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**THE STRUCTURE  
OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

**A FABIAN GROUP**

**TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE**

**SOCIALISM IN THE SIXTIES**



This pamphlet is the memorandum submitted by a group of Fabians to the Robbins Committee on Higher Education, with the addition of some explanatory paragraphs for the general reader. The group reached its conclusions after a series of discussions, and this pamphlet represents the generally agreed views of the participants, though individual members do not necessarily accept all the group's conclusions. The group is particularly grateful to Dr. Peter Hall, who undertook the major part of the drafting of this report.

During the discussions it was decided that it would be helpful if the Fabians, with their traditional interest in administration, concentrated their evidence on the *structure* of higher education rather than on broader issues of content. Hence the title and emphasis of the pamphlet.

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FABIAN TRACT 334

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*Note.—This pamphlet, like all publications of the FABIAN SOCIETY, represents not the collective view of the Society but only the view of the individuals who prepared it. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving the publications which it issues as worthy of consideration within the Labour Movement.*

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## SUMMARY

*Higher education, in our view, must and will expand rapidly in the next twenty years. We estimate that the numbers in full-time higher education will increase at least three-fold by 1980. We conclude that it is essential to ask whether the present administrative structure for higher education can cope with this increase.*

*It is, therefore, essential to examine the administrative pattern of the main divisions of higher education at the present time. We find great diversity of systems; we find no one system satisfactory; we predict that the defects in the existing systems will be magnified intolerably as expansion takes place. In our view, the evidence points to a viable unified system of administration for higher education, which will remove the main faults in the present systems while retaining, in essence, their good features.*

*We have, therefore, sketched the outlines of a scheme of unified administration.*

## I. Expansion

**H**IGHER education will almost inevitably expand very rapidly in the next twenty years.

First, *the number of potential students demanding higher education will increase.* The number of those staying on at school has been rising in recent years and seems likely to continue to do so. It is probable that by 1970 between two and three times the present number of boys and girls will be getting minimum qualifications for entry into higher education; there seems strong evidence to suggest that almost all the children entering selective schools and independent schools (30% of the age group in England and Wales) will end school at 18 years of age, while a growing number of those in the reorganised modern and comprehensive schools will also succeed in gaining at least five 'O' levels and some 'A' levels. The number of children seeking admission to institutions of higher education may, of course, be smaller than the number qualified to do so on present standards. But even so it will represent probably a tripling of demand in this decade, and it is not possible to see any slackening of the rate of growth during the next twenty years. What in essence is happening is that the motivation to stay on in full-time education among working class boys, and girls of all social classes, is rising to that of middle class boys. This process will undoubtedly continue.

It also seems likely that this country will repeat recent French and American experience, and that an earlier average age of marriage will lead to an increase in the number of children born per family. Together with an increase in the proportion who marry in each age group, this will mean that the birth rate will rise in the next ten years. Merely in order to provide higher education for the same proportion of each age group as now, we should therefore have to find increasing numbers of places in absolute terms.

We shall certainly want to do more than this. The evidence now available overwhelmingly supports the view that there is a vast reservoir of ability (in the narrowest academic sense) which is at present untapped. The Crowther Report's alarming findings on educational wastage, based on surveys of National Service entrants, need to be recalled here. Whereas only 25 per cent of the sons of professional or managerial workers had left school at 15 or less, in the skilled class this percentage rose to 78 per cent; in the semi-skilled class to 85 per cent; and in the unskilled class to 92 per cent. Whereas in the managerial class 51 per cent of the sons had stayed at school until 17 or over, in the unskilled

class the figure was 2 per cent. Nor were these facts directly connected with ability, even in the narrow sense as measured by I.Q. tests; for 42 percent of boys in the highest ability range had left school at 16 or less and the corresponding figure for manual workers' sons was no less than 63 per cent. No similar figures were available for girls, where the wastage is almost certainly greater. But beyond this, there can now be no doubt that the true size of the 'pool of ability' cannot be estimated from simple studies of I.Q. distribution. Conclusive evidence exists to show that I.Q. levels depend in part on the quality of schooling, the social and emotional environment of the family, and the social experiences of individuals.

### **Demands of the Economy**

*Secondly, the development of the economy will make increasing demands for people with formal higher educational qualifications.* The number of jobs held by professional and skilled people is increasing. A large number of government reports confirm that this tendency will grow rather than decline. The Younghusband report on social workers, for example, states that a tripling of qualified social workers would be a modest estimate of the numbers needed to staff the social services in their present form. The rate of teacher recruitment necessary to staff the schools under existing legislation cannot be less than 30 to 35 thousand a year. The reports on scientific and technical manpower have indicated a continuous rise in demand for people with such qualifications, both by industry and the government services. Thus in almost all professional and skilled occupations there are signs of a rising demand for trained and skilled people in the foreseeable future.

At the same time educational history has been marked by growing awareness that the requirements for entry to large numbers of occupations are becoming increasingly professional. It is only in this century, for example, that the typical dentist and the typical teacher have become trained persons as opposed to those who learn their skill by apprenticeship. There are a large number of occupations which are on the verge of the kind of transformation which occurred in dentistry and teaching. They are banking and insurance, accountancy, the law (solicitors), and a whole range of technical skills, particularly in electronics, where the apprenticeship system shows signs of breaking down. What is emerging is a two-fold tendency. First, employers are finding it difficult to recruit boys and girls of high ability at 16 or 18, and increasingly are having to recruit people with 'A' levels or graduates. This is also happening in the armed forces. Secondly, the qualifications and skills required for these occupations have risen and changed in recent years. In accountancy, for example, the increasing concern with cost accountancy has made a knowledge of economics essential to many accountants, and also to business management. To take two further contrasted examples, the training of solicitors and nurses has also involved an increasing proportion of formal education.

### Overseas Students

The third main reason for expansion of higher education is the *growth in the numbers of overseas students*. It is believed that at the moment there are well over 20 thousand students from the under-developed countries in institutes of further education in this country. In the Ashby Report on Nigeria's need for skilled manpower, some idea is given of the enormous demands to be made on places in such institutions in the developed countries if the poorer countries are to have sufficient skilled personnel. It would be hard to estimate a firm figure for this demand, but it is important to realise two points. First, the Soviet Union and the United States are making efforts in this direction and increasingly tend to recruit students from the Commonwealth. Secondly, we do not now make a large net contribution to the supply of skilled manpower in the Commonwealth: it is possible that at the moment we are actually draining Commonwealth countries of professional people. No fewer than 40 per cent of the doctors in junior grades in our hospitals are from overseas, and it seems probable that the proportion of nurses in mental hospitals and local general hospitals coming from overseas is also strikingly high. Medicine is a particularly interesting case of the general proposition that we shall need to extend our higher education system to meet the needs of countries overseas, because to all intents and purposes the number of places in medical schools have been restricted for over ten years. It is probable that a doubling of places in medical schools, quite apart from a change in the content of their curriculum, would still be insufficient to meet the demands of the poorer countries for medical personnel.

### Estimating Expansion

On the basis of this argument, it is possible to make estimates of the likely expansion of higher education in the next 20 years. There are two main ways of making these estimates. The first is from the *supply* side: to add the number of people likely to be qualified for entry, to suggest the proportion of those who will wish to go on to full-time education, and to estimate the length of the courses they will follow. The problem can also be approached from the *demand* side: how many qualified people will be needed? The figures given are, of course, only very rough orders of magnitude which indicate the scope of the problem to be faced.

From the *supply* side, the number of children leaving school after completing seven or more years of secondary education (18-plus) in England and Wales is likely to be:—

July 1959 (actual)	49,000
July 1969	131,000
July 1979	391,000

At a conservative figure, two-thirds of the 1969 'eighteen-plus leavers' and half of the 1979 leavers will want to continue in full-time courses, giving an annual entry as follows:—

1969	87,000
1979	195,000

To this may be added 10 per cent for Scotland and another 10 per cent for overseas students, giving totals as follows:—

1969	106,000
1979	237,000

These are figures for entrants. They will take courses ranging from two to six years. The average will probably shortly be nearly three years in the whole range of higher education, and it would be safe to assume minimum estimates of 3 years in 1969 and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years in 1979. (Even in 1959, 15 per cent of all university places were for post-graduates, and other courses were lengthening). On this basis, the number of places needed will be:—

1969	318,000
1979	730,000

From the *demand* side the calculation represents a large research task, and only very approximate suggestions can be made, as follows:—

Category	Annual entry	Factor (years in course)	Number of places
Teachers	35,000	$3\frac{1}{2}$	130,000
Social Workers	1,000	$3\frac{1}{2}$	3,500
Medicine	800	6	4,800
Administrators	10,000	6	60,000
Overseas Posts (all types)	40,000	$3\frac{1}{2}$	140,000
Scientific and Technological	80,000	$4\frac{1}{2}$	360,000

Thus the main parts of the sum lead to the conclusion that some 700,000 places would not be an over-estimate of the need for places in higher education if the nation's demands for the higher skills are to be met in twenty years' time.

Comparing the two estimates, we find that by 1980 between 700,000 and 730,000 places will be needed in higher education. This compares with a total of some 180,000 students in full-time higher education at present, and the plans already made for 280,000 places by 1970. Thus the number of students receiving higher education will more than treble in the next twenty years. It is very difficult to predict trends in any one section of higher education, but the demands of science, engineering, teaching, social work and places for overseas students, will be increasing at a very fast rate. In this process of prediction we think it an important point that the public services—education, the National Health Service, the personal welfare services, the civil service, local government—are not likely to press as hard as industry and commerce for specific courses to meet their needs for managerial and technical skills, simply because of their relative lack of funds.

An increase of the order predicted is, we suggest, itself sufficient reason for asking whether the present administrative structure for higher education can be expected to bear the burden adequately.

## 2. The Present Administrative Structure

THE details of the present administrative structure of higher education in the United Kingdom are reasonably familiar. Our concern here is to present as balanced a picture as possible of the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of the various elements in the structure, and to suggest how these features are likely to be exaggerated by the probable expansion of higher education in the immediate future.

We shall concern ourselves for the most part with *external administration*: that is, the relation of Central and Local Government to the institutions of higher education. We shall touch on the internal government of these institutions insofar as it is essential to an understanding of their relations with Government.

Higher education may be conveniently, if arbitrarily, defined as work based on the possession of the G.C.E. Advanced level certificate (or its equivalent) as an essential qualification. It includes three main sectors—the Universities, the Teacher Training Colleges, and the Colleges of Advanced Technology—and a number of minor ones, including advanced courses in Colleges of Art, Commerce and the like. At present there are in England and Wales some 110,000 full-time university students; some 30,000 students in teacher training colleges; and about 35,000 students in the Colleges of Advanced Technology—of whom some 25,000 are part-time—though in all some 95,000 students are attending full- or part-time advanced technological courses.

### The Universities

Analysis and discussion about the Universities inevitably centres upon the institution of the University Grants Committee. So curious and interesting a position does the Committee occupy in the administrative structure of this country, so central is a discussion of its merits and drawbacks to any possible scheme of reform of higher education, that it is worth while to set out a brief account of its constitution and operations.

The Committee as now constituted has two full-time officers, a Chairman (Sir Keith Murray) and a secretary (Sir Cecil Syers) who are assisted by a small number of permanent officials. The sixteen other members of the committee are appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer after consultation with the Minister of Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland, are part-time and unpaid, and individually serve for a term of years only. Rather more than half of



these members are university professors or other persons of academic distinction; they are supposed to be so selected that collectively they can assess academic needs of all kinds. The other members of the committee include the headmaster of a famous school, a local authority director of education and prominent leaders of commerce and industry. Generally one member of the committee is a woman. From time to time the main committee appoints sub-committees consisting of a nucleus of its own members who sit with the appropriate experts to advise it on particular topics such as medical education, social science, technology and halls of residence. The committee publishes annually a statistical abstract entitled *Returns from Universities and University Colleges*, which deals with the various categories of students, the degrees and diplomas awarded and the staffing and finances of the individual universities. After the end of each quinquennium the committee also publishes a report entitled *University Development* which provides a survey of university development.

#### U.G.C. Finance

The recurrent grants made through the University Grants Committee are based on a five-year period. A year or so before the beginning of each quinquennium, members of the Committee visit briefly each university institution and meet the governing body, professors and non-professorial staff and the students. By a fixed date each university subsequently submits to the committee a detailed estimate of its income and expenditure for the ensuing quinquennium, and on the basis of these estimates the committee makes its own consolidated recommendation to the Treasury. This is never made public. The Chancellor announces what the Government is prepared to give and the committee makes an allocation to each university in England, Scotland and Wales.

In the case of Oxford and Cambridge the colleges do not participate in the allocation, which is made for university purposes only; in London, Durham, St. Andrew's and Wales the central university authorities distribute the allocation made to the university amongst the constituent colleges and institutions. The assistance provided for recurrent expenditure is given as a block grant for each of the five years. Each university expends its grant alongside its other income in the way it thinks best.

Non-recurrent grants made by the Treasury towards the cost of new buildings and their equipment, the adaptation of older structures and the acquisition of sites, are however assessed on an annual basis. The proposals made by the universities for such capital expenditure are given an order of priority by the University Grants Committee. The plans for each separate building are supposed to be scrutinised and commented upon by the committee with the assistance of the Ministry of Works.

### Accountable to Whom ?

There are in our view a number of telling criticisms of the U.G.C. system. The first and most important criticism is lack of Parliamentary accountability. The arrangements for the U.G.C. have never been substantially changed since it was first set up more than 40 years ago when it was handling less than £2m. of public money. Today it distributes about £54m. per year. We can safely assume that by 1970 this sum will be doubled. The system offers a unique example in British government of public funds on this scale being distributed without any Parliamentary accountability. Indeed it is deliberately distributed direct from the Treasury precisely to avoid any Minister with responsibility for educational policy having any right to influence the decision. This position has been questioned by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee but has always been left as it is on the grounds of maintaining academic freedom. Yet the disposition of sums of money on this scale is a major decision affecting national economic policy.

Associated with this is a second criticism: that by its very uniqueness, the U.G.C. procedure insulates university arrangements from the decisions being taken in the rest of the higher educational system. This problem is likely to become much more acute as higher education expands, as the illogical frontier between university education and non-university education becomes increasingly attenuated, and as increasing need is felt for flexible arrangements allowing for easy passage from one part of the system to another.

A third criticism is that in its desire to maintain academic freedom, the U.G.C. has failed to take the initiative in many general fields of university administration where informed advice from a central body would have been invaluable. On the costs and design of university buildings, on the introduction of new types of course and the introduction of new faculties, the U.G.C. might have provided a powerful stimulus. But in fact it has done very little to challenge the conservatism in these matters which is almost inevitable in established self-governing institutions. With its tiny secretariat, the U.G.C. as at present organised could not hope to do this. Indeed, it has not even been able to follow what is happening and to present adequate statistics and reports. It is now expanding its staff—especially on the architectural side—but not to anything like the extent which is needed. To create a mere copy of the U.G.C. for other forms of higher education, therefore, would mean that this indifference would apply over a much wider field, where at present there is some central stimulus.

### The Teacher Training Colleges

About the *Teacher Training Colleges* it is very difficult to generalise. Most give a general training, but there are some specialised ones (e.g. for physical education). They are maintained either by local education authorities or by voluntary (chiefly religious) organisations, which

usually appoint a governing body to whom they delegate various powers. The L.E.A. colleges are financed from a national pool organised by the Ministry, to which all Authorities contribute. The voluntary colleges are fully maintained by direct grant from the Ministry, which also contributes 50 per cent towards capital expenditure (e.g. new buildings), or 75 per cent where capital expenditure is incurred by reason of the present expansion programme. The Ministry controls staffing, by approving staff establishments; and it retains the right to full inspection of the colleges. Since the McNair Report of 1944, it has been official policy to strengthen the links between the colleges and their local universities, through Institutes of Education (often called 'Area Training Organisations'). These Institutes are the examining authorities for the colleges, whose students take the Institute Teacher's Certificate. But the University link remains tenuous and the Institutes themselves are too often peripheral to the University. There is great variation between one college and another in size, in efficiency, in the degree of detailed control by local authorities, and in the extent to which the Principals themselves permit democratic participation through academic boards consisting of the tutorial staff. The Ministry of Education has been working during the last few years to try to rationalise the confusion; with partial success.

We think that it is important to release the Teacher Training Colleges from unnecessary interference by local, denominational or other pressure groups. The Colleges should be made basically autonomous institutions with effective self-government. In each area, there should be really effective controls, by the Institute of Education, over the academic standards and tutorial freedoms in the individual colleges. Members of the governing body would include members of staff of both these institutions, local authorities and the teachers in their schools, and the original founding authority.

If the colleges were to be made autonomous, the source of finance would have to be a centralised grants committee. If organised on the lines of the University Grants Committee this would be subject to the criticism we have made of that committee. But in the case of the Training Colleges there is an additional point. Under local authority control the Colleges enjoy the great advantage of very flexible negotiations with the authority on the spot. A centralised grants committee would do harm unless it had more local contact than at present exists with the University Grants Committee.

### **The Colleges of Advanced Technology**

The Colleges of Advanced Technology evolved from local technical colleges in which a large proportion of the work was advanced or research work. In the past they have always been partly financed by their local authorities. In 1952 the Ministry of Education announced that such colleges would be eligible for a 75 per cent rate of Govern-

ment grant, though they would continue to be run by the Local Education Authority concerned. In 1956, nine (shortly to be increased to ten) of the colleges, which had made substantial progress in developing advanced work and dropping other courses, were designated as Colleges of Advanced Technology, and the new plans propose that these be given direct grant status under independent governing bodies. The local authorities will be represented on the governing bodies and representation of the academic staff is to be considered.

This is an important advance which recognises the fundamental principle that these institutions of higher education are national institutions. It provides an obvious pattern for the reform of the Teacher Training Colleges. Nevertheless, it still remains an important defect that two of the elements of higher education are now financially dependent on the Ministry, and the third element, the Universities, on an independent grants committee. These three sectors comprise the major part of higher education, but there are a number of minor sectors which should expand greatly during the next twenty years. There are the technical colleges which have not got the status of College of Advanced Technology, but which are very little lower in standard, and which, (until the abolition of percentage grants), qualified for a 75 per cent Ministry grant. There are a number of specialised colleges of national reputation, such as the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and the Royal College of Art, which run courses of advanced standard. We think, however, that if a scheme can be designed to accommodate the needs of Universities, the Colleges of Advanced Technology, Teacher Training Colleges, and other institutions can be brought within this framework as opportunity serves.

We have tried to set down the main *specific* weaknesses in the administration of the three main groups within higher education. In general we think that the University Grants Committee system of finance is the most satisfactory. We would like to see a system broadly based on it, and organised probably in terms of quinquennial periods, extended to the Teacher Training Colleges and the Colleges of Advanced Technology. But in doing this it is essential to correct the existing faults in the U.G.C. system. It must be supported by a bigger staff; it must be made accountable to Parliament by an annual report and by liability to parliamentary questions on matters of policy; and to this end it must be put under a minister other than the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

But it is not enough to correct specific weaknesses. Even more important is the fact that at present there is no relation between one part of the system and the others in a coherent plan for higher education. This lack of co-ordination is unsatisfactory today and it will be immeasurably more so in twenty years' time when higher education has extended at least threefold; when courses and institutions have multiplied; and when there will be much greater demand than exists today for flexibility of transfer between one part of the system and another.

For these reasons we think it is not enough to create new pieces of financial administration on the lines of the University Grants Com-

mittee for each branch of higher education. It is not even enough to combine them in one higher education grants committee, even one accountable to parliament and supplied with an adequate staff. What is needed is more than a mere financial authority. Nothing less is required than a comprehensive pattern of Higher Education Authorities under a department of government responsible to parliament for the whole field of higher education. We therefore go on to suggest the constitution and functions of such an administrative structure.

### 3. A Structure for Unified Administration

OUR administrative structure is based on the needs of the whole range of students in full-time higher education. On the one hand we recognise that in *formal education* people continuing their education over the age of 18 have many different needs. Not all have either the wish or the ability to take wholly academic courses conducted at a high level of scholarship. Many wish to learn by doing rather than by reading or listening. Many skills are best acquired or can only be acquired in this way. Different types of courses taught by different methods and at different levels will require staffs of different background and of different temperament.

In *informal or extra-curricular education*, on the other hand, we hold that all students have certain needs in common, which are best catered for together. For many forms of higher education, some students will have to reside away from home, and subject to economic considerations we think it desirable that more should do so than at present. Similarly recreational facilities need to be made available for all students, not only for sport, but for the variety of extra-curricular activities that develop and widen the horizons of students. We realise that in the end this will come to a battle of priorities for building, and that student residence can scarcely be placed high as against demands for teaching and research facilities or as against general housing needs; we therefore lay very great emphasis on the importance of providing common social, cultural and athletic facilities for all students alike, since most of them will be living either at home or in flats and lodgings, not in colleges or halls of residence. It is above all a reform of the administration of these recreational and social facilities, making them common to all students in a particular area, that we wish to stress.

#### Residence

Up to the present time, arrangements for residence have developed separately in each field and in each institution of formal education; and they have uniformly tended to follow the hallowed Oxbridge model of halls of residence. We think that both these trends are regrettable and need to be reversed. Separate development leads to quite uneven provision of facilities as between one institution and another; it narrows the outlook of students who live and work entirely with students following similar courses; by insulating university students from other students, whether their facilities are superior or inferior, it creates an undesirable social élite. Halls of residence too often in practice are bound by petty regulations which many responsible and intelligent young adults find quite unjustifiably restrictive. A special problem is that of the

married graduate student, and it may be justifiable to make special provision for flats outside the local authority housing programmes.

At the local level therefore we start from the premise that it is necessary to break the adventitious and unfortunate link which has developed between a particular type of formal instruction and a particular place of residence. We want the administration of formal courses to be divorced from the administration of halls of residence, social, cultural and recreational facilities of all sorts. They pose separate problems and can be approached separately.

### A Formal Education

For *formal education* we begin by considering the extreme view that in order to encourage 'parity of esteem' between different fields of higher education, all formal education within an area could be brought into the same institution under the same governing body. A co-ordination of courses with a common core, the creation of diagnostic years and other shared teaching arrangements could be more readily developed in such an institution.

Such a proposal has, however, serious drawbacks. To encompass the whole of what we term higher education, with adequate numbers of both teachers and students in every field, the institution would have to be very large. There would have to be something of the order of ten or twenty thousand students and possibly many more. This would give little sense of 'belonging' to either staff or students. It would, however, probably lead to more of teachers' time being devoted to committee work than in smaller institutions. It would seem purposeless for staff members to attend committees during a large part of which matters were discussed which had no relevance to their own courses or interests.

We conclude that a single comprehensive institution providing all types of formal education for an area is impracticable and possibly undesirable. A number of institutions will be necessary, providing different sorts of teaching under different governing bodies, selected so as to have the needs of their particular type of student in the forefront of their minds. On what principles is a division to be made? We are agreed that at present there are too many specialised educational institutions; and that the really essential line of division is between the work at present carried on in Universities, Teacher Training Colleges, and Colleges of Advanced Technology, on the one hand, and all other institutions on the other.

This corresponds fairly closely to the division between work based on the 'A' level certificate (or equivalent) as a qualification, and work not needing it. We think that higher education, as thus defined, should be organised in separate institutions but co-ordinated by a single Higher Education Authority; and that other institutions should continue to be organised by local authorities and by voluntary organisations

as at present, but should be linked with the institutions of higher education much more closely through the further development of extra-mural departments, which it would be the duty of the Higher Education Authority to encourage.

### **University Status**

Within Higher Education as thus defined, we wish to see all institutions achieve university status. We think there will be a strong natural tendency towards this in the next twenty years, which is indeed already manifest. The work of the best Teacher Training Colleges and of Colleges of Advanced Technology already closely approaches the level of the average university degree in the methods of study and in the degree of intellectual flexibility and application required of the student. The Higher Education Authority will therefore work to end, as speedily as possible, the artificial distinction between degree and non-degree courses. New types of degree will be introduced by the existing non-degree institutions (Bachelor of Technology incorporating the old Diploma in Technology, Bachelor of Education) as soon as the Higher Education Authority is satisfied that the courses they offer approximate to degree standard. Thus within each area a loose federal University will develop, avoiding the weaknesses of the London model. A wide variety of types of course and of final qualification will be available, some of them generally taught in more than one institution, the majority concentrated within the separate institutions (i.e. faculties of the original university nucleus, plus the new institutions, which will themselves become one or more faculties).

A Federal Academic Board will be necessary to establish equivalent standards in the varying faculties. It should be composed of nominees of the faculties. It will work in close conjunction with a Regional Authority (c.f. below). Within this loose federal framework the Higher Authority will work to encourage the development of new types of courses and institutions for new needs. One of the most obvious of these, which will surely arise in the next twenty years, will be a demand for liberal arts colleges offering a more general education than the existing specialist honours degree, plus some specialised training for a vocation (specialised secretarial jobs, social service). These may grow out of existing institutions, but if they do not, the Authority should work in consultation with the Academic Board to establish them in new institutions.

### **Devalued Degrees ?**

An argument that may be used against these proposals is that they might tend to a devaluation of the university degree. We cannot accept this. It will mean that there are many types of university degrees and it will be clearly understood by everyone that in the narrow academic sense some of these degrees are better than others. We do,



after all, already regard an Honours degree as marking a higher level of achievement than a General Pass degree. But the fact of a degree will signify a certain level of educational achievement (similar to the standard of a degree today); and our proposals will mean that the students in higher education will emerge with a common background and a shared understanding, which they lack today.

### **Informal Education**

For *informal education*, a different pattern of grouping is required within the loose federal framework. Residential facilities and arrangements for extra-curricular activities should be planned for, and made available to, the whole student group within the area. The parochial teacher training hostel and the gossipy and authoritarian nurses' home should be opened to a wider group of students. In planning new accommodation, closer consideration should be given to the students' own preferences, which in some parts of the country seem to be for independent flatlets on the French model rather than for institutional halls of residence. We think that within each area accommodation should be provided by a variety of authorities, including trusts approved and subsidised by a regional authority, governing bodies of academic teachers and students' unions. The whole programme will, however, need to be co-ordinated by a regional authority.

Such is our picture of higher education at the actual working level. Our conception is that each student in a particular area becomes a member of two institutions: a teaching institution and a residential-cultural-social institution. This corresponds closely to the actual system (as distinct from the theoretical or historical system) in Cambridge and to a lesser extent Oxford today, where the student receives much of his instruction in departments (the great scientific departments, the new Arts faculty buildings) and lives in a College or in lodgings attached to a college, dining regularly in Hall. Because of the greater size and variety of provision, however, the system must differ from the Oxbridge system in giving greater power to the central co-ordinating authority in each separate area, and these area authorities must be in turn co-ordinated in their policies by reference to a national authority.

### **The Higher Education Authority**

We now go on to describe the constitution and function of the proposed national and regional authorities.

The general principles we have used are two:—

- (i) That the National and Regional Authorities should both be *ad hoc* bodies;
- (ii) That the National Authority (and through it, the Regional Authorities), should be responsible to a Minister; and that this Minister should be the Minister of Education.

As against the *ad hoc* principle we have considered two alternatives. The first was that the function of both central and local control should

be exercised by a Minister and his area officers, supported at both levels by advisory committees. It would be alleged that such a system would lead to an undesirable uniformity, a threat to academic freedom, and a general reluctance to experiment with new courses and new techniques. We do not, however, lay great stress on these arguments. We favour *ad hoc* authorities for two main reasons. First, we think that better continuity of policy would develop under *ad hoc* authorities than under direct Ministerial control. Secondly, the *ad hoc* authority would be more acceptable to university opinion, having close similarities to the present University Grants Committee which is, we believe, on the whole liked by the Universities and envied by Colleges of Advanced Technology and Teacher Training Colleges who are not under it.

We have also considered the alternative that the functions of the Regional Authorities could be satisfactorily exercised by the education committees of the major local authorities, negotiating with a central authority which could be either an *ad hoc* authority or an advisory committee. The enormous variation in the size of the local education authorities makes this impracticable at present. It would become practicable only if the present pattern of local government were radically reformed to provide for directly elected regional authorities. However desirable this may be on administrative grounds, it is not likely to be carried through for many years. Even if it were, however, it is still very doubtful whether the Regional Higher Education Authorities should be wholly controlled by the local authorities concerned, for these reasons.

(a) *Finance.* The additional cost obviously could not fall on the rates; it would have to come from the Exchequer in some sort of grant. It is hard to see how 100 per cent grants could be appropriately apportioned to local authorities while leaving them the measure of independence which they now enjoy. Higher education is more a national than a local problem.

(b) *Location of existing facilities.* Existing facilities are not distributed evenly throughout the country. There could be joint boards, or agency agreements between authorities, as happens in other fields; but these are devices not desirable in themselves.

(c) *Acceptability.* University teachers would not willingly accept control by local authorities and many technical and teacher training colleges find local authority control restrictive in many ways.

For these reasons we reject both centralised Ministerial control and local control. We propose instead *ad hoc* authorities at central and regional level. Both would be centrally-appointed but the regional authority would contain regional nominees.

We think that the National Higher Education Authority should be responsible in matters of broad policy to Parliament. At present the University Grants Committee is responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (but not through him to Parliament), the Teacher Training Colleges and the Colleges of Advanced Technology are broadly

responsible to the Ministry of Education. The Chancellor of the Exchequer would not be a suitable Minister to assume responsibility for all higher education because he has too many other responsibilities, and because it is unsuitable that a money-spending authority should be directly responsible to the money-providing Minister. The Minister responsible should have a Department which represents the public interest against sectional interest, yet understands professional organisations; which attempts to see the national structure of education as a whole; which believes that its job has a technical as well as an administrative side, and that research is an important function of a Government department; which can provide the staff to do the necessary research work on future needs in higher education, and to perform the necessary administrative work of liaison with the Regional Authorities. The Ministry of Education is such a Department. It has a fine liberal tradition of administration at all levels of education up to university level.

This Ministry could perform most readily the essential job of relating the needs of higher education to trends in earlier stages of education. Therefore a majority of the group proposes that the National Authority be made responsible to the Ministry of Education and to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

A minority accepted the force of these arguments about the high traditions and professional skill of the Ministry of Education, and about the continuity of higher education with earlier stages of education. They hoped also that the National Authority would have such prestige and independence that there could be no question of dictatorship by a Minister. They felt, however, that two matters rather outside the scope of this paper should also be considered. The first is that the Universities, the Colleges of Advanced Technology and (let us hope, in future) the Teacher Training Colleges are centres not only of higher education but of research. As the costs of research increase, its association with higher education becomes more difficult: but from day to day new administrative devices are being evolved to associate universities and other teaching bodies very closely with modern research and in particular with the work of the great Research Councils. To the minority, it occurred that further development on these lines was absolutely essential to the character of higher education in Britain, as helping to create a "research minded" and technically progressive society.

The second point is that the Ministry of Education is already an organisation which carries enormous responsibilities, responsibilities almost too big for a single Minister to represent effectively at Cabinet level. It could over-burden the Minister and might prejudice the cause of higher education if he had to speak also for the National Authority in Cabinet and in Parliament.

The minority would, therefore, prefer that (at least for England and Wales) the National Authority should be responsible to the Minister for Science, with an enlarged scope as Minister for Science and Higher Education.

### Finance and Policy

The *National Higher Education Authority* (N.H.E.A.) would lay down general lines of higher education policy for the country as a whole, which it would be the duty of regional authorities to interpret in the light of local circumstances. It would also co-ordinate the day-to-day activities of the Regional Authorities. It would apportion financial grants from the Exchequer among the Regional Authorities.

N.H.E.A. would consist of a board with a nucleus of full-time fully-paid members and a majority of part-time members including representatives of higher education and the professions. It would be appointed by the Minister of Education and would in turn be responsible for the appointment of Regional Authorities and of their chairmen. It would produce an annual report to him incorporating the reports of the Regional Authorities to it; this would be debatable in Parliament. Its general policy should be subject to Parliamentary questioning.

### Regional Authorities

There should be a *Regional Higher Education Authority* (R.H.E.A.) in each of the major provinces of Britain. (We visualise about ten regions). This body would have no power to select teachers at any level; that must remain in the hands of the Governing Bodies of the separate teaching institutions. Nor should R.H.E.A. be an examining body. It would, however, be the immediate financing body both on capital and current account; and this would be the basis of its power over the institutions for higher education within its area.

It should also act on behalf of the various institutions of higher education in its region when they wish to acquire sites for development. For this purpose it may have to be given compulsory purchase powers. We would, however, hope that a satisfactory solution to the general problem of urban development will be produced, which would give the R.H.E.A. the possibility of leasing sites for development direct from a regional planning authority at a nominal rent.

One other point should be specifically mentioned, and that is the problem of London, where so many institutions of higher education exist. It is not our task to consider the affairs of individual Universities, nor were we invited to do so, but it is clear that the London area is too large for the normal R.H.E.A. structure, and some modification of the proposals we have set out here might have to be envisaged.

The functions of the R.H.E.A. would be: —

- (i) to plan the development of institutions for higher education in its area, and to distribute the necessary finance derived from the National Authority.
- (ii) To co-ordinate arrangements for higher education, external as well as internal: for instance, shared teaching courses and

facilities, sponsorship of introductory or diagnostic courses where appropriate, the securing of agreements between teaching bodies about transfers within the system (including establishment of 'equivalence' of qualifications) and standardisation of entrance requirements.

- (iii) To co-ordinate, plan, and where necessary provide facilities for the residential accommodation and recreational facilities of students. We assume that R.H.E.A.s would be given a wide measure of freedom to experiment and to develop their area in the manner which seems most appropriate. In some areas, the room to manoeuvre will be limited for many years ahead by the location of existing facilities; in others, where a full range of facilities needs to be developed, the ideal of a physically-integrated 'campus' of higher education can be realised.

Each R.H.E.A. would be an *ad hoc* authority appointed by the National Authority. Like the National Authority, it would consist of a Board with a nucleus of full-time paid members and a majority of part-time members. There should be a reasonable balance (which might be laid down by statute) among representatives of teachers in higher education, the major professions, local public figures, and nominees of local authorities (both elected and salaried).

Local Authorities would therefore retain a share in the operation of the existing Teacher Training Colleges and acquire a share in the running of existing university institutions.

## CONCLUSION

We have done no more than sketch the outlines of a policy for higher education and of an organisational structure through which the policy can be implemented. The essence of our scheme is the co-ordination of higher education both centrally and locally. We want to see a common policy for common problems and separate policies for separate problems. We believe that the structure we suggest could fulfill these aims and offer opportunities for constant adjustment to the developing needs of students. Our proposed higher education authorities can be seen as a logical development of the University Grants Committee. We do not suggest a complete break with the past. This is in the Fabian tradition, and the tradition of English education as a whole.

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