

New Arts dean responds(?)

The University of Alberta's new Dean of Arts is smooth. Mighty smooth. His name is George Baldwin, and he succeeds Douglas Smith, who has resigned his position effective June 30. Dr. Baldwin, a former English Department chairman who is currently Associate Dean (Planning) of the faculty, was appointed last month by a 12-man selection committee that chose him over about 60 other applicants.

Dr. Baldwin was English Department chairman from 1967-68 to 1970-71 before resigning to become associate dean of Arts. "Those were years of explosive growth for the department," he noted. "The job was rapidly becoming one for a manager - I immensely enjoyed my time as chairman, but I decided I'd better pull out before it went sour on me. I needed a change of pace, since the pace of a department chairman is a gallop and one can't take that indefinitely. Actually, a department chairman is sort of a front-line administrator, and I wanted to get into something different."

Dr. Smith resigned his position as Dean of Arts almost immediately after Dr. Baldwin assumed the post of associate dean in charge of planning; consequently Dr. Baldwin had little time to decide whether or not to apply for the job.

"Now that I've been appointed, my feelings alternate between panic and anticipation," he said. "It'll be exciting, though. I like to be engrossed in my job, and this will certainly be the case with Dean of Arts."

Dr. Baldwin commented that the competition for the position was quite keen. "Nonetheless," he added, "I can see where some of the candidates might have been discouraged from applying had the selection been made more publicly. Some people just don't want to get involved in anything that might get political, and if the thing were made public, it would tend to become political. As for myself, I wouldn't care, because everyone knew by the grapevine that I was running anyway."

General election

"I do not favor the idea of a general election within the faculty to elect a new dean," said R. Baldwin. "I would oppose an election because I think the political disadvantages would outweigh the possible advantages. Besides, students already have a say in the selection through the student representatives on the selection committee." (on the committee that selected Dr. Baldwin there were 3 students, 7 faculty members and 2 administrators; however all future committees of this sort will have parity between students and faculty.)

Dr. Baldwin stated that, in broad social terms, he feels ultimately responsible for his action to the staff and students of the faculty. "I have a prime responsibility to try to live creatively within the tensions

between individuals and institutions," he said.

"I must make the faculty a place where staff and students can come together and have fun," he went on. "This is one of the things most often forgotten in the modern multiversity - that it's a place where you can have a lot of fun."

Dr. Baldwin noted that in the end an academic administrator who is "elected" makes it or fails according to the amount of trust he can build up in the people with whom he must work.

"I believe that basically I must be a servant," Dr. Baldwin continued, "but at the same time it's essential that I accept the responsibilities of my position. In actual practise, a vast amount of power can be exercised through persuasion, organization, and the like."

Blast PC's

While he was on the subject, Dr. Baldwin took the opportunity to level a blast at the fledgling Progressive Conservative government. "It's impossible to run the university as a business the way the PC government would like it to be run. They don't seem to understand how a university works, and as a result we're not getting much sympathy from them about budget cutbacks for 1972-73." (Dr. Baldwin's fears proved well founded last week when the government announced a budget that will necessitate cutbacks in almost all departments of the university.)

On the thorny "student power" issue, Dr. Baldwin noted that the faculty of Arts, in its faculty council, has parity; therefore students have considerable say in what goes on in the faculty. "Personally, however, I voted against parity when the issue came up two years ago. I did so because 'power' (which is merely symbolic since all the students seats are never filled) was the issue, and I consider participation to be more important than power. I'd prefer to go after participation, as I believe the power issue is now dead."

Professional students

Dr. Baldwin noted with concern that he sees "professional student participants" around now. "By 'professional' I mean the type that sits on just about every committee going and does little else. I'd much rather see different people on each committee. This would make for widespread participation which I think is healthier."

The usefulness of the ordinary B.A. is one of considerable importance in these days of job scarcity. Many people believe the B.A. to be virtually useless on the labor market, but Dr. Baldwin disagrees. "A month ago I would have agreed that the B.A. isn't of too much use in the job market. However, recent Canada Manpower Commission figures reveal that B.A.'s are in demand on the labor market, as



are M.A.'s; this can't be said for all the degrees offered by this university. Also, I know that a few years ago many employers preferred a B.A. to a B.Comm. when they wanted someone to fill a business position, although this may no longer be the case. In general though, I don't believe that employers shy away from people with B.A.'s."

Arts has another unique problem in that it tends to attract those students who are going to university just to get a general education, without having any particular vocation in mind. Often such students are subjected to pointless course requirements which prove to be nothing but a nuisance. "I'd like to see the issue of course requirements for these students debated in faculty council," said Dr. Baldwin. "Our policy on this subject is still based on the Hardy report which came out around 1958, so it's obvious that the issue has been ignored for years. I'm not a believer in grand plans about this sort of thing but I favor an approach to issues so they can be examined in some coherent order."

Course requirements

"As for course requirements in general, I'd like to see the faculty council debate individual study programs. We have honors study programs already, which is a good thing; but I think we should consider the general study program as well. I'm not necessarily committed to this, but we don't have individual study programs which are free except of course for prerequisites. I'd like to see the faculty council discuss this - I know that I for one got very little out of required courses outside of my discipline."

Dr. Baldwin also had a few comments about registration. In the faculty of Arts, as in many other faculties, every student must get his study program approved by the dean - a huge burden for the dean and his staff and a terrific nuisance for the students. When asked if he thought departments should take over this responsibility from the faculty, Dr. Baldwin replied, "In honors, I think that would be a good idea; as for general programs, departmental control was deemed undesirable

a few years ago because it turned out the departments were setting up 'little honors' programs. Now, however, the problem is that students aren't getting enough advice. I'm not quite sure what the solution is."

Dr. Baldwin came out in favor of that controversial university tradition known as tenure, but for different reasons than most people offer. "Most people claim that tenure is good because it guarantees academic freedom, and adds to job security and order in the university. As far as I'm concerned that's all nonsense. I believe tenure's main virtue is that it forces the university to decide, regarding each individual faculty member, where it's going and what it wants to do - in other words whether it wants this person around or not. However, in practise red tape tends to strangle this idealistic concept."

Student representation

When asked if he thought there should be students on tenure committees, he replied, "I can't think of any reason offhand why there shouldn't be - although that doesn't mean there aren't any reasons for excluding them. However, I feel that staff and administration should have the majority on such committees because they have to tolerate the candidate for a longer period of time. Students are here on a temporary basis only, while a faculty member has to put up with his colleagues indefinitely."

"I'm convinced that you'd end up with some bum profs no matter what system you used," he continued. "Also, there's more to the tenure issue than classroom performance. For instance a 30-year-old who is an excellent prof but who sits back on his laurels will be intellectually dead in a few years. That's why universities place so much emphasis on research and the doctorate - these are not ends in themselves, but indications that a professor is still intellectually alive."

So there you have it - George Baldwin, new Dean of Arts. He's qualified, he's self-assured, we hear he's well-liked. But will he make a good Dean? Only time and a few confrontations will tell.

By Dave McCurdy