

University Autonomy and Academic Freedom

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L. Matheson, to the Conference of Executive Heads of
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By J. A. L. Matheson

The choice of this subject — or combined subject — for one of the discussion sessions at the Exeter Conference of Executive Heads has, at first sight, a distinct air of *déjà vu*. Countless addresses, lectures, seminars and conferences have centred round this theme; hundreds, or perhaps even thousands, of books have dealt with it in more or less detail. Is the subject still of relevance and, if it is, what can be said about it that is not stale from repetition?

As for relevance one need look no further than almost any issue of the Times Higher Education Supplement. In that for May 25, which is the copy that has most recently reached me, aspects of academic autonomy and freedom, as they are manifest in countries all round the world, are discussed in several articles. The Conference of European Rectors, meeting in Helsinki, was concerned with university government at departmental, faculty and Senate/Council level. The Loken Report (on post-secondary education in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) recognises "that national governments are often loath to entrust too much responsibility for the provision of manpower to any one educational institution". In Turkey the new University Reform Bill proposes strict state supervision and surveillance of all university affairs, both academic and administrative. The T.H.E.S. leading article is entitled "Shockley and Eysenck," two names which epitomise the controversy which has sprung up around the possible correlation between race and intelligence, and whether academics are at liberty to investigate such a question or to speak about it in public.

Whenever vice-chancellors get together on this sort of occasion, or on corresponding ones within their own countries, they are almost certain to discuss many topics which are part and parcel of the general topic: the relations of their universities with the local equivalent of the British Universities Grants Committee; representation on their governing bodies; money, and the strings attached thereto by governments, benefactors or grant-awarding companies or authorities; recalcitrant staff and students; representation of students and staff on university committees; and so on.

Indeed the subject can be seen to comprehend almost every aspect of university life and organisation and, if this is really so, then it is obviously quite beyond the scope of a single introductory paper to do more than reconnoitre the questions raised. It seems to me, therefore, that my task as the introducer of a discussion which is to last but one day is to try to pick out some aspects of academic government and freedom which seem to me to be of special importance at present. I do so under two main headings: the university and the society in which it operates; and the organisation of the university and the freedom of the people within it. One can approach these areas of discussion in any order: they interlock, and it is really only for

arbitrary convenience that I attempt to separate them.

Before embarking upon a more detailed analysis, however, I wish to draw attention to the corollary of liberty — responsibility — which is so often overlooked in discussions about academic freedom. Responsibility is central to the concept of a profession; trust that a professional person will exercise responsibility is central to the relationship between a client and his doctor or lawyer; an academic's responsibility to his students, to his university and to his subject is central to the idea of academic freedom; and finally the concept of a university as a collection of professional academics requires that its institutional trustworthiness should be beyond reproach.

The University and Governments

In all countries education is coming to occupy a dominant position in national budgets and, within the educational sector, university education is very significant. In Australia, for example, the total educational expenditure rose from 2.45% of the G.N.P. in 1956/7 to 4.52% in 1970/1; within the total, the expenditure on universities rose from 0.27% of the G.N.P. in 1957 to 0.82% in 1971. Expenditure is rising everywhere partly because the numbers of under- and post-graduate students are rising and partly because improving standards mean increased unit costs. More favourable student-staff ratios, better academic salaries, the rapidly rising costs of books and equipment, and the rising cost of providing the area of building per student now thought to be necessary, all augment unit costs and so contribute to the formidable amounts now spent on universities.

These amounts are predominantly the responsibility of national budgets for it is no longer possible, even in the United States, for more than a small part of the total cost to be met from private sources.

It is not surprising, therefore, that governments seek ways both to keep expenditure on universities within bounds and to exercise more or less

control over how the granted funds are spent. In some countries this is done by incorporating universities within the machinery of government with a minister in overall control. Professors then become members of the civil service and cease to have anything like as much say in the determination of the policy of their university as they would have under a different system. It does not follow that, even if such a system does not appeal to people who have grown up in a different academic environment, there is necessarily as much loss of academic freedom as might at first be thought; indeed, given a reasonably enlightened government, it is possible that scholarly achievement will be enhanced partly because of the resources which are made available for scholarship and partly because scholars concentrate on scholarship rather than on policy and politics, academic or otherwise. Those who have worked in Sweden might agree that the system works well in that country.

In many Commonwealth countries, however, we operate under arrangements which derive from the British Universities Grants Committee system. This is certainly the case in Australia where the Australian Universities Commission (A.U.C.) follows the Murray

doctrine in what may now be its purest form. The A.U.C. derives its powers and duties from an Act which requires it to "perform its functions with a view to promoting the balanced development of universities so that their resources can be used to the greatest possible advantage of Australia". In pursuit of this noble task the A.U.C., in its latest Report, deals with the question of new developments in an interesting and enlightened way: it divides them into three classes: the first, involving major expenditure, a major educational departure, or a possible duplication of work being carried out elsewhere, requires its specific approval; the third comprises developments of which it disapproves for one reason or another. But it is the second which is the most challenging. "The introduction of new activities is a normal part of university development and essential to the maintenance of healthy and vital institutions. Those new activities included by universities in their submissions and not specifically referred to in this Report have not been mentioned because the Commission has not considered them to be new activities requiring its comment. So far as they are concerned, it is for the universities to decide whether or not they wish to proceed with them in the light of their available resources. The Commission has provided general comments relating to certain types of new activities for the guidance of universities. In particular, the Commission hopes that there will be an increase in the degree of collaboration between universities in order to ensure a rational use of academic resources."

It should not be thought that the A.U.C. is relaxing from its supervisory role for its philosophy is being implemented by the strengthening of its statistical apparatus so that an audit can be carried out at will to find out what is going on.

In order to meet the A.U.C.'s requirements universities have had to strengthen their own statistical and budgeting arrangements and this is all to the good for it is increasingly possible to devise methods of resource allocation within a university which are accepted by the beneficiaries as fair and reasonable.

The A.U.C. is just beginning to tackle the question of space allocation in order to help it to reach sound decisions on the granting of funds for new buildings. Here again the universities will gain some advantage, for the space inventories that are being prepared will enable them to make better use of existing buildings and to prepare sounder arguments for new ones.

Collaboration between neighbouring universities, as enjoined in the above quotation, is fairly easy to achieve at vice-chancellor level, or in non-competi-

tive areas like joint matriculation boards. But one of the components of academic freedom is freedom to compete and this sometimes makes it very difficult to secure the balanced development of universities by mutual agreement.

It is consistent with the A.U.C.'s attitude to new developments that it continues to set its face against ear-marked grants, preferring to leave it to universities to allocate funds for new projects from within the total block grant. University administrators and academics usually applaud this policy but apparently this does not inhibit them from indulging in special pleading now and again. "In some cases", says the A.U.C., "pressure for ear-marked grants from some groups in universities appears to derive from the inability of those groups to persuade the university community to their point of view."

While one can applaud the policy of eschewing ear-marked grants the question does arise of how the country can stimulate studies in, and the flow of students to, neglected areas of scholarship. The work of the Scarborough Commission is interesting in this connection. This Commission was set up because it had been discovered that while British universities were strong in the areas of Western European languages, literature and history, they were weak in Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African studies; this was a source of weakness, especially in the Foreign Office and diplomatic service, at a time of great turbulence in the Middle East. In 1947, therefore, the Commission recommended the funding of ear-marked grants to selected universities for specific purposes.

In 1960 a Sub-Committee of the U.G.C. was set up to find out what had happened. It found that while the number of staff nearly trebled between 1947 and 1952, when the grants ceased, the number of students increased very little. The publications of one very distinguished scholar who, however, had had no students, were outstanding in quality, impressive in volume and astonishing in range. They related to events of some 2000 years ago.

The Sub-Committee was forced to conclude that the overall pattern of development was disappointing but it went on to recommend further ear-marked grants this time of a somewhat different kind.

Many conclusions might be drawn from this rather sad tale: the first, of course, is that ear-marked grants do not of themselves necessarily produce the results for which they are intended; the second is that the organisation of universities does not lend itself to the introduction of undergraduate studies of a cross faculty or unfamiliar kind; and the third is that intense speciali-

sation at school is apt to be followed by continued specialisation in the same areas at university.

It is probably the case that Australia now enjoys a Universities Commission which is at least as sensitive to the issues of freedom and responsibility in academia as are universities themselves; the question is how long this happy state of affairs will continue. Of course the answer depends very greatly on the calibre and principles of the men in the most responsible positions but other influences may be very important. For instance, my impression is that the U.G.C. in Britain has been forced to become more authoritarian as the number of universities has grown. By my count there are about twice as many now as there were in Murray's day and that is a formidable increase which must have profoundly changed the relationship between the universities and the U.G.C.

Changes in the political system could have a similar effect. In the Australian Federation the States are constitutionally responsible for their universities although, since the A.U.C. began to operate in 1959, large amounts of money from the Commonwealth Government have supplemented the States' grants to their universities. I have no doubt that in arguing for the funds it believed to be necessary the A.U.C. had to tread quite a delicate path between Commonwealth and State governments; it may even have played one off against the other on occasion!

But the new Labour Government in Canberra has declared its readiness to assume total financial responsibility for the whole of tertiary education and it is providing funds to enable student fees to be abolished. The A.U.C. will thus have to deal with only one government in the future and this will certainly have an effect on how it attempts, and is able, to go about its task.

It will perhaps turn out that the most important influence on how Grants Committees are able to operate will be the public view of how the universities operate and I have no doubt that the events of the last decade have hardened public opinion. It is known, for example, that government thinking about union fees, and whether they should be abolished along with tuition fees, has been strongly influenced by public comments on indecency in student magazines.

I return later to the question of the effects of selective press reporting on universities. For the present I simply point out that the public is quite inconsistent in its attitudes. It hates long hair, irreverent and especially radical student behaviour, and student publications. But it badly wants its children to get in and it loves hearing about scientific research especially relating to cancer.

The Universities and Society

Many, perhaps most, people in our Association would endorse the proposition that it is the prerogative, and perhaps even the duty, of universities to act as the conscience of society; to draw the attention of the citizens of the State in which they live to what is wrong and what might be done by way of remedy. This concept was enshrined in a recent judgment by Mr. Justice Campbell who had been commissioned to pronounce on university salaries in Australia. "It (the community service aspect of university work) requires university staff, perhaps more than any other group in the community, to be cast in the role of social critic. This involves the identification of social, economic and technological issues and of the policy choices which are available to those confronted by these issues."

The exact words used by His Honour are important for they refer to members of university staffs as social critics, not universities collectively. The distinction is important but it is often overlooked.

In this company I need spend no time in distinguishing between the members of a university and the university itself as an institution although the distinction is often either not appreciated or ignored by the members themselves. In a liberal situation the academic is free to comment on public and political affairs according to his understanding, beliefs, and social philosophy. In a more restricted environment he may be virtually debarred from political utterance. But in either case the university of which he is a member should be free from involvement in his actions. If this is not so then the university may come to be identified with a particular point of view and this may have serious consequences.

It is perhaps understandable that students, passionately concerned about this war or that injustice which may—let us be fair—touch them personally, should be concerned if their university appears to be insensitive on these issues, for example by being ready to talk to politicians on the "wrong" side, or to welcome them to the campus or, the ultimate horror!, offer them an honorary degree. One could applaud this concern if all students were innocent young idealists, free from any thought that other young, and more gullible, idealists could be manipulated into attacking their university if it should stray from the left side of the road.

The facts, unfortunately, are otherwise; internal dissension in universities

comes not from innocent idealists but from dedicated activists who are well able to distinguish between this or that war, or this or that injustice according to its place in the ideological stock market.

Some staff, unhappily, are of the same persuasion and interpret their academic freedom as a licence to use their university as a base from which to launch political fusillades. If their university, or some other members of its staff, should react critically to their activities then it is this criticism, rather than the actions which gave rise to it, which is paraded as an attack on academic freedom.

Before about 1964 the matters about which I am writing were virtually unknown. In that year the epoch-making events at Berkeley opened the eyes of the student world to the fact that they were numerically powerful, that the universities which they inhabited relied on convention, rather than on real power, to maintain their equilibrium and that any dedicated group which was prepared to risk the survival of its university could make a lot of political mileage by appropriately chosen revolutionary tactics.

The consequences of this discovery have been dreadful, and the reaction it has evoked sometimes even more dreadful—Kent State did indeed outbid Berkeley.

Now that the initial fury of the student revolt seems to be spent it is possible to take stock and to enquire what went wrong, what features of university organisation made them so vulnerable.

It is not now appropriate to embark upon a long analysis but I do wish to argue the proposition that incoming staff members and students should somehow have brought to their notice the importance of protecting and preserving their university's political neutrality.

The University of California attempts to deal with this by means of its Regulation No. 5 (revised June 5, 1944) which sets out in unexceptionable terms that University's understanding of its role and function and the rights and duties of its members in relation thereto.

The regulation is too long to quote in full but it speaks of the freedom of a university being the freedom of competent persons in the classroom. "In order to protect this freedom", it goes on, "the University assumes the right to prevent ex-

ploitation of its prestige by unqualified persons or by those who would use it as a platform for propaganda."

In my observation it is not common for these matters to be set down in such detail and incorporated in conditions of appointment. The British faith in an unwritten constitution encourages the assumption that all members of a university will know, without being told, how to behave but experience shows that the assumption is unfounded. In fairness one should add that experience also shows that the explicitness of the Californian conditions of appointment did not give much protection in the 60's but at least recalcitrant staff members could not plead ignorance as an excuse for their actions.

This whole question of the permissible limits of protest has naturally been very much canvassed and a lot has been written about it which I need not traverse now. But it is perhaps of interest to explain how the definition of student misconduct came to be an acutely controversial matter within my own university.

For several years after Monash opened, when there were only a few hundreds, and then a few thousands, of students I used to explain to each year's freshers that we had been too busy to write rules but that if they behaved like reasonably civilized adults they would be all right. It did not then enter my head that a few years later students, claiming political immunity, would deliberately disobey instructions (cf. the setting up of collecting tables at Berkeley), indulge in sit-ins, deface walls with painted slogans and so on. Nor did I reflect that there is not an accepted norm of reasonably civilized adult behaviour.

At a fairly early date someone pointed out that we had no Discipline Statute so I sat down and wrote one. My lawyer friends tell me that it is quite inadequate, which is not surprising, but the point is that it is only concerned with the procedure to be followed if a student is accused of misconduct; no definition of misconduct was attempted, the assumption being that the tribunal would itself decide whether the conduct complained of was, in fact, misconduct.

When students demanded some more definite guidance on what they might or might not do it proved to be extraordinarily difficult to write down, in any succinct manner, a definition of what is acceptable behaviour in a university; to try to define unacceptable behaviour seems to be even more difficult.

So it is with the concept of a university's neutrality. Certain kinds of action, on the part of staff and students, will obviously put their university at risk with governments or public opinion. In the last resort this risk may have to be

taken but in the ordinary way one might have expected that people would try to act so as not to identify their university with their political actions. This usually happens, but there are people who do not accept this view and who deliberately set out to politicise their university and to engage it, as an institution, on the side of a controversy which they happen to favour.

In Australia the issue that triggered student action was the Vietnam war in which, it must be remembered, Australian troops were engaged. There was also conscription of 20-year-olds, on a lottery basis, and the arrangements for conscientious objectors were very un-

satisfactory. Public opinion was very divided on the issue but the parents of soldiers who were on active service were far from sympathetic to university students who, perhaps having been balloted out of national service, were at one stage attempting to collect funds for the Viet Cong. People were talking about bullets stamped "Monash" being found in the bodies of dead Australians and so forth.

I attempted to maintain the University's neutral stance; the institution would continue to respect its duty to its students, for example by declining to give their ages to anyone, but it

would expect them not to involve their university in their demonstrations. The whole thing got hopelessly confused, as these things do, but in spite of everything that happened I still think it was right to try to maintain the principle of institutional neutrality.

It is not difficult to think of issues which go to the heart of the functioning of universities on which the institution itself should take a stand; the admission of black students to South African universities is a case in point. But that was not the situation at Monash where staff and students were divided on a divisive issue.

The Organisation of the University

Representation on governing bodies

In recent years there has been a strong move to widen the membership of the governing committees of universities by increasing the number of students or including them where they were not previously admitted. In my own university most Faculty Boards, for example, have admitted two or three students. This has sometimes been criticised as mere tokenism but the Faculty of Medicine has avoided this charge by putting twenty-five students on its Board. Time will tell whether this is a wise move.

The usual experience has been that it is hard to get students to stand for election and, once elected, to get them to attend. This is not surprising. Most university business is pretty tedious and many of the issues that are argued at length must seem of little importance to students who are interested in what they are interested in; this does not often include the finer points of academic pedantry which occasionally occupy faculty boards and such bodies.

The real interest of students, so far as their lives within the university are concerned, are the quality of a university's provision for good study. Are there enough seats in the library? Are there enough books, especially set books and prescribed references? Are the ventilation systems in the lecture rooms adequate? Are they too hot, or too cold? Is the lecturing adequate? Can tutors tute? And so on. These are matters on which students might be expected to have a view for their aca-

demic success may depend on the answers.

I am not at all sure that the committee structure in my own university is of much relevance to some of these matters; perhaps we ought to be thinking up some new way of bringing deficiencies in the elementals to the attention of authority.

It has surprised me that while improvements in student representation have been rather widespread corresponding changes in non-professorial representation have not been proportionate; nor have the lecturing staff complained very vociferously. Perhaps they realise that the significant decisions are made elsewhere and that faculty board business is only the tip of the iceberg. Most universities now have a comprehensive telephone system!

The assessment of teaching skills

There is one area, however, where student opinion might be decisive and where staff might feel a threat to their academic freedom: the quality of teaching. In many American universities carefully thought-out questionnaires are circulated among the students of a class in order to test opinion on the performance of the lecturer-in-charge. This has happened in Australia only to a very minor extent and, because of the inept way in which it was carried out, it was very easy to dismiss the results as misleading.

I used to think that quizzes of this kind were intolerable but I have

changed my view. It now seems to me that if a lecturer cannot carry conviction with his class then there is something seriously wrong which should be corrected. It is true that if a lecturer is disastrously incompetent then this usually comes to notice, but not always.

Everyone knows, of course, that there are brilliant people who are tremendously stimulating to small numbers of senior students but who are lost before a large group; and that there are flamboyant characters who can entrance a first-year class but who would soon be exposed by a bright bunch of honours students. I am not speaking of these extremes but rather of the great mass of teachers who do the bulk of the teaching. They are very variable in competence, and perhaps especially in their knowledge of the problems of examining.

In my public utterances I usually defend the universities' position in this matter on the ground that they are learning institutions, not teaching institutions, but I have to confess that the argument does not stand up to close examination.

I think increasingly that students should sit on promotions committees not so much to pronounce on individual cases as to encourage the serious consideration of teaching as well as research skill.

It is really extraordinary that universities, where research on every conceivable topic is conducted, should still not have found ways of assessing the competence of their staffs in the basic skills of teaching. Could it be that it has come to be thought that to attempt to measure a person's competence, in an objective way, is somehow an assault on his academic freedom?

The influence of individuals

It seems to have escaped serious comment that universities, although inevitably provided with a hierarchy of governing bodies, are collections of individuals and that the strength or weakness of the institutions is a function of the capacity of quite a small number of people in key positions.

The committee structure, on this view, is quite irrelevant; it does not matter whether one has departments and faculties or schools. What does matter is that the system should be such that the originality of individuals is not impeded. One could almost argue the case for a dual system of government consisting of the "over-world" and the real world. The over-world is the familiar structure of Council, Senate, Faculty and Departmental Boards; representation is widespread; the membership is huge and comprises members of all classes of society. Business is characterised by the interminable discussion of tedious memoranda; nothing really happens.

Beneath the facade of the over-world the real world is occupied by a small number of hard-working, competent individuals who get things done. Buildings are put up, staff appointed, budgets prepared, bills paid but no signs of all this penetrate the over-world.

This splendid idea was given to me by a colleague many years ago who pointed out that provided one never changed the title or syllabus of a course one need never go to a faculty meeting; and he never did!

It is not really possible to be as thoroughgoing as one might wish because, in actual practice, the real world would have to poke its head up into the over-world from time to time and so reveal its existence.

But even with the ordinary way of doing things not sufficient attention is paid to the fact that the functioning of committees depends enormously on the paper that is put in front of them; the agenda, memoranda and minutes to a large extent define the decisions, and not the other way round.

It follows that the effectiveness of a university's machinery, the speed with which decisions are reached, problems tackled, injustices corrected and the

encouragement given to new ideas and their implementation depend critically on the administrative competence of a few key people.

The conclusion I draw from this is that universities really need many more full-time administrators than is common. Full-time Vice-Chancellors are now accepted (grudgingly?) but full-time deputy or pro-vice-chancellors are not yet very common and deans are still usually elected for short terms while continuing to hold their chairs. I do not believe this is adequate and that every effort must be made to get imaginative and energetic academic administrators to operate, not necessarily for more than a few years at a time, on a full-time basis.

In my University the large multi-professional departments, usually with the chairmanship rotating, seem to be the most successful. They can afford more help in the way of laboratory managers and administrative assistants, so that the chairman is not snowed under by the minutiae of day-to-day business. A full-time dean with a faculty secretary and some clerical help can shield chairmen from a lot of routine so that they can concentrate on scholarship. That is real academic freedom.

Communication: Freedom from the Press

As I write this the American press is preening itself on its tenacity and public-spiritedness in uncovering the Watergate affair. It is said that the law of libel operates in such a way in the United States as to allow, or even encourage, journalists to probe political and financial scandals without exposing themselves to libel actions or threats of action designed to silence them.

Commenting on the journalistic situation in the two countries the Australian Minister for the Media recently remarked that while United States newspapers enjoyed wider freedom, there were fewer reports of the sordid details of a person's life and greater respect for individual privacy than existed in Australian papers. Vice-Chancellors, unless they are careless or unlucky, are seldom at personal risk from newspaper indiscretion but in my experience they can be in very great institutional danger.

It so happens that my university was the first in Victoria, and one of the first in Australia, to experience student intransigence. The press leapt on this new topic with avidity and the sit-ins and demonstrations that characterised the late sixties were reported and photo-

graphed to such an extent that the public became convinced that Monash was in a state of total disorder. By the time that student activism had spread to La Trobe and then to Melbourne universities the subject had lost novelty and so received less press attention; the result is that to this day the name Monash is synonymous with student disorder in the minds of many Australians while other universities, which have endured far more traumatic experiences, are popularly supposed to be havens of tranquillity.

I do not assert that the reporting of which I complain was especially inaccurate, although on occasions rumour and innuendo were paraded as if they were the truth. But I do assert that the regular reporting of selected aspects of the life of my university because they were judged to be, and doubtless were, newsworthy was cumulatively harmful.

Moreover it was not long before all this was observed by the radicals who began to exploit the media's interest in disorder and to tip off journalists that a demonstration was to be expected. I recall that one day I arrived at my office to find a television crew unpacking their gear. In reply to my enquiry as

to what they had come to record I was told that I should soon find out; sure enough, in accordance with the democracy of participants that was then in vogue, a large open-air students' meeting was held at lunch time when many inflammatory resolutions were passed by huge majorities and predictably featured in that evening's television news.

After many discussions with senior journalists and editors I came to the conclusion that as we couldn't beat 'em we'd better join 'em. We engaged one, and later a second, journalist and set up an information office. We started a broadsheet, at first attempting simply to counter the many scurrilous and inaccurate assertions that were circulating on the campus. Other publications have followed and the situation now is that press and radio increasingly rely on the office for information which they accept as accurate; even the radical students occasionally come along for help.

This is a depressing tale: it records how selective and tendentious reporting created a situation which could be and was exploited by activists with a greater regard for political effectiveness than for truth. The counter was to build an information dispensing organisation

which is now so well regarded that it could be used to broadcast favourable propaganda or to conceal unfavourable or uncomfortable facts! Let us not forget that important axiom of the academic microcosm: propaganda is that branch of the art of lying which consists of very nearly deceiving your friends without quite deceiving your enemies.

Getting news around a university

The other day, at a ceremony for the conferring of degrees, a graduand appeared who declined the proffered testamur and, instead, handed the Chancellor a manifesto in which he complained that the awarding of degrees implied the completion of learning whereas learning should be an ever-continuing process.

It so happens that my university, having nearly reached the limits of its planned physical growth, has been considering how best to develop in the years ahead. It has decided that the most important opportunities lie in the area of the continuing education of

adults and, in order to bring this decision to reality, has established a Centre for Continuing Education, appointed a Director and is now in process of strengthening the courses for adults that are already running and starting many more.

These glad tidings, I should have thought, had been widely distributed both in University publications and in the public press. The appointment of the Director was certainly announced as are individual courses as they occur. Yet our young protester was either ignorant of all this or chose to ignore it because of his preconceived notions.

This is but one example of the difficulty of ensuring that information about the University's activities, functions and mode of functioning is very difficult indeed to disseminate. Certainly the written word does not suffice.

I mentioned in preceding paragraphs the steps that we have taken by way of producing publications. For many years the Agendas and Minutes of the University's governing bodies have been freely available. A fat handbook on Administrative Procedure is in every Department. But all this is not enough; I fear that we shall have to come to terms

with television!

Some years ago there was disputation as to whether the proceedings of the Discipline Committee should be open to an audience. The Statute, which had been drawn up with an eye to the protection of the accused from undue publicity, said not; the particular accused who was disputing this rule, perhaps having in mind an impassioned speech from the dock to a selected and sympathetic audience, thereupon declined to recognise the Committee's jurisdiction. A possible compromise solution, that the proceedings be broadcast on closed circuit television, was rejected on the grounds of impracticability.

As television technology advances, however, it may soon be possible to broadcast, on closed circuit, the proceedings of university committees without subjecting the participants to abnormal lighting. It would thus be possible for anyone in the university, if he were sufficiently interested, to observe committee proceedings and both the problem of overcrowding and the risk of disruption would disappear. This may turn out to be the most workable answer to a perplexing problem. How far it is compatible with academic freedom is, perhaps, open to question.

Finally, by way of a postlude, I add a piece which I wrote some time ago on the chairmanship of departments. It is not really an adequate discussion of an important subject, but, in default of time for rewriting, it will have to serve . . .

The chairmanship of departments

Until quite recently in British universities, and in those which derive from the British tradition, appointment to a chair meant becoming the head of a department and involved responsibility for its academic, financial and physical administration. Since there was usually only one professor, with often less than ten lecturers of various grades, those making the appointment had to consider how the several candidates were likely to discharge the many and diverse duties which would face them. A was clearly the most original scholar; B the better teacher; C the most experienced and urbane university operator; D the most orderly administrator; E had the most influential and wealthy friends; F the fewest or least vocal enemies.

Who would best combine all the necessary qualities? Who would gather round him the best staff? Who best retain his youthful powers until, at 65, he died a painless death without making any inroads on the superannuation funds?

It was indeed a difficult matter to

choose, especially in the knowledge that the appointee might well be in office for thirty years. Observe that a choice had to be made and that, however hesitant the committee, a department could not be left indefinitely without a head in spite of that well known theorem that a good vacancy is better than a bad appointment.

How different is the task of a committee which is considering whether or not to promote a person to higher status; if his case convinces the committee he is promoted; if not, not.

Considerations of this kind perhaps played some part in the evolution of the structure of the large American academic department where, as is well known, there may be half-a-dozen full professors, who have often been internally promoted to this rank, and a corresponding number of associate — and assistant — professors, and other lower forms of academic life. In such a multi-professorial situation the administrative headship of a

department could not be identified by unique rank and the rotating headship or chairmanship, determined perhaps by mutual agreement or perhaps by election, was inevitable.

Until recently certainly, and perhaps still, there was a clearer distinction between, and a sharper definition of the functions of, the Administration and the Faculty than in Britain. It could almost be said that the Regents or Trustees appointed the President, who selected his administration, who hired the Faculty to teach the students, for ever and ever, amen — until 1964. In the present, post-Berkeley era, all this is in a state of flux and no-one can say what the steady state will prove to be if, indeed, there ever is such a thing again. But one can ask whether the average American department functioned as well as or better than its British opposite number and, if so, why. (Outstanding departments are here ignored on the grounds that they were

doubtless due to the presence of outstanding people who will make any system work.)

Certainly it is to be expected that if persons are promoted to full professorships because of their eminence, no other consideration being relevant, then the question of choice becomes unimportant; it is only if it is desired to import someone from elsewhere that one candidate has to be separated from the others. And the American practice of making appointments by private negotiation in the Academic Market Place almost eliminates the competitive situation and certainly avoids the agonising situation often faced in England.

All this is very advantageous, and so is the possibility of giving the administrative chores to the person who handles them best, or dislikes them least, or both. Moreover there is no special reason, in this system, why the chairman should be a full professor and there is obviously a lot to be said for looking for a competent administrator, who is not a particularly gifted scholar, lower down among the tenured staff. What could be better than having the department well run by someone who likes doing it while the real scholars get on with their research?

At a time when countless books and articles are being written about the student revolution it would be silly to attempt an explanation in a few lines. But I think it will be found that this American professorial system played a part: the academic's loyalty was more to his subject than to his university; his research and his graduate students more significant than his undergraduates, if any; his most pressing problem the renewal of his research contract or grant; his chosen companions government officials, company directors or charitable trustees rather than fellow-academics; his favourite sport, golf; his club, the local airport lounge where he could be quite certain to meet his colleagues.

All this is an exaggerated caricature, without doubt, but do not forget that it was Berkeley, with its posse of Nobel Laureates, its ferocious belief in the philosophy of publish or perish, its neglect of its undergraduates in favour of its graduate school, which blew up first. At the least American practice is sufficiently suspect to make

us very cautious before adopting a similar system here.

As Australian universities get larger it is getting more and more common for departments to have more than one professor and in universities which employ the school system it is inevitable that they will be multi-professorial: the question of chairmanship or headship thus arises. There appear to be four possibilities: to have a permanent, appointed professorial head; to rotate the headship among the professors; to have a head appointed for a certain period, or indefinitely, from among the whole staff including non-professorial members above a certain rank; to have a head elected by vote of some or all of the staff.

Before proceeding it may be worth pointing out that it is not essential to have the same arrangements in each department. Nor is it necessarily the case that the best scheme for an arts department will be equally advantageous in a laboratory department. Certainly clinical departments in a hospital present special problems for here, as well as the regular tasks of teaching, research and laboratory management, there are the additional responsibilities of patient care, the training of young interns, and the participation in hospital, as well as university, policy making.

Rather than attempt to argue the pros and cons of particular arrangements I prefer to set out some principles which should be borne in mind in deciding how to proceed.

First it does not seem to me that whether an arrangement is more or less "democratic" is relevant. It is not apparent that inspired research or valuable teaching is achieved by popular vote nor is it at all obvious, especially these days, that an election would necessarily produce the best chairman. Certainly if, as is sometimes suggested, the electorate included all staff or even all students one could easily foresee some disasters.

At the other end of the spectrum there do seem to be considerable advantages in rotating the chairmanship between the professors. Science professors have been known to argue that the complexities of laboratory administration require stability in the headship but I do not find this convincing: the experimental evidence, in fact, is contrary for even permanent heads of de-

partment take study leave, usually without disaster.

In passing it might be mentioned that, at its best, the single-professor department with perhaps ten lecturers and a hundred or so students had the sort of virtues that are found in a united family. While many universities try to maintain the same sort of numerical relationship in a large multi-professorial department it is not common, I believe, for a particular group of students and lecturing staff to be identified with a particular professor so as to produce a quasi-family within the larger department.

The most important considerations, it seems to me, spring from the notion of responsibility and, for my part, I believe that many of the present difficulties of universities spring from the fact that often no-one can be identified as carrying responsibility for particular events (except the vice-chancellor who is responsible for everything) nor, if he can be identified, does he necessarily have the authority and power to exercise responsibility. In the departmental situation a transient, elected chairman, especially if he was accountable to a departmental meeting, would be in such a weak position that he could hardly discharge his responsibility even if he wanted to. Such a situation would be as far removed as one could get from the ideal department which former students would be proud to assert that they had belonged to.

It should not be thought that I am thinking of the professorial head as a universal factotum who does everything. There is every reason for delegating a great deal more departmental administration than is common to members of the non-professorial staff. Indeed there is much to be said for having a chief-of-staff, a real associate of the professor, who would be in day-to-day charge of the running of the department so long as it was clearly understood that ultimate responsibility rested with the professor.

If there is any serious departure from present practice then the whole question of professorial salary and conditions of appointment in the British-cum-Australian scene will have to be called into question. The present arrangements assume that as well as possessing distinction and enjoying status a professor carries responsibility; if this goes then the special position of professors goes too and the whole employment policy will have to be reconsidered.