

IN DEFENCE OF THE GEORGE REPORT

Three months of grueling work. Night and day work. The sort of work which only a highly-trained academic with a disciplined intellectual ability can do.

And last week, the results of their labour were published. R. E. Aldous, J. M. Beck, and R. E. George are intellectuals of unquestionable merit at the worst of times. But under the strain of producing a report which would affect the entire university, today and in the future, they went beyond what might normally be expected of a single man, no matter how great. They produced what only a highly dedicated team of astute and original minds could create: a blueprint for tomorrow.

One of the problems resulting from this type of work is that the "average man", the "man on the street", finds the intellectuals work almost indecipherable. The subtle turns of phrase, the intricate references to great thinkers, the wealth of scholarly information which is taken for granted: all the devices well known to academics escape the layman's ear.

It is to this problem, in an attempt to avoid misunderstandings, that we now turn our attention. We essentially attempt to translate, and explain. We hope that when we're finished, everyone at the university will be able to understand and act upon a report which might otherwise wisp unperceived above their heads.

How best to accomplish so grandiose a task, when one is dealing with an entity like the monumental GEORGE REPORT? After reviewing similar efforts dedicated to other great documents, we have decided that only one possibility is left open to us: A paragraph by paragraph dissection, followed by a general explanation.

So bear with us. At times it may seem arduous, even tedious. But the rigour of intellectuals demands such a procedure, and who are we to deny it to them? For mass uneducated audience, such a technique would be impossible. But university students, eager to understand the processes of Intellectual Work, will not only be able to understand the report, but the techniques which will become a profession for many of us.

Terms of Reference

On June 16, 1969, we were charged by the Senate Council, on behalf of the Senate, to:

Examine the Functions and Responsibilities of Deans of Faculties and Chairmen or Heads of Departments.

This paragraph is essentially understandable to almost every one. There is therefore, probably little to be explained about it.

The words "power" and "authority" did not appear in our terms of reference. For this we were glad because, in our view, a person must have just enough power and authority to carry out his functions and discharge his responsibilities. He does not have power or authority simply as a badge or perquisite of office; he is given it merely so that he can do what he is called upon to do.

Of course, intellectuals don't have to define words like "power" and "authority". But for the rest of us, let's go into it a little more deeply. "Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability exists." "Authority" is the exercise of "imperative control", which is "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." (The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, by Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, Editor).

Complicated? Not really. All it means is that authority is the ability to influence certain given people about certain given things - things that people have agreed on before hand, usually. Power on the other hand, is not restricted to particular people, or the specific issues. A person in authority can only tell certain people to do certain things; a person in power can tell anybody to do anything.

In this light, the report takes on more meaning: people in the administration of the university must have not only authority, but power. In other words, a Dean must be able, for example, to tell professors and students to do particular things, but presumably must also be able to tell anybody else to do anything else which he deems necessary to do his job. A world thought of in this way is so much more efficient than one which is not.

The next sentence says that power and authority are not a "badge of office", but things which are merely given (to a university functionary) so that he can do what he is required to do. In other words, there's nothing pushy about deans and department heads. They aren't given power to make them feel "big", as some would say. It is really very reasonable: they are given power so that they can do what they are called upon to do.

But two words in this sentence escape the neophyte's eye: "given" and "called upon". An analytic mind knows that "given" implies that someone "gives", just as "called upon" implies that someone "calls". An exciting problem is posed: who gives, and who calls? An expert sees these words as a titillation including him to find out about what's ahead and a lure to read on.

Since the Faculty of Graduate Studies is not a faculty in the usual sense, we have chosen to confine our attention to undergraduate and professional faculties.

Note that the Faculty of Graduate Studies is not a faculty in the usual sense. Presumably this means that it is either not a faculty at all, or else a faculty in an unusual sense. Since the fact that it is called a faculty seems to rule out the possibility that it is not a faculty at all, we are left with the conclusion that it is a faculty in an unusual sense. What is the sense of such a faculty, one might then ask? Presumably another precursor of what is still to come.

Structure of University Government of Dalhousie

Since Deans and Department Chairmen or Heads operate within the broader structure of university government, they cannot be considered in isolation. Something must therefore first be said about the general system of government at Dalhousie.

As concise and illuminating as this well-put paragraphs, it requires little explanation.

There are two distinct branches of government:

Of course, in normal government structures, we academic tenderfeet might think that there would be three branches: executive, administrative, and judiciary. But in a modern universities, George Report shows, such notions do not hold.

a) The Administrative Branch

This branch undertakes the procurement of funds from governments and private sources, and controls expenditure. In addition, it provides those general administrative services which are necessary for the implementation of the academic policy of the university.

Really, one could say, the administrative branch is the branch which gets and spends money. It provides services for the academic branch.

The final responsibility for administration is vested in the Board of Governors, but the Board, of necessity, delegates some to the Chairmen and Heads of Department

This paragraph is fairly simple. What is interesting is the footnote which appears at this point:

1 We shall henceforth use the title Department Chairmen to include Department Heads in those faculties which retain the old term.

The use of the words "old term" indicates that a Department Chairman is the same thing that a Department Head used to be. It indicates the fasti-

dious way in which an intellectual is able to keep up with the jargon in his particular field, and is a compliment to the authors of the report, and the university as a whole.

What ever complications remain in this paragraph are explained by its successor.

This is the traditional "line" organization which goes back to at least Roman times. Though many students of management doubt if a system devised mainly for military purposes in ancient slave or feudal societies is necessarily appropriate for our modern rapidly changing and technical society, it does at least have the virtue of simplicity and of being well understood. There is a clear line of authority with provision for co-ordination at each level. The activities of Chairmen of Departments are co-ordinated by their Deans, and the President co-ordinates the activities of Deans.

The remarkable breadth of knowledges of the George report researchers is indicated by this elucidating section. Imagine the research which was necessary to trace the present university structure to Roman times. And an intellectual knows that something which has stood the test of time is tested by the time which it has stood. And look what happened to the Roman Empire. It lasted, as any historian can tell you, longer than most.

To infer that a modern university should be run more democratically than the Roman army is to deny all thought. And feudal societies had a certain regularity of operation which any continuity expert would envy. Slavery may be thought of as outmoded now, but who are we to judge the wisdom of ancestral generations? If it weren't for slavery we might not be here today, and a system which was dedicated to the preservation of ancient slave societies deserves to be preserved in some monumental form. This, as we shall later see, is one of the objectives

of the George Report. Our university will become a living museum, dedicated to bringing the past into tomorrow.

And it is not only a monument, for as the report continues, the Roman Military System's chief virtue is that of being simple and easy to understand. The points which the authors are driving at so subtly here is, of course, that every thing which can be understood by ancient illiterate serfs can be understood by today's intellectuals. Not only that, but co-ordination is easy to achieve, particularly when you remove the romantic notions of liberal democracy which clutter and agitate against the efficiency of Dalhousie's competitors.

Those who would call this report reactionary are actually themselves reactionary - reacting against the inevitable cyclical nature of man's social existence.

This apparent simplicity can, of course, be deceptive. Even in a simple organization, successful administration demands skill. It is never just a matter of following a rule book or of obeying instructions from those above and giving orders to those below. An administrator, if he is to be successful, must be capable of securing the willing co-operation of those with whom he has to deal. And nowhere is this more true than in a university where few academics regard themselves as "company men" but are independent thinkers on most subjects.

The first sentence of this paragraph refers to the lessons learned from Roman History where, as everybody knows, an empire collapsed because of the incompetency of particular men and not because of structural reasons in the Roman Social system, a crass misjudgement made by many. It is common knowledge amongst Roman historians that the Army disintegrated because Generals fell into the habit of using their rule books, rather than seeking the "active and willing co-operation" of their slaves and serfs.

At this point, for the first time, a value-judgement is made by the authors of the report. They seem to assume that few intellectuals regard themselves as "company men", but rather as "independent thinkers". Even if this were true, it could obviously be changed.

(b) The Academic Branch

By the acts of the Nova Scotia Legislature, "The internal regulation of Dalhousie College and University is committed to the University Senate ... subject to the approval of the Board." By long practice and custom this has come to mean that Senate is the supreme academic authority with the duty of prescribing academic regulations for the operation of the university, and of dealing with other internal matters such as student discipline.

The certain neutrality of the academic community is no doubt what is referred to in the legal (not real) control of the Senate by the Board of Governors. The Senate is largely composed, of course, of the senior members of faculty; the Board of Governors is composed, in majority, of Businessmen and Professional People, with a couple of trade unionists, priests, students and so on to establish a good community representation. One can readily see that if the Senate ever lost sight of "neutrality" someone would have to step in, and presumably this is why no recommendation is made about ending the legal power of the Board of Governors over the senate.

Of necessity, it delegates much of its responsibilities for day-to-day academic matters to faculties, which may conveniently be thought of as committees of Senate. In addition to acting on behalf of Senate, faculties have the duty of keeping Senate properly

informed about their affairs and of bringing forward recommendations for changes in policy. They have no authority except that bestowed upon them by Senate.

This is Hegelian and thus inarguable.

We do not deal with the composition of faculties nor with the way in which they govern themselves within the policy laid down by Senate. However, there are a number of matters which may become issues in the near future, particularly the part played by students in the government of faculties; and, science changes made by one faculty may cause problems for other faculties, we recommend:

Recommendation 1

That no faculty make significant changes in its system of internal government without the prior permission of Senate.

This essentially refers back to the Roman Military System, where, it is clear, if one regiment of the Army changed its structure and, for example, elected its officers, the rest of the army would be struck by a paralyzing and desperate demoralization. Little is worse than a demoralized army; little is worse than a demoralized university.

(To be continued...)