

## Report of Discussion

Tuesday, 21 November 1989. A meeting of the Senate was held in the Senate-House for the discussion of the *Report*, dated 29 April 1989, of the *Syndicate appointed to consider the government of the University* (*Reporter*, 1988-89, p. 617).

Dr B.J. PEARCE:

The comments of the Board of Land Economy were not included in the special edition of the *Reporter* and yet we would like to take the opportunity of putting our views forward.

We have confined our comments to the *Report's* recommendations. We broadly agree with recommendations 4, 5, 8, 10, 13-15, 26, and 27, and particularly recommendation 14 since the Department of Land Economy is not within the Groups of Faculties. We have no comment to make on recommendations 11, 12, 15, 18-20, and 24, also 31-33, but we do have short comments on the others and I would like to make those now.

On the first recommendation, whilst we regard the delegation of powers from Regent House as generally acceptable, we do feel that Regent House should have further powers to propose policy changes beyond its power to initiate discussion. With regard to recommendation 2, some concern has been expressed in the Department that the central bodies could avoid the scrutiny of Regent House by not recording issues in the three items of University business. Powers to deal with University business beyond these three items might be enhanced.

On recommendation 3 there is a possibility that senior non-established research staff will as at present be prevented from becoming members of the Regent House under the proposals. Some would achieve membership through their membership of individual Faculties but others, especially those working in institutions outside the Faculty system like the Department of Land Economy, would not. Perhaps those currently eligible for membership of Senate under Statute A, II, 3(f) could be included for membership of Regent House.

On recommendation 6 we feel that, while the Council would be required to submit an Annual Report to the Regent House, there would be little action that could be taken if the Regent House disapproved of its contents. In any case, given that the report would cover past events, there would be little possible recourse. One solution here might be a requirement for Regent House to approve an annual budget for the forthcoming year.

With regard to recommendation 7, we recognize the need to draw the membership of the Council from the various categories, but consider that greater weight could appropriately be given to the rôle of the Regent House by specifying four Heads of Colleges, two members of the General Board, and ten other members of Regent House, all nominated and elected by members of the Regent House.

On recommendation 9, we are uncertain as to how the rôle of the Executive Committee would work out in practice. If it is to deal with routine business only, as suggested in paragraph 8.1.7, such decisions might reasonably be delegated to University administrative officers. On the other hand, if a more important rôle is

envisaged, it would seem that the decisions should be taken by the whole Council. If the Council is felt to be too large for this consideration might be given to a reduction in its size.

With regard to recommendations 16 and 17 we would like to suggest that it is appropriate for responsibility for financing and planning to be located with the Council. If the rôle of the Financial Board is to be limited to administrative functions such as the management of the University's investment portfolio, then this recommendation is acceptable. The rôle of auditing the University's finances could be better fulfilled by a more independent body such as the Board of Scrutiny.

On 21-23 we feel that the extent to which authority would be transferred in practice is not very clear, although we favour the principle of delegating responsibilities. On the assumption that the Councils of the Schools were constituted as at present, the proposed increase in their responsibilities would be welcomed; we feel that it could be appropriate to abolish the Faculties, introducing Departments where necessary.

The full intention of recommendation 25 we feel is not very clear. We do not feel for instance that it would be necessary to relocate administrative staff to a single location.

On recommendations 28-30 there have been different views expressed in the Department as to the appropriateness of the recommended changes in the office of Vice-Chancellor, reflecting different aspects of the rôle of that office. The value of a longer term of office is recognized in order to facilitate more consistent relations with the outside world and in providing political leadership. However, it has been suggested within the Department that for political leadership the position should more appropriately be an elected one. In general we do not feel that the Vice-Chancellor should take the rôle of chief executive, this being a function that is more appropriate to the senior administrative officer.

Finally, the Department is concerned that the Committee has been unable to address fully the question of the relationship between the Colleges and the University, though its attention has been drawn to some of the difficulties in this relationship. We feel that proposals should be made to deal with this issue and only after that can the details for the organization of the University be fully worked out.

Mr J. GRIEVE SMITH:

Vice-Chancellor, one of the major weaknesses of the present system of government of the University is that it is unnecessarily complex and obscure. When the Wass Committee were inviting evidence last year, hardly any of my colleagues professed to understand how it worked. The Committee's Report seems to have had a miraculous effect in this regard. Cambridge is now full of knowledgeable people, criticizing this or that proposal for reforming the system on the grounds that the Committee did not properly understand how it really worked.

For my own part, after seven years here I confess that I still do not completely understand the workings of the system. But having had over thirty

years' experience in both central government and industry, and having served as a member of a local authority for several years, I have learnt enough to feel that the government of the University is seriously wanting in both its managerial and its democratic aspects. I find therefore the intense conservatism that the Report has provoked very depressing. To a relative outsider the reforms proposed by the Committee seem very modest. They attempt to update the system in one or two respects, but they are not, for the most part, in any sense fundamental.

There has been a plethora of detailed argument about the proposals. I should like to make some more fundamental comments on the Report and its context.

The most significant feature of such exercises is often what they take for granted rather than what they question. In the Report of the 1923 Royal Commission one such assumption (baldly stated in one paragraph) was that Cambridge should remain a 'predominantly male' university. This time, there is the statement, constantly and uncritically reiterated in recent weeks, that the University should remain a 'self-governing community of scholars'. I believe we are a close-knit community, but this formulation arrogantly ignores several thousand members of our community, the non-academic staff of the University and Colleges who have no votes in Regent House. Maybe fifty years ago they could be regarded merely as servants of the scholars. To-day we should surely recognize them as members of the University community. I realize that the Colleges are the worst offenders in operating a system of apartheid between the Fellows and the staff; but the University itself should be quicker to emerge from this outdated, and in many senses insulting, conception. And what about the students? Are they not scholars too – or at any rate supposed to be? If we are to maintain a democratic structure – and I believe we should – one of the questions which must be faced in the 1990s is the position of the students and non-academic staff.

There are also a number of obvious and simple questions that need to be asked about our democratic machinery either before or after Wass. There are various complex provisions to ensure particular interests are represented on the Council, but each person is elected by Regent House as a whole, who very often know nothing of those they are called on to vote for. Should we not consider electing members of the Council by constituencies consisting of groups of (a) Faculties or Departments and (b) Colleges? The turnout of 130 people in the recent by-election for the Council of the Senate is hardly indicative of a flourishing democracy. At the moment too many people seem to equate democracy with veto by referendum.

The second fundamental point which the Wass Committee took for granted was the manner in which the University is governed by a detailed written constitution and rule book in the form of the *Statutes and Ordinances*. This is an intensely constricting and conservative factor, making it extremely difficult to adjust gradually to changes in circumstances. As an example: in the field with which I am reasonably familiar, College finances, there have been no really substantial adjustments since the 1920s. The system is badly out-dated, but the task of modernizing it becomes increasingly daunting. I must say that the Civil Service is a model

of flexibility and informality compared with our procedures. Any major reform of the system must tackle this problem and examine the whole question of the rôle of the *Statutes and Ordinances*.

To my mind one of the major objectives should be to make our system more flexible. The proposal for more devolution of control over budgets could help to achieve this. To take one important example: flexible employment. The fact that all University Lectureships and the like in Cambridge have to be full-time is a major obstacle to many women with young children who wish to pursue an academic career here. At a time when employers in a variety of fields are devising schemes for career breaks for mothers (or fathers) and a choice of subsequent working hours, Cambridge academia sticks rigidly to the full-time norm. Yet it is unquestionably easier for Cambridge to offer University Lectureships of varying fractions of the current norm than, for example, the consulting engineers Ove Arup to offer the choice of a shorter working week to mothers who are managers of major projects – as they are successfully doing. To move in this direction, we need both a commitment to succeed and an amendment of the present rigid constitutional anachronism of a university 'post' equivalent to one full-time lecturer.

The critics of Wass repeatedly assert that the reforms are intended to make it easier to do the bidding of the Government or the UFC. As far as I am concerned (and I am sure a majority of 'reformers') this is the opposite of the truth. We need an effective system of University government to enable us to stand up for ourselves more effectively in a harsh and sometimes brutal environment. Indeed I sometimes feel that those deeply embedded in the system do not appreciate – or at any rate speak out for – the fundamental virtues that, at its best, Cambridge has to offer. This applies particularly to the rôle of the universities as bastions of free speech and discussion in a world where so many people who are knowledgeable on important issues suffer the constraints of corporate man – or woman – unable to discuss freely the things they know best. The ability of the academic to speak freely what he sees to be the truth, not only to his fellow academics, but more important to the outside world, whether it be in the realm of politics, economics, philosophy, or science, is one that we should use and defend stoutly. The existence and exercise of this right is one of the most important contributions this or any other university can make to society as a whole. To protect this right we must be prepared to stand up to our paymasters (whether public or private) and convince the public that we are right to do so. To this end we need a vigorous and effective University government headed by a Vice-Chancellor who has the time, energy, and experience to lead the attack. We shall not maintain these essential freedoms by keeping our heads down and seeking a quiet life.

If the Wass proposals for the Vice-Chancellorship go too far, we should compromise on: a four-year period of office; a Vice-Chancellor from Cambridge (not necessarily a Head of House); and make the necessary financial arrangements to enable him, or her, to undertake the job full-time.

Given the welter of comment and opposition that the Report has evoked, the Council of the Senate have a very heavy responsibility as they consider the next step. I suggest that they must look for common

ground and use the Wass proposals, amended as necessary, to achieve some updating of our system of government. To fail to do so would be a sorry commentary on our ability to manage our own affairs.

Dr C. F. FORSYTH:

Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Senate, I have some remarks to make about the Wass Syndicate's proposal (in paras 5.1.6, 5.1.7, and 5.1.8) that certain important powers, presently exercised by the Regent House, should be transferred to one or other of the central bodies.

This is an important matter, for the fact that the Regent House is the governing body of the University is a vital aspect of the distinctive character of Cambridge. Membership of the Regent House is the clear sign that we are not the mere employees of the University or one of its Colleges, to be sent hither and thither as our employer wishes, but form part of the body which governs the University. The Regent House is the community of scholars about which there has been so much talk; and the question is whether that community of scholars is going to continue to be self-governing and democratic or not.

The importance of the Regent House as the governing body of the University goes far beyond creating in its members 'a feeling of involvement and participation in the work of the University' as the Syndicate suggests (para. 4.2). The central bodies know, as they go about their daily business, that their proposals may be rejected or accepted by the Regent House; and this ensures that the members of the Central Bodies are sensitive to Regent House opinion and, very largely, work *together* to develop proposals that will be acceptable to the Regent House. Thus, even if ballots in the Regent House are relatively rare, the fact that the Regent House may, if unsatisfied, exercise its powers imposes a wholesome discipline over the rest of the government of the University. Moreover, when an issue that profoundly divides the University arises for decision only the Regent House can take that controversial decision in a way that is unquestionably legitimate and in which even those who disagree fundamentally with the decision reached are bound to accept and respect. Furthermore, a reduction in the powers of the Regent House may in the medium to long term have profound consequences for the character of the central bodies themselves. For if they are to have the final word in matters of moment to the University, they will change from deliberative to representative bodies where members will be elected to represent a particular interest. Such a change will not promote the efficient government of the University.

Any change, therefore, in the powers of the Regent House should be approached with the greatest caution and only agreed to when the case for that change has been clearly established. Has the Wass Syndicate made a strong case for this change?

The Syndicate bases its proposal on the proposition that 'the procedures of the Regent House for the conduct of business are too slow and too cumbersome for it either to fulfil an effective executive rôle, or to take policy decisions, in a way that is appropriate to modern conditions' (para. 5.1.1). All that the Syndicate provides (in para. 5.1.2) in justification of this proposition are some examples

of occasions on which, in the Syndicate's view, it was not possible to consult the Regent House in advance over the formulation of policy in certain important matters. On these occasions the Regent House was consulted (or its approval sought) after the event.

It seems, however, a most curious logic to argue that because it is sometimes not possible to consult *before* the event, consultation *after* the event is to be abolished. Surely, the proper course is to consider ways in which consultation before the event may be strengthened (by perhaps reforming Regent House procedures so that they are no longer '...slow and ...cumbersome', if that is in fact the case), not abolish consultation altogether?

Moreover, the controversy over the Syndicate's proposals in regard to the Regent House arises from the transfer of decision making power away from the Regent House, not from the absence or otherwise of consultation in the formation of policy. To be concrete about this, one of the most important issues will be whether a body other than the Regent House will have the power to suppress University offices and whether a body other than the Regent House will have the power to decide whether new buildings should be constructed (the General Board would like to strip the Regent House of this power (para. 12 of the Board's comments) while the Wass Syndicate would allow the Regent House to decide on major building projects (para. 5.1.7)). Doubtless the Regent House would like to be consulted about the formulation of policy on these matters, but it is surely more important that it should retain the power to decide, ultimately, about these matters.

Although the Syndicate's Report as well as the comments of a number of University bodies (particularly that of the General Board) are replete with references to the delay and cumbersome nature of the Regent House's procedures, I have begun to have doubts about whether this delay actually exists. The timetable headed *Reports and Graces: 1989-90*, produced by the central bodies, reveals - to give but one example - that a matter placed on the agenda of the Financial Board and the General Board on 11 October would be considered by the Council of Senate on 16 October, a Report could be published on the 18th, a Grace submitted on 8 November and, provided no ballot was called, the Grace would be approved on 17 November. The delay occasioned by the Regent House's procedures was barely a month (from the publication of the Report (on 18 October) to the approval of the Grace (17 November)).

That does not strike me as too long a period for the Regent House to consider so weighty a matter as the suppression of University offices or the construction of a major new building. Of course, should the Report be criticized in Discussion and a ballot called resolution of the issue may take rather longer. But given that the matter is *ipso facto* controversial this delay must be considered the due tribute which celerity pays to democracy. Only those who would stifle dissent could hold otherwise.

Of course, it is true that the University does sometimes take too long to decide an issue. But this delay, it seems to me, arises primarily not from the procedures of the Regent House but from the time that the central bodies take to consult *inter se* and to consult with University bodies other than the Regent House. Once the wheels are set in motion for

a decision by the Regent House, the procedures do not seem to be 'slow and...cumbersome'.

The implicit response to the point just made of those that would see the Regent House's powers curtailed is that the wide-ranging consultation that precedes the Regent House's decision renders the Regent House's decision unnecessary. There are three points about this worth noting: first, there is a world of difference here between being consulted and being able to vote for or against a proposal. Secondly, even those who are consulted at Faculty or Departmental level about the plans of the central bodies are not generally consulted about matters concerning other Faculties in which as members of the University they may have a proper interest. And; thirdly, in many Faculties the only opportunity for the ordinary lecturer to participate in the government of the Faculty is to attend the statutory Annual Meeting which has no power to bind the Faculty Board (Statute C, I, 12) and which has been known to last as long as an hour. This is no substitute for membership of an unemasculated Regent House.

From what I have said it should be clear that I do not consider that the Wass Syndicate has made its case. There may well be various technical matters (such as temporary upgrading) that could usefully be dealt with away from the Regent House, but the Regent House has yet to hear properly motivated reasons for such changes. The uncharitable may consider that the real reason for proposing the reduction of the Regent House's powers lies not in considerations of delay and efficiency but in the fact that some would prefer that the final decision on these controversial matters should be made by the central bodies in case the Regent House makes a decision inconvenient or embarrassing to those bodies.

I would not be so uncharitable as to impute such undemocratic motives to the Syndicate, but the litmus test of any proposals that the Council of the Senate may put to the Regent House will surely be, first, whether any proposed transfer of powers away from the Regent House is narrowly defined and supported by cogent reasons; and, secondly, whether mechanisms are established to ensure that whatever body may be exercising a power, it remains properly accountable to the Regent House for the detailed exercise of that power.

In this regard it may be useful to point out that the power already exists under Statute A, III, 9 for the Regent House to delegate powers to the Council of the Senate as well as other bodies. If a good case is made by the Council of the Senate for the delegation of any particular power then the Council should put such a proposal to the Regent House in a straightforward way. Such delegation could (and should) be for a limited period of time; thus if the Regent House was dissatisfied with the way in which its delegate had exercised the relevant power the delegation would not be renewed. This would ensure that a delegate in the detailed exercise of its powers would remain responsive to opinion in the Regent House for it would know that its stewardship of the Regent House's powers would in due course have to be justified. This existing Regent House procedure seems to me to be more democratic, straightforward, and easier to achieve than the Syndicate's proposals. It is also neither cumbersome nor slow.

Finally, let me make this point. Many members of the Regent House will already be aware that an ingenious, but inevitably controversial scheme,

whereby the Law Faculty will obtain a new building on the Sidgwick Site to be built largely with moneys obtained by leasing to a College part of the Old Schools, will shortly arise for decision. Whatever our particular views on the merits of this scheme may be, we are surely all agreed that the final decision must be taken, as it will be, by the Regent House. However, if the General Board's views are accepted such decisions would in future be taken by the Council of the Senate without reference to the Regent House. I find it impossible to believe that the Regent House will vote to accept such a reduction of its powers.

Dr J. M. WHITEHEAD:

Vice-Chancellor, one of the most important statements in the Wass Syndicate Report is contained in paragraph 4.2. 'First, the University is a self-governing community of scholars. In our view this feature of the Cambridge constitution is one of its greatest strengths, and must be preserved in any constitutional reform.'

It is clear from a number of sources that this principle is under attack. Autocratic line management is the order of the day, both within and outside the Cabinet. The Jarratt Report on efficiency within universities made it clear that democratic consultation and collective decision making were, in its view, inefficient and time-consuming and should be replaced with a more managerial structure.

If we are to defend our right to democracy within the University then we have to be able to refute the charge of inefficiency in the conduct of our affairs. It is therefore important to look at how the University structures its government.

Many of the recommendations of the Wass Syndicate, if carried out, will I believe help us to conduct our affairs in a more efficient manner. The devolving of some of the decision making down from the General Board to the Councils of the Schools, for example, is in principle a good idea, and one that should be welcomed.

The point that concerns me about the Wass Syndicate's Report are the sections that deal with membership of the main Committees. If we were to follow their recommendations we are in danger of reducing the number of individuals who can be members of the main Committees, and who thus can participate in the formulation of policy for submission to the Regent House.

I do not support the proposed changes to the membership of the Council of the Senate, whereby four of its members are proposed by the General Board, because I think it is important that membership of the Council should be determined by the Regent House. I also think it is important to protect the right of ordinary members of the Regent House, those who are not Heads of Houses, Professors, or Readers, to be represented on the Council. I have two alternative proposals to make. Either that the membership of the Council remains as it is, with one modification: that class (c) membership should be reserved for those members of the Regent House who are not eligible to stand in the other two categories. Or that specific categories are removed altogether and the Regent House simply elects sixteen individuals from its members. The Wass Syndicate's suggestions for how the elections

should be carried out are an improvement on the present system and should be accepted.

The overlapping membership thought necessary between the Council and the General Board can be maintained by continuing the present practice whereby the Council nominates four members to the General Board.

I am also concerned about the overlapping membership of the Councils of the Schools and the General Board. I am not convinced that the same individuals need to be members of both bodies. The Wass Syndicate sees the two bodies as having different functions: the General Board is primarily responsible for academic policy making, subject to the approval of the Regent House, the Councils of the Schools for implementing that policy. I think that these two tasks can be carried out by different individuals. They would, it is true, have to talk to one another, but I do not believe that communication within the University is so bad that this is not possible. If members of the General Board are to act as representatives for their areas then one would hope they would talk to those whose interests they represent and not just those who are members of the Councils of the Schools. The principle of a self-governing community of scholars is surely better upheld by greater participation of individuals, not less. I would like further consideration, therefore, to be given to membership of these bodies.

Finally, Vice-Chancellor, on another matter altogether, I would like to welcome the Wass Syndicate's recommendation that membership of the Regent House should be contingent upon the holding of University or College office and not upon the holding of a Cambridge M.A. The fact that the University appoints individuals on the basis of degrees that it does not thereafter recognize but makes honest academics of them by conferring on them one of its own is a practice that reflects little credit on anyone.

Dr A. W. F. EDWARDS:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I have here the remarks which I had intended to make on this occasion before I read the 'Comments on the Report of the [Wass] Syndicate' published in the *Reporter* on 10 November. These remarks open with an expression of thanks to the Council for having followed the conventions attached to the publication and subsequent treatment of Memorials and to the establishment of *ad hoc* Syndicates, and they go on to express the hope that the Council will continue to follow the conventions by Gracing the principal recommendations of the Syndicate and will not allow themselves to be deflected from their duty thus to let the Regent House, as governing body, take the final decisions. On this point the Memorial laid particular emphasis.

Alas, I cannot now say this because of the Notice on page 135 of the 'Comments' *Reporter*. This unsigned announcement is silent as to its origin, but we may assume from its content that it is a Council Notice. It gives details of what the Council intend procedurally, and goes on to say which of the general principles advanced by the Wass Syndicate they endorse and, by implication, which they do not.

It is deplorable that the Council should have given any opinion whatsoever prior to the formal Discussion of the Report to-day, and doubly

deplorable that they should have done so without giving the signatures of those members of the Council who agree with this particular collection of Wass principles, and, if the dissenting members so wished, the signatures of those who do not. Statute K, 17 says 'Reports from the Council to the University shall be signed by the members of the Council who agree with the report'. Is it to be circumvented by the Council calling their policy pronouncements 'Notices'?

But worse is to come. The Notice states that the Council intend to submit Graces for the implementation of their selection of Wass proposals in association with another Notice 'setting out their conclusions'. So we are promised selected Graces on the fundamental questions before us without there ever having been a Report of the Council with signatures appended so that we can see who supports what.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, it seems to me that the constitution is now in a parlous state. The Council have immeasurably weakened their own position by abandoning their proper rôle, whilst in the 'Comments' *Reporter* the General and Financial Boards have revealed their entrenched positions all too clearly. As you know, my prescription for breaking the constitutional log-jam is to give the Regent House the Oxford-style powers which have been lacking all along, and without which the phrase 'self-governing community of scholars', to which the Syndicate in their Report and the Council in their Notice pay lip-service, is meaningless. But the introduction of those invaluable, sensible, democratic, and successful provisions is clearly going to take Cambridge a little while longer yet. (The Syndicate's 'Board of Scrutiny', I might add at this point, addresses a different problem. What the Regent House needs is not more power to *oppose*, but more power to *propose*.)

May I therefore suggest another way forward? There is something of a crisis developing. Crises need bold, firm, and, above all, well-supported measures. Let us therefore have a General Election. The idea seems to be widely-applauded these days. Let the sixteen elected members of the Council resign and stand for re-election. I hope that in addition a large number of members of the Regent House representing a wide variety of opinions would stand, especially members of the General and Financial Boards who actually hold the views published in their names (but not, with the notable exception of Dr Gordon Johnson, *over* their names). Let each candidate provide a short *curriculum vitae*, as Wass recommended, to be circulated just as flysheets are together with details of the time of voting. Such a new Council would have the support needed to perform its constitutional rôle properly and effectively.

It is with regret that I have to end these brief remarks with a reference to an opinion expressed by the Financial Board in their comments. At the bottom of page 144 they assert that the Memorial implied that the University is, in their words, 'an ineffective organization in serious decline'. A careful re-reading of the Memorial lends not the slightest support to this damaging assertion, which is a libel on the 194 signatories, not one of whom would for a moment have contemplated signing a paper carrying any such implication.

The danger of these opinionated unsigned

documents from the central bodies is now clear enough, and is no doubt especially keenly felt not only by Dr Johnson but by those members of the Financial Board who signed the Memorial. As the Memorial's draftsman, I should be glad to receive from you, Sir, in due course, a private assurance that, on further consideration, the Board regret having made this assertion.

Professor M. F. BURNYEAT:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I wish to say a few words about the ideology of the Wass Report. The reason I use the word 'ideology' will become clear if I quote the end of paragraph 11.3.2: 'We believe that in Arts subjects Chairmen of Faculty Boards could with advantage adopt a more prominent rôle; we believe that this is important if the teaching and related work of Arts Faculties is to be properly planned and co-ordinated'. The implication of these words is that hitherto the teaching and related work of Arts Faculties has not been properly planned and co-ordinated. No evidence is offered for this libel. It is just an assumption of the Report that planning and organizing *cannot* be done properly unless some one person is in charge. And my question is: Where does that assumption come from?

Not from reality, as I can testify from ten years' experience of an Arts Faculty in this University. It comes from the UGC, who are cited at 3.2.1 as demanding from Cambridge 'leadership, co-ordination, and strategic planning'. For 'leadership' read 'management'. The assumption that planning and organizing cannot be done properly without a leader, i.e. a manager, in charge is the third wave of the ideological invasion that has already given us appraisal and differential pay for Professors (see my remarks in *Reporter*, 1988-89, p. 864). Only this time the invasion is receiving encouragement from within our own counsels. One looks in vain through the Report for any real sense that the University *is* the community of scholars who work in it. The picture is consistently one of those scholars being managed and planned by 'leaders' at various levels of a hierarchical structure.

The kind of 'leaders' this ideology would give us is expressed most vividly at 12.5: people who have the time, opportunity, and a sufficiently long period in office 'to set their stamp' upon the University's government and to give direction to it. Paragraph 12.5 is concerned, of course, with the office of Vice-Chancellor, but the Syndicate's claim that their proposals are an integrated whole is correct on at least this point, that all the way down the proposed hierarchy—from the new Vice-Chancellor through the Chairmen of the Councils of the Schools to Heads of Departments and the more prominent Chairmen of Faculty Boards—all the way down they propose 'leaders' who will set their stamp upon the rest of us. The Vice-Chancellor is merely the most prominent such figure and the one described in the most revealing detail.

This enormously costly person is not to be elected, but chosen by the reconstituted and much more powerful Council of the Wass Report. He (I use the masculine in total confidence that it will be he) is to have a substantial enough academic record to ensure the respect of 'leading academic figures in the University' (why not all the academics? and does 'leading' academics mean the most distinguished in

their scholarship or the most powerful in the hierarchy of government?). Moreover, he is at full vigour in his fifties (12.8 and 12.9.2). In other words he is my age with an academic record no worse, and probably much better, than mine. *In that case, why does he want the job?* What does this vigorous scholar or scientist want from power? I know at once that I do not want to be led, planned, or stamped upon by him. It appears that he need not even come from within Cambridge University. The prescriptions for the new office of Vice-Chancellor are an open invitation to the kind of semi-professional managerial academic that has emerged in regrettably large numbers in recent years. This will be the kind of Vice-Chancellor who uses the phrase 'My university' as the Vice-Chancellors of certain other universities did during the recent examination strike; and he will no doubt expect 'his' Chairmen of Faculty Boards to speak in the same sense of 'My Faculty'.

The tragedy is that such possessive language will be quite justified if the Syndicate's constitutional proposals are accepted. For consider what the new Vice-Chancellor will do as he sits in his expensive new residence surrounded by his secretaries and assistants, not to mention further secretaries for the assistants. According to 12.7(a) *he* will give the University its sense of purpose; according to 12.7(b) *he* will keep a watchful eye on all the academic institutions within the University; according to 12.7(c) *he* will give the Colleges their sense of contributing to University policy (why only a 'sense' of contributing?); according to 12.7(d) *he* will make sure that all the University's administrative organs function as they should and *he* will feel personally responsible for the performance of the University's civil service; according to 12.7(e) *he* will detect any weaknesses that may develop in particular parts of the University and ensure that the competent body addresses itself to the problem. And according to 12.8 *he* will do all this for a period of up to seven years. No wonder *he* will be so busy that *he* will need a Pro-Vice-Chancellor to help with the dinner parties and a few other activities that Heads of Houses are fit for (12.10). And no wonder many of us think that, if the University really can afford an extra £350,000 a year to improve the running of its affairs, it would be better and more cost-effective to spend the lot on secretaries, to help *everyone* cope with the constantly increasing volume of paperwork.

Back now to the more prominent Faculty Chairmen recommended by the Syndicate. They are a miniature version of the big boss at the top. Like the Vice-Chancellor they are to be appointed, not elected as they are at present. They are to be appointed by the General Board on the nomination of the Faculty Board for a five-year term with the possibility of reappointment. Why so long in office? In order that they may 'influence the development' of their institutions (11.2.4.2).

This is a total negation of the way Arts Faculties work at present. As things stand, I can expect to be asked, some time in the next ten years, to serve as Chairman of my Faculty Board for a period of two years. As things stand, I would feel a moral obligation to do so. Were the appointment for five years, I would refuse. Nor would I support the nomination of anybody who was willing to serve for five years. The Syndicate plainly has no inkling of the distinction between a Head of Department and a



Chairman of a Faculty Board. It wants to inject authority and 'leadership' in a place where it does not belong. The authority in an Arts Faculty, and the proper author of its future development, is the Faculty Board itself. The Chairman is the servant of the Faculty Board and that Chairman has served best who has facilitated most effectively the execution of the decisions and plans of the *Faculty Board*. The Chairman is there to take a turn at doing the chores so that others can get on with teaching and research, and any worthy occupant of the job will want to get back to their own teaching and research as soon as possible.

In effect, in the two instances cited so far the Syndicate has designed an office which is (a) managerial rather than academic, (b) such as to attract only persons who positively want power. The same principles are applied to strengthen the rôle of the Chairmen of the Councils of the Schools, which in this Report include the Interfaculty Committee. Whatever the Syndicate may say about self-government, we face the abolition of the traditional concept of a community of scholars and the moral fabric that goes with it. This is confirmed by what the Syndicate does say about self-government, namely, that a ballot should require 100 signatures (10.4.1). (Just try collecting 100 signatures in the statutory period of seven days after a Grace is published while simultaneously carrying on with teaching and other duties.) What the Syndicate has designed is what the UGC demanded, a line management system in which Cambridge can be led, planned, and stamped upon according to Government whims. The kind of unhappy university that creates is visible throughout the land.

Mr L. BERRIDGE:

Vice-Chancellor, I speak as an elected representative of the students of this University and I would like to address one point, namely the proposal that there should be a student observer on the General Board.

This proposal has been rejected by the Syndicate in their Report in which they argue that students can make their most effective input on Faculty Boards. The General Board supports the Syndicate's conclusion.

Vice-Chancellor, I would suggest that this proposal should be reconsidered. The General Board deals firstly with matters of detail which arise within the individual Faculties. On these issues, it is indeed at a Faculty Board level that students can make their most effective contribution. However, the Board is also responsible for more long-term matters, such as determining broad questions of policy relating to the University's Academic Plan. In order to make an effective input in these areas, students will require an overview of the system which can only be gained through direct representation on the General Board.

Many senior members of this University – some rather to their own surprise – have noted the contribution made by students on a variety of committees and have found it enlightening, opening up new avenues of thought. This is the purpose of student representation – to offer a different point of view, a perspective other than that which is natural to the senior members of that committee.

Student representation has been shown to work on Faculty Boards and in the Colleges. Moreover, it has

been shown to work on the Council of Senate itself; there is no reason why it should not work on other University committees as well.

Therefore, when the Council of Senate puts forward the proposals arising from the Wass Report to be considered by the Regent House, I urge it to include as a separate question the proposal to extend student representation in the manner I have described.

This would separate the issue from the rest of the proposals arising from the Wass Report and would give students and the Colleges and Faculties which support increased student representation the opportunity to convince the members of the Regent House that we have a case.

Dr M. A. N. LOEWE:

Vice-Chancellor, in observing (11.2.4.4) that 'There are superficial attractions in adopting a Departmental structure in Arts as well as Science subjects', the Report might have added with some advantage that in some instances there are positive reasons for doing so on academic grounds.

The Board of Oriental Studies, which had been established since at least 1877, was followed by the Faculty of Oriental Languages in 1927. At that juncture its concern lay almost exclusively with the languages and cultures of the Near East, and it could still be claimed, with some justice, that a reasonable degree of unity informed its purposes. For, apart from the very few specialists in Sanskrit and Chinese, the members of the Faculty had been grounded on the same type of scholarship; as scholars or authorities in one of the languages of the Near East, they had usually been trained to command the others; their technical problems were often of a comparable nature, depending on research and investigation of the same type; and the erudite works which they produced were largely comprehensible, and sometimes indispensable, to many of their colleagues.

Owing, however, to the steady expansion and diversity of the Faculty's interests many years have passed since those conditions could apply. The change of the Faculty's title in 1956 to that of Oriental Studies symbolized the conscious decision to attend to subjects of various types that had hitherto not been deemed worthy of a place in the curriculum or the Tripos. For there had been a growing tendency for the Faculty to house specialists in areas whose linguistic and cultural developments were utterly different from those of the Near or Middle East, originating as they did in South or East Asia. Such an extension of interests has in no way diminished in subsequent years. As a result there are many matters both of an academic nature and an administrative significance where it has become increasingly more difficult, or even impossible, to expect all the members of the Faculty Board to have the right to voice an opinion, or to reach a solution that is agreeable to all. As a particular example, the annual rite of examinations, held under the aegis of a single unit, requires Examiners solemnly to sign their names to results for which they can in no sense be regarded as responsible.

Cambridge remains one of the few universities to group together subjects as diverse as the *Code of Hammurabi*, Chinese literature since 1917, The *Song of Songs*, colloquial Arabic, Indian nationalism,

and Japanese thought and religion. By doing so it gives rise to considerable misunderstanding to the ignorant, who may well assume that the subjects require comparable treatment and that the University sets out to provide it, as for a unity. In addition to the violence that is done to academic and intellectual considerations, the retention of the present structure appears to have a mundane bearing, in that it has evidently been proving inadequate for the purpose of fund raising. It is perhaps this reason that has encouraged the production of letterheads of various types, as far as I know without official authority, that imply the independent treatment of some of the subjects that are concerned.

The Faculty of Oriental Studies has been proud to pay attention to a large number of subjects; and while the Faculty is only too well aware that their maintenance is at permanent risk owing to the relatively small numbers of students who are attracted, they believe that their retention as individual entities is a necessary service to any university which prides itself on its care for the humanities. In the past, members of the Faculty have heard the cynical and humiliating argument that, by division into Departments, the Faculty would be committing suicide; for it would then be much easier, when times are hard, to eliminate small Departments one by one, as retirements might suggest. Vice-Chancellor, it would be a poor university, an ignoble university which would take note of such considerations at the price of intellectual and academic integrity.

It is to be hoped that it is not too late to consider the division of this Faculty into Departments that provide individually for its various interests. The concept of 'Oriental Studies' is obsolete; the reasons for changing a single Faculty into its several Departments are anything but superficial.

Professor R. G. G. COLEMAN:

Vice-Chancellor, I make this statement on behalf of the Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College.

The Governing Body of Emmanuel College have discussed the Wass Report. They supported the recommendation that the tenure of the Vice-Chancellorship should be four or five years. They believed that if a Head of House were elected to a full-time Vice-Chancellorship for such a tenure, he or she should move into a residence provided by the University so that the College could elect an Acting Head of House. They were evenly divided on the question of whether the Vice-Chancellorship should be confined to Heads of Houses. The Governing Body did not accept the proposal to transfer some discussions of academic policy from Tutorial Representatives to the Colleges Committee. They welcomed proposals to strengthen the Admissions Forum. A majority of the Governing Body expressed regret at the consistent tendency of the Wass Report to diminish the democratic character of University government.

Dr F. W. RATCLIFFE:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, it is a sobering thought that some three years ago the Ninth Report on certain recommendations of the Grave Report was published. If the latter had been implemented the Wass Syndicate would not have been necessary to-day. As it is, the stuttering progress of that Report through the machinery of the University's government provides

an object lesson on the shortcomings of the system and on the need for the Wass Syndicate. I welcome the Report warmly and hope that it fares better than its predecessor. I trust too that, though it could not hope to please everybody, it will be put to the Regent House as it is, its recommendations tested, and the appropriate measures taken without delay.

Having said that, I will comment on two aspects of the Report. The first relates to the proposals for the Vice-Chancellorship, on which it is agreed so much hinges. Five years seems to me to be the minimum term possible for the chief executive of so large and complex a university as Cambridge, seven barely enough. There is no evidence whatsoever that such a distinguished office would not attract outstanding candidates of the right age and much evidence to suggest that on laying it down gainful employment would follow. Indeed, the office in other large institutions seems to groom occupants for even weightier national responsibilities. As for the cost, this must be included in the block grant of those universities with long-term vice-chancellors and I see no reason why Cambridge should be excluded, if indeed the money is not already there.

My second comment relates to the proposed Consultative Committee. I regret that the Syndicate felt unable to recommend the introduction of laymen more positively into our affairs. Though highly desirable in such bodies as the Cambridge Foundation, on which so much of our well-being will depend, it seems they merit no rôle in the immediate management of the University. I think this is short-sighted, particularly in the times in which we live. Nevertheless, the Consultative Committee and the suggestion that lay-members be invited to serve on the new Finance Committee go some way to recognizing the principle and on that account they are welcome. It may be that if the Wass Syndicate recommendations are implemented the improvements in our system of government will be such that there will be a real incentive to open it up more fully to the impartial scrutiny and professional expertise which lay representation brings.

Dr K. B. PRETTY:

Vice-Chancellor, the Cambridge Senior Women's Committee has discussed the proposals of the Wass Syndicate and I speak on behalf of the Senior Women's Committee today.

In the recently published comments on the Report three bodies raised the point that I wish to elaborate, which is the effect of the Wass Syndicate's proposals on the representation of senior academic women staff on the central bodies. I quote from the *Reporter* of 10 November 1989:

*From the Faculty of Classics:* 'The proposed composition of the General Board might in practice exclude a fair representation of senior women academic staff'.

*From Lucy Cavendish College:* 'Lucy Cavendish would be concerned if the interests of women members of the University were not reflected in the membership of the central bodies.'

*From Newnham College:* 'Newnham would be concerned if the proposed changes led to even fewer of the women academic staff being members of these bodies than at present.'

The concern of these bodies is echoed by the



Senior Women's Committee. In particular, the proposed membership of the General Board might result in the absence of female membership so that women would not be represented in the most senior academic committee of the University. The Wass Syndicate's concentration on 'senior management' in the membership of both University and College committees limits women's access to those committees until we reach a stage when there are far more women at a very senior level in the University as a whole. For historical reasons there are relatively few very senior women members of the University, fewer than in other universities, and disproportionately fewer than the junior membership at Cambridge. Eventually we must assume that this will change, but in the meantime we hope that the Syndicate will take note of the effect of their proposals. If their intention is to promote 'as wide a range as possible of academic interests' then we believe that they must widen the management base to include a greater number of potential members of the central bodies.

Dr O. RACKHAM:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, the Wass Report proceeds from the assertion that the University at present does not 'conduct its business efficiently', does not 'respond swiftly and decisively to current needs', and is not 'prompt and decisive in its dealings with outside bodies'. This is assumed to be an evil to be remedied by giving the University a chain of command modelled on that of businesses and industries, at the cost of a considerable sacrifice of the University's democratic structures.

In challenging this assumption, I can do no better than to quote Professor Snodgrass's remarks at a Discussion four months ago: 'Suppose that British business had served its country as well as the British universities have, what would be our national position now? Would we still have a gigantic balance of payments deficit...?' and so on (*Reporter*, 1988-89, p. 863). His point was that all but the worst universities have done their jobs better than the majority of businesses and industries. By any standards of comparison, Cambridge has performed better than most universities. In particular, it attracts outside benefactions on a princely scale: we only have to glance through the *Reporter* for the last year - or even the last week - to see examples. In saying this, I do not want to be complacent; but merely to establish that the system isn't obviously bust and this isn't the way to fix it.

If the objective of the proposed changes were to enable the University to attract a huge endowment, releasing it from financial dependence on the government of the day, I would reluctantly agree to them. But I fear that this will not be so. To 'respond swiftly to current needs' will in practice mean acquiring yet more activities and institutes in addition to those we already have. This brings up the deeper question, How much more expansion can Cambridge stand? Does anyone seriously think that Cambridge can go on expanding through the next century as it has consistently done throughout this century?

Expansion is not a problem that worries businesses. Businesses know they are unlikely to be still alive in a century's time, and can go on expanding as long as the sun shines. But this is no way for a permanent learned body to run its affairs.

It may be unfashionable to say so, but there are limits to growth, and Cambridge is reaching them. We have already filled up much of the Old Addenbrooke's Site. To accept a benefaction means foisting a new building on the middle of an existing court. As Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology will tell you, there cannot be an infinitely expanding university in a town of finite size. We have got to the point where a government can, in effect, kill off one of its own historic institutions of learning without publicly calling in the hangman. All it has to do is to command the institution to move to Cambridge, and let Cambridge house prices do the rest.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, the problems of the University in the next century will be those of too much success, not too little. They are unlikely to be problems of money, but of space and accommodation and attracting non-academic staff. To enable us to take decisions more efficiently and therefore more hastily will remove the last remaining brake on proposals for yet further expansion. This would be immediately a bad thing for Cambridge city; it would be bad for other seats of learning; and in all but the short run it would be bad for this University too. It is a characteristic of industries that they have boom-and-bust cycles; that is why I would hate our University to become an industry.

Professor Lord LEWIS (read by Dr S.G. Fleet):

Mr Vice-Chancellor, the following comments are made on behalf of Robinson College.

In his introductory letter to the Report, Sir Douglas Wass states that the substance of what the Syndicate propose 'should stand or fall as a whole'. However, if this College were asked to accept or reject the substance of the Wass Syndicate Report as a whole, it would reject it - mainly because we view with dismay the hierarchical management model which dominates the thinking of the Syndicate. This is compatible with welcoming the idea of a devolution of certain functions from the central bodies.

We nevertheless accept that there is room for improving the way the University runs its affairs. We therefore suggest that the Council of the Senate should modify the Wass proposals in the light of the present round of comments and then put those amended proposals to the Regent House. This should be done in such a way as to make it possible for a coherent package of reforms to be voted on either as a whole, or in a few major sections. If the alternative were for the thirty-three separate recommendations in the Report to be put to the vote or amended *seriatim*, there would be a serious danger of ending up with an incoherent or inconsistent set of changes in the present system - which, whatever faults it may have, does at least work reasonably well.

We should like to make detailed comments on those aspects of the Report that seem particularly significant for the Colleges; they are in the order in which they occur in the text.

#### Section 5: Regent House

Para, 5.1.8 proposes that the Regent House should 'hand over' some of its powers to the central bodies. Two difficulties arise with this proposal. First, it is not clear precisely what powers are involved apart from the power to establish or suppress academic posts other than Professorships and Readerships. This uncertainty must be clarified before the merits of this proposal can be properly assessed.

Furthermore, it would be far better to specify the specific powers that were to be 'handed over' leaving the residue in the hands of the Regent House, rather than list the powers that would remain in the hands of the Regent House (as is done in 5.1.7).

The second difficulty is one of principle. The fact that the Regent House is the governing body of the University and that the ordinary Fellows of the Colleges (who may hold no University office) form an important part of that body is responsible for much of the unique character of Cambridge. Thus any reduction of those powers should be approached with the greatest caution; and the *sine qua non* of any reduction in the Regent House's powers must be the establishment of adequate mechanisms to ensure that the central body exercising any of the Regent House's powers is accountable to the Regent House.

In this regard we have a suggestion to make. If the case is cogently made for the 'handing over' of any of the Regent House's present powers, then those powers should not be transferred to the central bodies, but only *delegated* to the extent that the Regent House sees fit. The Regent House would reserve the right to withdraw such delegation at some future date. All such delegated decisions should appear in the *Reporter* with reasons.

Such an arrangement should obviate the need for the proposed Board of Scrutiny. The Board's only substantive power will be to recommend the rejection of the Council's Annual Report and the Allocations Report; but this power is too blunt an instrument to achieve the detailed accountability of the central bodies. What is sought is a mechanism that will ensure that the central bodies in the detailed exercise of their powers remain sensitive and responsive to Regent House opinion. Delegation, subject to regular review, will achieve that end; the Board of Scrutiny will not.

In no circumstances should the power to establish or suppress University offices be resigned by the Regent House (para. 9.3.2).

We have two detailed comments to make about the Syndicate's proposals concerning the Regent House. First, we endorse the proposal to separate membership of the Regent House from possession of a Cambridge M.A. (para. 5.3.2). Secondly, the age limit of seventy for membership of the Regent House is unacceptable (para 5.3.6). Some of the University's most distinguished and wisest members are over the age of seventy and their continued contribution to the University should be encouraged.

#### *Section 8: The Council*

The proposed method of election to the Council of the four Heads of House and four representatives of the General Board is unacceptable. The Syndicate proposes 'election' by the Regent House 'on the nomination of' the Colleges Committee or General Board. This seems a contradiction in terms (paras 8.2.2 and 8.2.3). The present method of election where each eligible person is capable of being nominated is preferable. Not only will this ensure that the relevant members of the Council are representative of the Regent House rather than the Colleges Committee or the General Board, but the appearance of a contrived election will be avoided.

We oppose strongly the proposal that the Council should delegate some of its responsibilities to an Executive Committee and that the Council should meet

less frequently (para. 8.1.6). Members of Council should do the job they were elected to do. This would be compatible with the Council's setting up standing committees for particular areas.

Once more there are some more detailed comments. First, when appointing the proposed new planning committee the Council should ensure that the Colleges are appropriately represented (para. 8.1.5), since we regard the work of this committee as of the utmost importance to the University. Secondly, the rôle of the proposed Consultative Committee needs further exposition.

#### *Section 9.3 The General Board (and related matters)*

We do not see any need to change the present position of the General Board in relation to the Council (para. 9.3.1). The Syndicate itself considers that 'in practice the General Board would enjoy virtual independence'; we consider that that should be the formal and theoretical position as well. No good case is made for the need to subordinate the General Board to the Council of Senate. On the contrary, should some of the other of the Syndicate's proposals be adopted there seems every reason to wish to protect the autonomy of the General Board.

The institution of joint teaching appointments between the University and Colleges will increase the need for good communications and a closer relationship between the University and College teaching. To this end consideration should be given to College representation on the General Board and further the election of, say, two of the members by Regent House (para. 9.3.3).

The position of NUTOs in many Faculties is unenviable. With barely any representation in the government of the Faculty they often bear much of the brunt of teaching and examining. We suggest that wherever there is a significant number of NUTOs in any Faculty, then there should be formal provision for their representation on Faculty Boards. This should ensure that Faculties are more responsive to the concerns of all their members.

#### *Section 9.4: The Financial Board*

We similarly see no need to change the existing relationship between the Financial Board and the Council.

Under the present Statute four members of the Financial Board are elected by the Colleges. This provides a powerful and effective link between the Colleges and the financial management of the University. At a time when the University is looking for increased financial support from the Colleges an arrangement of this kind should be maintained.

#### *Section 10: Conduct of Business*

We do not consider that ballots have been called by members of the Regent House frivolously in the past. Thus we see no need for any change in the number of signatories needed to request a ballot; but if the number is to be changed, it should be raised to a maximum of twenty-five, rather than 100 (para. 10.4.1).

#### *Section 11: Administrative Organization*

Further consideration is needed of the proposed changes in the rôles of the Councils of the Schools. The different Schools vary considerably in the degree of inter-relationship between the disciplines they cover and it is not necessarily appropriate for the

same approach to be adopted for them all. It is an important principle, however, that Chairmen of Schools should be elected by the Councils rather than appointed by the General Board (para. 11.2.2).

The Syndicate's Report attaches a great deal of importance to avoiding delays in decision-making. One simple but substantial step towards this end, which would involve little change in the University's system of government, would be to schedule more frequent meetings of the central bodies and the Regent House during the long vacation.

#### *Section 12: The Vice-Chancellor*

We consider that the style of Vice-Chancellor envisaged in the Report is neither necessary nor desirable. We believe strongly that the holder of the office of Vice-Chancellor should be a Head of House or someone already holding an appointment in Cambridge and that the period of appointment be compatible with this.

Four years is probably the maximum time for which it might be practicable for a Head of House to be Vice-Chancellor. Similar considerations would apply to someone else in Cambridge holding a permanent job, e.g. a Chair. On the other hand, if anyone were to be appointed as a career position they would be looking for a permanent or indefinite appointment rather than a maximum stint of seven years. This is an additional reason for retaining the office in its present form but for a longer period of appointment.

We are opposed to the idea that the Vice-Chancellor should be appointed by Council rather than elected as at present.

#### *Section 12.7(c)*

The College looks for rather more than 'a sense of contributing to University policy.'

#### *Section 13: Cost of the Proposals*

We recognize that there is under-staffing in the University administration but are against the diversion of scarce funds to support the cost of appointing an outside Vice-Chancellor and the consequent loss of academic posts.

#### *Section 14: The Colleges*

The College rejects the recommendation that the Colleges Committee, the Tutorial Representatives, and the Bursars' Committee should be given more delegated authority by the Colleges and more power to take executive action (para. 14.2). This proposal strikes directly at the Colleges' autonomy and would place powers, properly belonging to Colleges, in the hands of those committees.

More mundanely, we have some less important comments. First, the Vice-Chancellor should remain as Chairman of the Tutorial Representatives (para. 14.4.2) in order to strengthen the links between the Senior Tutors and the central bodies. We agree that links should be maintained and strengthened between the Tutorial Representatives and the central bodies (para. 14.4.4).

Secondly, the Joint Committee on the School Curriculum and Examinations and the Joint Consultative Committee on Admissions should remain separate but with overlapping membership (para. 14.5.3).

#### *Communication*

A major weakness of the situation to-day is that so few people understand the operation of the University's system of government and know what is happening outside their own Department or College, or have any feeling of wider participation. We believe that this contributes to the under-involvement of women and other groups in the government of the University. There is an urgent need for better communications. One of the duties of any new Information Office should be to produce a newsletter for circulation within the University (para. 11.5.5) both providing information about the consideration of business by the central bodies and other news of the University, and also providing a forum for discussion and correspondence. The *Reporter* should be sent to all members of the Regent House who request it without fee as the *Gazette* is in Oxford.

Dr D. S. H. W. NICOL:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, the Wass Report answered a definite demand in the University. No amount of evolutionary change could be held to be its substitute. We are all genuinely proud of the attestation of excellence in scholarship given by external bodies to the University. It should be our endeavour both to maintain this and to enhance it in a manner which would carry us through the changing circumstances of the *fin-de-siècle* and into much of the twenty-first century. This is the purpose of the Report, I take it, and our discussion of it.

My own background is that of having been Principal of a constituent college of a British university: that of Durham, and Vice-Chancellor of a new university in Sierra Leone composed of a century-old college, Fourah Bay, and one then three years old, that of Njala. Interaction at the Association of Commonwealth Universities, which owes a great deal to Cambridge graduates, was useful.

Elsewhere, Mr Vice-Chancellor, at a preliminary discussion, I had outlined my views. I shall not give a detailed comment or analysis but a broad survey of the proposals.

That of the Cambridge Vice-Chancellorship for example. The President of Clare Hall has given us a summary from his great experience, both here and elsewhere.

The recurrent cost of about £1m, as put down by the Financial Board, seems excessive, especially if we think only of the individual woman or man who might hold that position. But it is not an individual we are thinking of; we are considering an office and indeed an institution which in the hands of the right person should generate many times that amount a year.

It is important that the Vice-Chancellor should have links with a College where, by meeting its members and their guests from other Colleges, he would have informal contact and advice from the grass roots.

The triumvirate of Registry, Secretary to the Board, and Treasurer makes sense. One of them, usually the Registry, has to be the *primus inter pares* to give direct advice to the Vice-Chancellor after consultation with the other two. Otherwise the Vice-Chancellor will find himself constantly having meetings with three heads of administration of the University. The others should confer only if they have fundamental disagreements.

The rôle of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor would be that of

deputy chairman, particularly at the daily or twice-weekly administrative and co-ordination meetings which should take place at the Vice-Chancellor's office.

A Vice-Chancellor in my view cannot be seriously effective with a period of office under five years. Whatever decisions are reached by the University this year should probably be reviewed after the first Vice-Chancellor has held office for two years. He or she should not be put in a straitjacket, however benign, for five years. He should be able to report on the new scheme and how effectively it is working. It is of course important that the Vice-Chancellor should be academically excellent. This need not be equated as being compulsorily a Fellow of the Royal Society or of the British Academy as there are still many eminent academics remaining by choice outside those justly venerated bodies.

I believe the Board of Scrutiny to be essential. This does not preclude review or auditing bodies at other levels, but this Board would have an overall survey of the University, free from the pressure of committees and personalities, and will thus be able to give advice to the governing body of the University.

I would first suggest that Heads of Departments should play a more prominent rôle in decision-making at the centre. This would not lead to autocracy but a genuine recognition that a great deal of the income and reputation of the University depends on them and their ability to get on with their staff.

I continue to be worried, Mr Vice-Chancellor, at the absence of any organization which does not include members of the University who did not graduate and are yet interested in the University. But perhaps the Cambridge Society or an *alumni* association founded by the fund-raising centre might be an answer.

I am concerned also by the question of gender and age and their unequal representation on decision-making Committees. We should remember that women scholars and young people of both sexes constitute now more than three-quarters of our membership. An age limit also of seventy is now demographically out-of-date.

Finally, one should avoid the situation of being bogged down by considerations of committees, devolution, and overlapping. These can be worked out by experience drawn from the Wass Report and the amendments which will follow our discussions. We are not a city limited company trying to make more financial profits; if so, a firm of accountants or of production engineers could do an equally good job in suggesting changes, some of which might even be improvements.

I may perhaps be permitted to summarize our task as I see it as follows: an increase of the depth of knowledge through research and training; service to both national and international communities in working towards an improvement in the quality of life of their many millions; and finally an enhancement of the just and soaring aspirations of the human spirit. It is by our resolution of these that the future will ultimately judge us.

Dr J. P. DOUGHERTY:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I support the general thesis that power should be transferred from the Regent House to central bodies in the interest of good and prompt government. That is certainly preferable to the acquisition of such power by informal encroachment, as has been exercised in recent years.

The Regent House, although continuing to be the Governing Body in some sense, would thereby enjoy diminished executive, and in some detailed matters legislative, power. Section 5.1.8 proposes some mechanisms for compensating the Regent House for that loss. Here I may seem to be echoing earlier speakers; however, I would like to point out that, on an earlier occasion (*Reporter*, 1986-87, p. 288) I suggested an alternative means whereby the Regent House could safeguard what are its present powers; it was to the effect that some at least of the powers that would be vested in central bodies as a result of the change would be held by them only on a temporary basis, and would have to be renewed by the Regent House at suitable intervals. It would be analogous to the parliamentary procedure for re-enacting expiring measures. I wonder if this should again be given consideration?

I also support the proposed changes in the rôle and term of appointment for the Vice-Chancellor. I note that these have not in general been well received, and I would urge the Regent House to take very careful note of Professor Low's remarks in this connexion. Most comments on the subject concur that what we are looking for is a scholar of the highest quality. In other words, the job is to be first of all one of academic leadership even though administrative and other skills of a high order will be wanted as well. It would seem therefore that hesitation about the five- or seven-year term of appointment may originate in the feeling that a scholar of the standard we would be looking for would be unwilling to take the post for so long and then find himself without a job at all, especially if he had only a few more years left before retirement. Where the appointment is made internally, and not from the Heads of Houses, it seems to me the University ought to be prepared to treat the matter as one of secondment so that the Vice-Chancellor would be able to resume an academic position, presumably of high seniority. This would follow the precedent of officers who have taken secondment for as much as five years to serve as Chairman of a Research Council or of the UGC. It is understandable that when a Head of House is appointed on these terms the College would really expect him to resign his headship, as it would be difficult to find a 'locum' to serve as Head, and even more so if such a person would not have available the Master's Lodge. In that case, and in the case of a Vice-Chancellor appointed from outside, it seems to me that if the University is expecting a first-class scholar, it ought to be able to offer the retired Vice-Chancellor an unestablished post at the professorial level in the Faculty of his choice for him to occupy as Vice-Chancellor Emeritus until he reaches the age of retirement. Such a post would be similar to a Royal Society Professorship. As this would not happen for every election, and as the number of years such an unestablished post would be occupied would not be very large, it seems to me a reasonable price to pay in order to attract the right person. As regards the question of accommodation for a Vice-Chancellor who is not a Head of House, I share the Financial Board's concern about the likely cost if the University has to acquire a site and build a residence from scratch. But is this in fact necessary? Surely the remuneration package for the Vice-Chancellor could be such as to make the post attractive even if he is to live privately,

as indeed many Vice-Chancellors might well prefer to do. As regards overnight accommodation for guests, which appears to have been one of the questions in the minds of the Financial Board, I suggest that the University should build a suite containing a small number of University guest rooms of suitable standard. Perhaps this could be done as part of a modest development programme at Madingley Hall, providing suitably gracious surroundings, and where there would be already available facilities for catering.

As to the Financial Board, I fear, sir, that the Syndicate goes too far in the direction of down-grading that Board's status so as to become a sub-committee of the Council. It is true that the Financial Board's rôle in resource allocation is largely advisory rather than executive. However the actual allocation of resources is made by *both* the Council and General Board and so far as recurrent expenditure is concerned, it is the General Board that allocates some three-quarters of the money. Of the Financial Board's other jobs, the overseeing of property is of course a major one, but we should not underestimate the assistance and advice that the Board gives in such matters as pension schemes, VAT, purchasing, and many others. I would see the Financial Board, therefore, as continuing to be an independent body, and believe that it should be associated with the General Board at least as much as with the Council. The suggestion that the number of College Bursars on the Financial Board should be reduced may have been started, at least in part, by myself (*Reporter*, 1986-87, p. 289). However I only suggested that the number should be reduced from four to two, on account of the demise of University taxation. It would continue to be important for the University and Colleges to co-operate on financial matters, and this will be even more the case if the UFC introduces the system of bidding or offering (which ever is the right word) for students to be funded at set levels for various types of courses. The funding per student presumably includes the sums payable to the University and to the College, and the distinction between those will be regarded as merely an internal management problem for us. This being so, I think that my suggestion made at that time, namely that there should be two Bursars and two members of the General Board on the Financial Board, is still the correct one. I note that the Financial Board's own comments on the Wass Report refer to the need for cross membership with the General Board. To be more specific, I think the correct membership for the Financial Board is to have two members of the Council, two members of the General Board, two Heads of Departments or Faculties, two Bursars, and two jokers.

Mention is made in the comments of the Financial Board's rôle in the publication of College accounts. May I say in passing that it seems to me that Accounts I to VI give an acceptable form of presentation for the revenue accounts of a College in the various departments, and the specimen Trust Fund account is also suitable. It is recognized that where there are numerous small Trust Funds it is reasonable to summarize them. However Accounts VIIa, VIIb, and the Cash Reconciliation Statement might as well be omitted, along with the outdated reference to the Minister of Agriculture (*Statutes*, Schedule D). These accounts give no real impression of the capital position of the College, and the figures they contain usually look more like figures from toytown.

May I finally reiterate a point I raised at the informal discussion of this Report last June. It is that our rule book should contain specific provisions for the establishment of Trusts at arm's length from the University, and of Limited Companies. This has been a subject of criticism in the past.

Mr M. J. S. DIXON:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I have been asked to read the following statements on behalf of the Trade Unions that represent assistant staff in the University:

*Association of Cambridge University Assistants*

ACUA's main submission to the Syndicate included the need for observer status on the Council for representatives of the assistant staff. The Syndicate proposal, that the Council would concentrate on major questions of University policy and delegate more routine matters, gives our submission more credibility. University assistant staff, around 2,500 in number, give unquestionable support to the ideals, efficiency, and stature of this University. They help teach and mould the students. Why is it, then, that students get observer status, and assistants not? No reason has been given for not recommending the granting of this right, and we believe the Syndicate would be hard pressed to do so. Through this Discussion we press the point again, noting that the Assistant Staff Committee's submission includes the same proposal.

Section 11.2 of the Report on the *management of resources* seems to be the section which has most relevance to assistant staff. Heads of Departments and Chairmen of Faculty Boards, it is proposed, are to be given more authority over establishment of assistant staffs and thus more powers to adjust and alter establishments, gradings, etc. Heads of Departments and Chairmen of Faculty Boards rely heavily, or should rely heavily, on the advice they are given by their Superintendents, Departmental Secretaries, Principal Assistants etc.; indeed they may even pass the responsibility on to them. This emphasizes the need for sound appointments, of both academics and assistants, and for good career structures for both academics and assistants. Having been appointed, they still require management training. If proper attention is given to departmental management, then ACUA raise no objection to this proposal.

*Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union:*

The present system of University government by the Regent House was empowered in 1926, some sixty-three years ago, and the Wass Report, quite rightly, has tried to take account of this passage of time. We commend many of the practical suggestions to ensure both greater efficiency and greater accountability, but are saddened to see that no attempt, either by function or contribution, has been made to also bring the relationship with assistant staff forward the complete sixty-three years.

The important rôle that Cambridge University has to play in educating the citizens of Britain is well known and well recognized. Its rôle as a major and enlightened employer still needs a little enhancing and the Wass Report makes no progress on this matter.

MSF believe that *glasnost* should not be confined to hypothetical future members of the EC from the

Eastern Bloc but also to *all* British employees. Towards this aim the twelve Labour Ministers of the EC have met and drawn up a draft Social Charter. On 8 and 9 December all the Heads of State will be holding a Summit to discuss the twenty-six articles of this document as well as a series of directives for implementing the general principles of the Charter. Submissions have also been made from many Trade Unions, including our own.

We recommend that the restructuring should take on board the ideals soon to be embedded in law, and, in particular, those elements of the Social Charter concerning industrial relations and the treating of *every* employee as an equal partner.

The areas MSF specifically wishes to negotiate on are those of employee participation, co-determination, training, and retraining rights.

#### *National Association of Local Government Officers*

Members were surprised and disappointed to find that their written submission to the Syndicate requesting that University assistant staff be given a direct say in the decision-making processes of the University had been ignored. The Branch wish to emphasize the invaluable contribution assistant staff make to the teaching, research, and other academic activities of the University, and to stress that they expect recognition of this contribution to be reflected in the composition of the Council.

With the proposed devolution of power to Faculty Boards and Heads of Department, it is essential that grading, pay, and conditions of service continue to be applied uniformly throughout the University, and that there are tight safeguards against any individual Head of Department deviating from agreed policy in this respect.

Professor J.H. BAKER (read by Mr H.J. Easterling):

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I shall be involved, as a member of the Council, in discussing the fundamental issues raised by the Report, but I would be grateful for the opportunity to comment on one detail of the proposals which, although noticed adversely in some of the Colleges' comments, and favourably by Dr Whitehead in her remarks this afternoon, has not received much of an airing. This is the proposal in para. 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 concerning membership of the Regent House and the status of Master of Arts. I understand that the Syndics may not have intended their proposals necessarily to include the repeal of Statute B, III, 6 or the regulations concerning M.A. Status, and I hope that is the case. As someone who came to Cambridge from another university, I greatly appreciated the grant of senior membership in that form; to take it away would be deeply divisive.

If, however, these arrangements are to continue in force on an optional basis, what is the purpose of the proposal itself? It is not, apparently, that the Regent House should cease to be a sub-set of the Senate, because it is proposed that membership of the Regent House should carry automatic membership of the Senate. There is therefore not much overall simplification involved in the proposal, merely a rearrangement in which the need to obtain M.A. Status is dropped. (I might add in parenthesis, in case there are any misapprehensions on the point, that the M.A. Degree is not at present required for membership of the Senate or the Regent House: under Statute A, II, 3(e) a University officer is a member of the Senate if he has M.A. Status.) Presumably most University officers even

under a voluntary system would continue to seek the M.A. Degree or M.A. Status. The proposal is therefore, in effect, to permit opting-out. It is to enable University officers to be members of the University's governing body while opting out of what we generally (if not very precisely) call senior membership. Why should this be a matter of concern in connexion with the government of the University? The only reason advanced by the Syndicate (para. 5.3.2) is that 'the present practice of granting the Cambridge M.A. Degree lends colour to the belief that Cambridge does not "recognize" the degrees of other universities'. All we are concerned with, then, is a colourable belief; and, since no Cambridge degree is in truth required for membership of the Regent House, the belief is clearly false.

It might not be necessary to say all this were it not that there clearly is some notion afoot that the University does not 'recognize' the degrees of other universities. It surfaces in the comments of the Faculty Board of Earth Sciences and Geography, and in Dr Whitehead's remarks, which seem to me to proceed from misapprehensions. Recognition can obviously take many forms, few if any of which have any bearing on the government of the University. If it means that degrees of other universities should be treated exactly as if they were Cambridge degrees, that is what we call 'incorporation'; and it is impracticable to extend that system because of the want of reciprocity. No other universities, besides Oxford and Trinity College, Dublin, recognize *our* degrees in that fullest sense. It would also be impracticable nowadays, in view of the lack of any clear international equivalence: for example, I know of a Mediterranean university where the LL.D. is the first degree in law. According to Earth Sciences, recognition means including all degrees in all official University lists. That is something which might be considered as a separate issue; it is not inherently objectionable, except in so far as the Registry should not be required to publish information not within his official knowledge, but its usefulness would obviously have to be weighed against the increased cost and size of our lists and the substantial research required. It nevertheless has nothing to do with the government of the University. For others, I believe 'recognition' means wearing the dress of other universities on academical occasions; such people clearly regard academical costume as a kind of fancy dress rather than as a regular habit which emphasizes membership of the same institution and a submission to its discipline. Again, however, that is an issue outside the terms of the present Report.

It seems to me that there are only two aspects of recognition which really matter and which might be expected in any university: (a) that the title of Doctor be recognized as having universal currency, and (b) that graduates of other universities who become officers of this University be treated as favourably as our own graduates. There seems to be no problem with (a): at any rate, in all the thirteen years before I took a Cambridge doctorate, I cannot remember being denied the courtesy-title of Doctor, even in formal letters from the Old Schools. As to (b), we achieve this equality by the simple device of conferring the M.A. Degree or M.A. Status on all officers. In other words, we already do more than most other universities in terms of recognition. It is odd that this is the very device which seems under threat.

I suggest that the present system, whereby an officer is required to become a member of the University by matriculating, thereby acquiring M.A. Status, or by



taking the M.A. Degree under Statute B, III, 6, is necessary and beneficial to our government. How can one properly participate in governing a body of which one refuses to become a member? I would therefore be grateful, Mr Vice-Chancellor, if the merits of this proposal could be reconsidered.

Mr T.R. VOLK (read by Mr M.M. Johnson):

Vice-Chancellor, I am prevented from attending the Senate-House today by a commitment to lecture abroad undertaken before the date of the Discussion had been announced. Since I shall not have had the advantage of hearing the contributions of earlier speakers, I propose to confine myself to commenting on the three areas of concern which I addressed at the informal discussion held in the University Centre on 6 June. If thereby I repeat points already made this afternoon or I fail to respond to alternative opinions in the same areas, I ask pardon of yourself and of members of the Senate.

I preface my remarks with a declaration of interests. A graduate of this University, I have since 1972 served as a full-time officer of the Fitzwilliam Museum. This is, to anticipate what is I hope a non-controversial recommendation of the Wass Syndicate, an 'institution under the supervision of the Council' and is managed by a Syndicate wholly appointed from without the Museum staff. The Museum constitutes one of the smaller departments of the University: its present establishment comprises, in addition to a Director, twelve graduate staff on the main site in Trumpington Street, with a further three officers at the Hamilton Kerr Institute at Whittlesford. Apart from the Director and one other officer, none of the staff holds a College Fellowship. Membership of the Regent House therefore offers the one opportunity an officer of the Museum ordinarily has to influence the affairs of the University. I do however recognize that as an invited lecturer in the Faculty of Classics since 1976-77 I myself am able on occasion to contribute to discussions within that body.

I have three points to make.

The first concerns the composition of the Council under the proposals set out in the Report of the Wass Syndicate. The Syndicate itself, as the present Council and the General Board in their comments published in the *Reporter* of 10 November 1989, subscribe to the principle that the University should be a self-governing community of scholars. This principle, which I endorse, reasonably finds its ultimate expression in the composition of the committee that is conceived as the principal executive and policy-making body of the University, namely the Council.

The Wass Syndicate recognizes that the extra duties and responsibilities which it recommends should be exercised by the Council will enhance that body's power at the expense of the collective will of the University as represented by the Regent House. Indeed, it is the purpose of the Syndicate that this should be so. As a check on the new Council, we are however offered an improved system of accountability in the form of an Annual Report and the establishment of a Board of Scrutiny. Without considering the merits of either proposal, this seems to me to get matters the wrong way round. The University's exercise of self-government ought not to be by way of inquest or *post-mortem* on what has been done in its name, but by ensuring that its officers are fully represented on the Council.

Significantly, as it appeared to me, Sir Douglas referred in the informal discussion of the Syndicate's

Report to the proposed Board of Scrutiny, rather than the Council itself, as the body 'representative' of University opinion. He is perhaps brought to this view by the Syndicate's own proposals for a Council of more restrictive composition than heretofore. On the Syndicate's recommendations, the new Council will comprise sixteen ordinary members, half of whose number are to be nominated by sectional interests (albeit subject to ratification by the Regent House) and half directly elected by the Regent House. This would replace the present system of sixteen ordinary members directly elected by the Regent House in three classes. Note that under the present regulations, while a contest in class (a) may be exceptional, it is surely the norm in the other two classes. The ability of the individual member of the Regent House to participate in the government of the University is thus diminished, rather than enhanced, on the Syndicate's proposals.

If the Council is minded to accept the recommendation that membership in class (b) should be suppressed in favour of four candidates nominated by the General Board, the representative nature of the new body will need, in my view, to be preserved by increasing the number of places available for election in class (c) to either ten or twelve. (One factor in determining the eventual size of this category might be whether Heads of House should continue to be eligible for election in both classes (a) and (c).) The proper concern expressed by the Wass Syndicate that the proposed Board of Scrutiny should fulfil its representative function by reserving two places to members of the Regent House of less than ten years' standing might be transferred, by regulation or convention, to the election of members of the Council in class (c). A Council thus constituted might well remove the need for a Board of Scrutiny at all, thereby resolving some of the difficulties envisaged in the informal discussion and in comments published in the *Reporter* of 10 November 1989.

The objection raised in June to an increase in the membership of the Council was that sixteen ordinary members constituted the optimal figure. But as the Syndicate also recommended that the Council meet less frequently and that much of its business be divided between an Executive Committee and a Financial Committee, a body of eighteen or twenty persons does not appear to me unnecessarily cumbersome.

My second concern derives from the various recommendations made by the Wass Syndicate to increase the number of members of the Regent House required to nominate candidates for election to the Council, to request Discussions, and to call for ballots on Graces.

The need to make these changes is nowhere argued; and the proposals sit uncomfortably with the principle of self-government. The number of candidates nominated for election to the Council in class (c) does not approach that which in the 1970s often afflicted parliamentary by-elections. Or does the Syndicate believe that more candidates than vacancies is a bad thing? And how often is the right to request a Discussion on a particular topic exercised?

But my greatest concern is the proposal that the number of signatures required for a ballot should be increased from ten to 100. Again, the Syndicate provides no evidence of the frivolity of past requests. But not only are we offered no justification for the recommendation, but it seems to me that the Syndicate has not understood the full value of the right to request a ballot. This surely depends as much on the idea -

perhaps the word is 'threat' – than in the practice. Recent experience in the Museum has been that the possibility of a ballot helps to concentrate the mind of the central bodies. That is not a criticism, but recognizes that those bodies will not always be successful in sensing the needs of particular groups, particularly one as small as that with twelve or fifteen members. I am not claiming the power of veto for such a group, but its present ability to call for a ballot ensures that its views are taken seriously. Nor should it be forgotten that Graces will continue to be proposed by the Council, the scope of which may be limited to a number of officers considerably fewer than the hundred members of the Regent House whose interest it would be needed to attract merely to get the matter raised, should the Syndicate's recommendation be adopted. This concern is, I know, shared by other members of the University; but I do not join those who propose a compromise figure of, say, twenty-five signatures. As no case has been made for a change, and any increase is likely to work against the interests of any minority group, let us leave well alone.

My third point is more local. It concerns the functioning of the Fitzwilliam Museum in the spirit of self-government and in accordance with the suggested devolution of management control.

The General Board in its comments on the Wass Syndicate's proposals (para. 14) endorses the principle that members of the Regent House established in institutions under the Board's supervision should have an effective means of involvement in the process of policy formulation. I trust that the Council in considering the implication of the Wass Syndicate's Report will be no less concerned to involve in local decision-making the officers of institutions under its supervision.

In reply to my enquiry at the June discussion, Dr Johnson indicated that it had been in the Syndicate's mind that the sort of devolution proposed for General Board institutions should be extended to those under the Council; and that in the case of the Fitzwilliam the competent body would be the Syndics of the Museum. I shall not rehearse in detail points made by myself, and by others, in the Discussion of the Report of the Warnock Committee (29 November 1988), but it seems to me that a precondition of any further devolution of authority to the Museum should be a revision of Syndicate membership to bring it in line with the University Library Syndicate, the Computer Syndicate, the Board of Extra-mural Studies, and the proposed Institute of Management Studies, by the inclusion of a significant number of Syndics elected from and by the Museum's own graduate staff.

The revision of Syndicate membership, together with other suggestions made in last November's Discussion, would, in my view, not only meet the Wass Syndicate's concern to maintain the self-governing character of the University, but would achieve, too, its purpose in improving the efficiency of the Museum, both by enhancing staff motivation and by reinforcing the professional contribution to be made to the deliberations of the Fitzwilliam Museum Syndicate.

Mr J. F. Q. SWITZER:

Vice-Chancellor, may I refer to remarks made earlier by Dr Edwards on the comments on the Wass Report by the Financial Board, namely the passage at the foot of p. 144 of the *Reporter* of 10 November referring to 'the notion of an ineffective organization in serious decline as the Memorial implied'? As a member of

the Financial Board and also as a signatory of the Memorial, I do feel that perhaps Dr Edwards is unnecessarily sensitive about those words. He may not recognize the rather heavy-handed irony of the drafting committee, but if he looks at the words of the Memorial itself I think there are terms there, such as the existing structure which 'no longer fully satisfies the requirement for rapid, firm, and effective decision making', there is a 'lack of efficient procedures for policy making', and there is 'the absence of satisfactory means by which the Regent House can fulfil the normal rôle', and so on; I think perhaps he should not attach undue importance to that last line that I quoted from the Financial Board's comments.

I would like to refer to one issue which I regard as being absolutely central which does not appear to have been properly covered. As one who signed the Memorial I have been disappointed on a number of occasions to hear people who at least regarded themselves as educated say of the Memorialists how stupid they were; that on the one hand they wanted efficiency and then they wanted the Regent House to have more power, making these remarks as if these two things were incompatible. Of course they are *not* incompatible in the least, and indeed they are the very *heart* of the matter. The very starting point therefore is the nature of the University's democratic constitution and I very much regret that the Syndicate's discussions of this were not included in the Report. There are two kinds of democracy, are there not?, representative democracy and participatory democracy. And while I am devoted to the first as the British system of parliamentary government, clearly ours is the second form; it is participatory democracy. We are, in those words that have been quoted a number of times this afternoon, a self-governing community of scholars, and I am bound to say in passing that in the informal discussion at the University Centre I thought there was some considerable confusion on the part of members of the Syndicate about the difference between these two forms. A number of parallels were drawn with Westminster and Whitehall and parliamentary procedure which seemed to me to be pretty irrelevant.

It is absolutely essential that the Regent House remains the governing body. It *is* the governing body and I therefore want to endorse as strongly as I can Dr Edwards's suggestion that we must include in our constitution the provision as recommended by the Franks Report of the Commission of Enquiry for Oxford in 1966. In paragraph 532 there are these words, and they are so important I think that, although Dr Edwards referred to them, I would like actually to read them:

'We think that Congregation as the supreme source of authority must retain the right to express its opinion upon any subject of general interest in the running of the University. Moreover, as we have indicated several times in our argument, this power to move a resolution from the floor is the sanction to inhibit abuse of power in a system of delegated responsibility. We recommend that the moving of a resolution from the floor on matters concerning the policy or the administration of the University should be continued.'

and that is absolutely fundamental. It is no good merely having a power to dismiss the Council; that is entirely negative, and I think Dr Edwards's point about the Regent House having the power to make positive proposals is fundamental.

In the context of this question of our government may I refer briefly to the late Professor J. W. Linnett who was Vice-Chancellor of the University, 1973-75. Those of you who are interested in his views could do no better than to look at the *Reporter* of 8 October 1975 at his address on retiring as Vice-Chancellor and, watching some of the paper of the statements being read out this afternoon and listening to other people reading statements on behalf of people who were not here, you will find his remarks on Discussions perhaps rather interesting. But he not only saw the problems facing our constitution but he actually, as you Vice-Chancellor will know, brought about some relatively minor changes in the rôle of the Vice-Chancellor; he provided you with an office, he even provided you with some staff, and a run-in period sitting on the central bodies, and so on. But his most important idea was to extend the term of office of the Vice-Chancellor, particularly so that he could be more effective, not only here but in influencing the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. And after his tragic death, only five weeks after he gave up being Vice-Chancellor, this and other proposals were quietly forgotten. His memoranda and the letters which he obtained for the Council of the Senate from other Vice-Chancellors are extremely interesting, and I was astonished to discover only last week that they were never circulated to the Syndicate. I would like to pay tribute to his memory. It is right that it should be recorded in the report of this Discussion, and the fact is that had he lived, or indeed even if he had died but had we been as wise as he was, we would have evolved a system of governing the University which could well have made the Memorial of Guy Fawkes' Day 1987 quite unnecessary.

Professor T. J. SMILEY:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I should like to address just one question: how to reconcile efficiency and democracy. The first thing is to dispose of the premise that the conflict is 'inevitable' and that the Regent House is inherently 'slow and cumbersome'. The Report presents this not as a premise but as a conclusion, supported by the illustrations in section 5. I shall take one of these (the preparation of the Academic Plan), and show that it does nothing of the sort. I could go through the others with the same result, but it would be pointless. For at the June discussion the Syndicate conceded that they had not actually scrutinized a single one of their supposed illustrations.

If they did not look at the evidence, and if the evidence does not support their conclusion, where does the idea come from? I think it comes from a particular ideology of management. One might call it a civil service view of British industry. Its features are tidiness, hierarchy, exclusiveness, and secrecy. The real, though unspoken, objection to the Regent House is not that it is slow but that it is public.

If we are to look to industry for a management philosophy, there is a rival one, based on consensus. Granted, there is a *prima facie* tension between consensus and effectiveness. But, as Japanese if not British industry has discovered, there is an answer to this. It lies in unremitting attention to detail—the accumulation of small-scale efficiencies and piecemeal improvement of techniques at every stage of the process—and above all in attention to speed and to the question of advance warning. This is not easy to achieve. It is much easier to devise grandiose con-

stitutional blueprints than to change a managerial culture or to tackle the nuts and bolts of administration.

Let me take the nuts and bolts first. Of course the Report makes some suggestions about administration, but they are mostly at a fairly high level. As they come closer to earth they become sparser, more tentative and less specific and, in crucial contrast to the constitutional changes, there is no proposal for following them through into practice. So I hope, Mr Vice-Chancellor, that the Council will look into the matter for themselves and will actually do something about it. (We do after all have a Professor of Management and a Professor of Industrial Relations.) There is certainly no shortage of material to work on. To begin with, there are the cases mentioned in the Report. The Academic Plan, for example, included the closure of the Department of Applied Biology. This proposal took eighteen months to get from the School of the Biological Sciences to the Council of the Senate, and five more months for the General Board merely to reply to the subsequent Discussion. You would think that anyone seriously concerned with speedy decision-making would want to look into this, instead of blaming unspecified 'Regent House procedures'. And then there are all the case studies and the horror stories to be found in the evidence submitted to the Syndicate. My own eye was caught by memoranda 9, 27, 33, 35, 50, 57, 77, 98, and 104; but there is a great deal else besides. If we could put these sorts of things right we would not need a revolutionary change in our government. And if we do not put them right the change will not do any good anyway.

What I mean by 'changing a management culture' is best illustrated by taking an actual example. The move of the Royal Greenwich Observatory is a good one for three reasons. It is the one case which the Syndicate claimed to have examined in detail. It also involves our response to an outside body. And it may perhaps be the sort of thing the Memorialists had in mind when they referred to 'uncertainty about the source of authority in the University, the undesirable proliferation of unofficial committees not sanctioned by the Regent House, and the taking of important decisions, sometimes involving very large sums of money, which have neither been approved by the Regent House nor even reported to it'.

Needless to say, it is not the merits of the decision but the procedures that are at issue, and I should also say that it took place before the time of the present Secretary General. Working out what happened has been rather like reconstructing the movements of some powerful nocturnal animal on the basis of occasional sightings in scattered villages, but the affair seems to have had three salient features.

(1) The bid to the SERC was made without the knowledge of any of the central bodies. The General Board were told that this was because of pressure of time. The Financial Board and the Council were not told anything at all for over eighteen months, and their members agree on how the matter was then put to them: 'We were not asked whether or where, but were given the site plan'; 'We were told it had got so far that it could not possibly be reconsidered'.

(2) The General Board were initially given to understand that the bid would have no financial implications for the University. But, as the Council reported after the event (*Reporter*, 1986-87, p. 796), it was clear from the outset that other universities had offered sites at no charge, and that a competitive bid

would have to be made. And so the Financial Board were told that *in view of the assurances which had been given to attract the RGO to Cambridge*, the site would have to be leased for nothing. (They did not learn, and neither have I, what these assurances were, or who gave them, or when.) Then there was the cost of creating the infrastructure for access and utilities, plus the cost of moving the existing buildings. And as the sums involved moved up towards the million pound mark, the SERC drove a hard bargain – as well they might, since the University were by now caught on a hook of their own devising. In the end the central bodies counted themselves lucky to get off as lightly as they did.

(3) At no time was any attempt made to report to the one body with the authority to approve the move, the Regent House. And when, after two years, the matter did finally come to them, and reasonable queries were raised, the Council could only repeat what they too had been told: 'Any attempt to reopen negotiations now would damage the University's reputation'.

The Syndicate's response to this is twofold. First, sidetrack the central bodies: reduce the Financial Board to a Committee of the Council, and reduce the Council to meeting twice a term. True, they *call* it 'the supreme policy-making authority'. Call it the Cabinet if you like, but the real policy-making power will lie with the academic equivalents of Sir Alan Walters: that 'informal group of senior members with whom the Vice-Chancellor can share some of the burdens of office', as Sir Humphrey's – Sir Douglas's – Report so delicately puts it in section 12.10. Second, they emasculate the Regent House. They take away its say over University lands and anything else that might get in the way of the new régime, and turn it into a shareholders' annual meeting, with its Board of Scrutiny futilely recriminating after the event.

An alternative response would draw a very different pair of morals. First and incidentally, outside bodies like the SERC or the UFC are notoriously capricious, incompetent (always demanding answers by yesterday), and much given to moving the goalposts in the middle of the game. Promptness and decisiveness are not unqualified virtues when responding to such people. Indeed promptness and decisiveness are not the only virtues. As your predecessor pointed out in his evidence to the Syndicate, those who criticize our system 'sometimes fail to be aware how much less controversial is the final decision as a consequence, and how much more effective is its implementation'.

The second and principal point directly addresses the question of management culture. Why were the central bodies not drawn in from the outset? Had this been done the Financial Board might have been able to explain to the General Board the difference between promptness and recklessness. Why is there this tendency, which everyone who has ever served on the central bodies will confirm, to keep them in the dark until matters have been pre-packaged and half-decided?

And why did the central bodies keep the Regent House in the dark? After all, the matter was hardly a secret. If the Regent House had been consulted in 1985, not 1987, told what was in the wind, warned of the sort of commitment involved, told of the positive case for the move, and asked to approve it in principle, my bet is that they would have done so without a vote, or at least by a large majority. Even if they had not approved, a fear that your colleagues will not agree with you is hardly a reputable reason for declining to consult them.

The same point crops up in the earlier example I mentioned of the preparation of the Academic Plan. The Syndicate said that 'pressure of time' prevented the Regent House from being consulted. But in fact the Plan took thirteen months to prepare, and what the Council announced at the beginning was: 'the central bodies will prepare the plan'. In short, what was lacking was not the *time* to consult the Regent House but the *will* to do so.

The University places a great deal of trust in its central bodies; but trust is a two-way affair. (I apologize for mentioning the word 'trust', Vice-Chancellor, since it does not actually occur in the Report.) The Regent House needs to be seen, not as an adversary who may block developments that have been worked out by competent authorities over many months or years, but as a partner to be informed and consulted as early and as often as possible. What we need, in other words, is fewer white papers and more green papers, or more white papers with green edges. But none of this requires stripping the Regent House of any of its significant powers.

MR W.P. KIRKMAN:

I am speaking as Secretary of the Careers Service Syndicate, and I want to address just one point of detail. In their Report, the Wass Syndicate recognize the value of the contribution of non-resident members of syndicates and boards, and in section 8.2.8 they refer specifically to the Careers Service Syndicate as one of the bodies whose membership includes outside members. This is the background to their proposal for a Consultative Committee consisting of eight persons 'not currently members of the Regent House', together with the Vice-Chancellor and two members of the Council.

The Careers Service Syndicate has found over the years that the contribution of 'outside' members is substantial. We have been able to attract people of seniority and wide experience who have been ready to give their time and expertise to the University by this form of service. We would, therefore, strongly support the proposal for a Consultative Committee. It should be possible to attract to it people of the same kind of calibre and experience as those who are prepared to serve on our Syndicate, and the University would undoubtedly benefit from this.