--statements--Correspondence; correspondence with the Committee of Economists 1900-1909
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, miscellaneous
Box 1, Folder 7	Report of the Committee of Economists
Box 1, Folder 8	Writings about the case
Box 1, Folder 9	Writings--Statements by several faculty in support of the university
Box 1, Folder 10	Writings--miscellaneous
Box 1, Folder 11	Clippings
Box 1, Folder 12	Clippings
Box 1, Folder 13	Clippings
Box 1, Folder 14	Clippings
Box 1, Folder 15	Clippings
Box 2, Folder 1	Publications by Ross
Box 2, Folder 2	Publications by Ross
Box 2, Folder 3	Publications by Ross
Box 2, Folder 4	Publications by Ross
Box 2, Folder 5	Publications by Ross

Shaw, Albert and Wheeler, Benjamin correspondence 1900**Scope and Content Note**

Edward A. Ross. Autograph Letter Signed. Stanford University, Stanford, California, December 9, 1900. 4pp. To Dr. Albert Shaw, Editor-in-chief of the Review of Reviews, with a typed copy of a letter from David S. Jordan of Stanford University to Dr. Ross, June 15, [1900], sent to Shaw by Ross with his signed note: "This letter is confidential and I am not at liberty to print it. It must not be published, quoted, or even alluded to. Even the phraseology should not be followed closely. Please keep it in your own hands and return it to me when you are through with it. ... " With Benjamin I. Wheeler. Typed Letter Signed as President of the University of California. Berkeley, Calif. December 8, 1900. 1pg., marked "Confidential". To Dr. Shaw.

Ross first sent Shaw - in confidence - a copy of the letter he had received from President Jordan explaining that Mrs. Stanford "likes you personally, and respects your brilliancy", and, while having "no desire to limit freedom of speech ... feels that the reputation of the University for serious conservatism" was impaired by "hasty acceptance" of "social and political fads" not approved by "conservative thinkers" and businessmen. While she was indeed disturbed by Ross' views on immigration, her greater concern was for "the good name of the University" in upholding what Jordan called "the status quo". Ross' accompanying letter to Shaw said that Jordan had been placed in an "intolerable position" in "seeming to restrict free speech", which "galled him into resentment toward me ... ", being "alarmed lest Mrs. Stanford should break with him" because he had made no secret that it was her demand that Ross be fired. A week later, the President of the University of California, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, sent Shaw still another confidential letter lamenting the "sharply divided" academic opinion on the Ross case, especially at Stanford, where "two hostile camps" were divided by "very bitter feeling". Wheeler noted that Jordan had privately defended Ross and "urged Mrs. Stanford, in every possible manner, to desist from her resolution that Ross must go" - until Ross dishonorably revealed things Jordan had told him in confidence, making public statements "which he had no business to make at all." Ross himself was "not a true university man ... has not the university scientific spirit"; "his place is not in a university faculty", but "the way in which he has been dislodged" and "the spirit in which it was done is entirely wrong." Moreover, "there is no doubt that Mrs. Stanford, and her opinions concerning him, were the sole cause of his removal."