



Canadian Committee on Labour History Comité Canadien sur L'histoire du Travail

Statement by the Canadian Committee on Labour History (CCLH) on Academic Freedom and the Unjust Firing of Professor Thomas Alter

We, the officers and Members of the Executive of the CCLH, condemn the unjust firing of tenured Associate Professor of History Thomas Alter by Texas State University, San Marcos. Texas State University President Kelly Dampousse fired Professor Alter on 10 September 2025 without due process; he was given no opportunity to answer or rebut allegations directed against him.

Professor Alter was singled out for comments he made during a weekend talk outside of the university at an event that had no connection with his employer. Although Professor Alter drew on his academic expertise, this talk was not linked in any way to his work at the university. Most importantly, contrary to the university's accusation, his remarks did not call for or advocate violence; rather he addressed in broad hypothetical terms, the need for justice for working people and the best strategies that might be involved in achieving it.

We are further disturbed by the allegation that Professor Alter's scholarly writings constitute evidence of his unfitness to teach in Texas. Such policing of content violates Professor Alter's academic freedom and substitutes politicized opinion for evaluation by his peers, which had already led to his tenure.

Without a hearing or adherence to other formal procedures, this firing goes against the principles of academic freedom and employee rights that are central to higher education in a democracy. No university president should have the power to fire a scholar in this way. We stand with other organizations committed to democracy and free speech in condemning this act. President Dampousse's decision to fire Professor Alter was apparently prompted by hearing a spliced recording made by an individual who did not receive Professor Alter's permission to record his remarks at the online conference. This is a chilling reminder of the ways that distortion of speech can become vehicles to squelch dialogue.

As scholars working in another country in the same general field as Professor Alter, we are impressed by his intellectual contributions to the study of labor, and are convinced that he is a valuable addition to Texas State University, where his expertise and commitment to teaching make important contributions. His unjust firing should be overturned, and Professor Alter reinstated as a member of the Texas State University faculty.