



DEAN QUILTS: Dr. J. Robert Nelson, dean of the Vanderbilt Divinity School, has resigned from the university staff along with nine faculty members over the school's refusal to readmit a Negro sit-in leader to the divinity school. (AP photo.)

Vanderbilt Shaken When 10 Members Of Faculty Quit

NASHVILLE, Tenn., May 30 (AP)—Vanderbilt University, an 85-year-old institution that prides itself on its scholarship, was shaken to the roots yesterday by the resignation of the divinity school dean and nine faculty members over a racial issue.

Fourteen students in the divinity school also quit and three more who graduated Sunday said they were returning their diplomas. Most of the faculty members indicated their resignations would not become effective until next year.

All were protesting the refusal of the university to readmit for summer class Rev. James M. Lawson Jr., a Negro minister who was expelled from the divinity school last March on grounds he was a leader in sit-in demonstrations.

Chancellor Harvie Branscomb, who turned down the request to admit Lawson, issued this statement last night:

"In a matter of this importance, involving so many members of the divinity school faculty, I do not think that I should act on these resignations, but should refer them to the trustees of the university who will undoubtedly wish to examine the issues involved."

Divinity school Dean J. Robert Nelson, who resigned first, said Branscomb's action was "destructive . . . upon the confidence and morale of the divinity faculty and others in the university."

He called it the "feeble acquiescence by university authorities to a public image of Mr. Lawson which was both distorted and defamatory."

Nelson has been dean since 1957, coming from Geneva, Switzerland, where he served four years as secretary of the commission on faith and order of the World Council of Churches.

The nine faculty members, who represent 34 years of tenure in the divinity school, followed with a statement of resignation

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they delivered to Branscomb's home in which they said:

"Inasmuch as three months of steady negotiations with the university administration has failed to produce any resolution of the issues involved in the dismissal of Mr. James M. Lawson Jr., we have reluctantly decided that we must resign."

They added, however, that, "in accordance with accepted procedures and with due regard for the welfare of our students, most of us plan to remain with the university through the coming academic year."