

https://www.dailyuw.com/archives/from-the-archives-the-bad-blood-between-henry-suzzallo-and-gov-ronald-hartley/article_42387c00-ab62-11ef-b273-237ea91adffa.html

TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

archives

From the archives: the bad blood between Henry Suzzallo and Gov. Ronald Hartley

By Anya Farwell Contributing Writer
Nov 25, 2024



The Daily UW front page, Oct. 5, 1926.

In 1915, Henry Suzzallo was sworn into office as the 11th president of the University of Washington. During Suzzallo's 11 years at UW, he used his influence to help the war effort during World War I, settled long-standing city worker disputes, and built UW into one of the top colleges in the country. In 1926, despite all his efforts, Ronald Hartley, the new governor of Washington state, fired him. Why would Hartley fire someone with such a legacy?

During the Seattle General Strike of February 1919, a five-day stoppage of all manufacturing and industrial work, the city was held at a standstill.

When Suzzallo took office, workers and industries were still dealing with the consequences left over from the strike. Suzzallo, who was part of the National Labor Board, issued an eight-hour workday to combat this fallout and get the city back on track. Hartley, originally a lumber worker turned political figure, was later outraged by this change, as it would lead to paying workers overtime.

A few years later, Suzzallo would exchange verbal blows with a close confidant of Hartley's: Adam Duncan Dunn, a Washington state representative and campaign manager for the governor. Dunn was from Yakima and worked on the board of regents for Washington State University, UW's rival college.

Dunn worked to cut appropriations from UW, voicing his envy and disgust over Suzzallo's \$18,000 salary, Suzzallo taking obvious offense. Although \$18,000 wouldn't get you very far in our modern economy, it was extremely high in the 1920s.

In a meeting with the Yakima alumni, Suzzallo named Dunn "the worst enemy of your alma mater," as seen in a newspaper clipping for 1925. "I have no respect for the intellect of the conscience of Duncan Dunn," the clipping continued. Hartley was a close friend of Dunn, and took Suzzallo's offensive stabs to Dunn as stabs to himself, further adding to the strife between him and Suzzallo.

For some time the air seemed to calm between Hartley and Suzzallo around the time Hartley was appointed governor of Washington in 1924.

"Your offer to be of service in acquainting me with educational affairs is much appreciated," Hartley wrote in a letter to Suzzallo dated Dec. 16, 1924. "I am sure your experience in such matters will prove of great value."

This moment marked the calm before the storm, but after he was elected, Hartley wasted no time before butting heads with Suzzallo. “Doctor Suzzallo not going to resign,” read a headline from the Associated Press in 1925.

One year after Hartley took office, rumors of Suzzallo being asked to resign from his position circulated around campus, causing an uproar and dread from staff and students. Hartley had stated in earlier speeches that he was displeased with the University Budget, and the spending habits of the President, mostly calling attention to the construction of the Suzzallo Library, which at the time cost \$894,000. Suzzallo had a different vision for the library, as he wanted to cultivate the “soul of the university” and draw in student interest.

Hartley had control of the UW Board of Regents after the dismissal of two members. The president of the Board of Regents, Alvah Jordan, had claimed in an interview from 1926, that he knew of no intention of ousting Suzzallo from his position. Although regents had spoken about the security of Suzzallo’s position at the university, Suzzallo was fired after a board hearing in 1926, per Hartley’s request and action.

After news broke out of Suzzallo’s dramatic termination from the university, Seattle erupted.

“Two Regents quit; Campus parade held as protest,” read a headline from a 1926 issue of The Daily UW. “Prominent Men and Women in All Walks of Life Deplore Dismissal of University’s President,” read another headline.

Students, staff, and the citizens of Seattle didn’t take Hartley’s actions lightly. Although many protests and petitions took place in the wake of Suzzallo’s dismissal from the university, community members lacked evidence to repair the situation.

“Ronald H. Hartley undoubtedly will leave the office of the governor the most despised man in the state of Washington!” a Seattle newspaper clipping from Oct. 5, 1925, said.

Hartley was Washington’s governor until 1933, with his career ultimately ending at the beginning of the Great Depression. Suzzallo spent the remainder of his life in Seattle, leaving his footprint and powerful guidance behind at the university, with his name living on through time through the iconic library.

Reach contributing writer Anya Farwell at archive@dailyuw.com. X: [@AnyaFarwell8188](https://twitter.com/AnyaFarwell8188)

Like what you’re reading? Support high-quality student journalism by donating [here](#).

