

R.W. Staff Association 20 Nov 1984

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, it has become a firmly established tradition that the V-C should address you on the occasion of your A.G.M. I appreciate the opportunity of sharing some thoughts with you, and attempting to answer your questions, hopefully to the satisfaction of most of you. The questions presented afford me the opportunity of discovering some of the issues that are of concern to you.

The year 1984, in spite of George Orwell's gloomy prognostications, has generally been a kind one to R.W. We have gone about our business of preserving, imparting and extending knowledge in a purposeful and congenial manner, without any serious dislocation, in spite of the troubled times in which we are living. Factors outside the university environs are clearly destined to have an impact on us to an increasing extent, and I shall say more on this anon. Let me first make some remarks on our own affairs.

Finance

1984 was to have been the first year of the much heralded new subsidy formula. In the event its application was something of a fiction, involving as it did a 27% cut. In effect it was the old formula with a 2 1/2% cut. Further uncertainties surrounded the long awaited new salary dispensation, the 12% across the board increase at the beginning of the year being a holding operation. The final details regarding salaries are now well-known to you all, and there is thus no need for me to dilate any further on this subject. I should like to compliment Rhodes staff, however, on the exemplary

patience and understanding shown by all of you in the connection. It certainly has made my task a great deal easier.

When one ~~fully~~ considers the aggregate effect of initial cuts, followed by certain limited adjustments and adjustments, coupled with our own efforts at containing costs, the final financial outcome for 1984 is indicated as being more or less a break-even result, with some prospect of a very modest surplus, if you are optimistic by nature. This is a matter for considerable gratification, since at one stage it appeared as if a serious deficit might be confronting us. No institution can perform its function in a stable environment if persistent financial deficits plague it.

The prospects for 1985 remain problematic, and depend largely on what percentage of the new formula subsidy is actually forthcoming. No university ~~to~~ administrator believes that we shall receive our subsidy in full, and we at Rhodes have budgeted fairly conservatively, I hope sufficiently so.

Construction ^{is likely} ^{to} ^{have} ^{an} ^{effect} ^{on} ^{student} ^{nos.} The university over the past few years has expanded at a sustainable range of typically 2-4% p.a., but that phase is ~~certainly~~ unlikely to continue, certainly for the next 5 yrs. The availability of Gold Fields house means a modest increase in student numbers, and in 1985 we may well reach an all-in total of 3500 of whom \pm 2900 will be full time in G-Town. Thereafter, once the construction and landscaping in the central campus area is complete, hopefully in early 1985, no large construction projects are envisaged. Space norms and Govt capital stringency will see to that. New formula does make provision for upgrading, remodeling existing bldgs, and we hope soon to make progress in this direction, provided the new feature of the formula actually is implemented.

With applications from prospective students running about 7% above last year + accom expansion $\pm 2\%$ we shall obviously be in a position to be more selective. It may well be that in a few years' time that we may be able to catch up with UCT, where the vast bulk of students have C aggregate matrices or better. Such selection practices do not appear to engender controversy there, and ~~certainly~~ ^{without question} their academic, esp research reputation is an enviable one, ~~that I~~ ~~do not wish to~~ ^{will} certainly be a rewarding experience to be teaching students the vast bulk of whom would have the necessary intellectual capacity and concomitant motivation to profit more fully from their instruction.

Major Facilities

A major new facility installed this year was our new electron microscope. This, together with the older machines available, has made our capabilities in this ~~year~~ ^{area} the envy of many apparently better endowed universities. For most of the year we have also had the opportunity to familiarise ourselves with PLATO, the computer-managed learning system. This has ~~to~~ ^{recently} occasioned a good deal of comment, most of it apparently favourable. The final verdict is not yet in, and the question of finding the money for it, should it receive the thumbs up, is not a trivial one. One cynic ^{recently} described it to me as rote learning by computer instead of by Sjabok, but no doubt G. Oberem can easily give the counter-argument to that sort of view.

E.L.

PABX ex Phillips Electro mechanical
big advance on present manual syst. last yr 4-5 years
all electronic - ~~automatic~~ office automation, electronic mail etc.

To those of us not in the Commerce and perhaps Educ faculties, the fact that we have ^{a fledgling but flourishing} ~~the~~ E.L. division, does not loom very large in our minds. By next year we shall prob have almost 200 a/gs and 20 or so p/gs registered. When you visit E.L. you might care to ~~to~~ check

in. I'm sure I.L. Stead will give you a warm welcome

I should like now to return to a point to which I alluded at the beginning of my address, and that is ^{possibly determined} the impact which off-campus events could have on the atmosphere of objectivity and order without which any university would find it exceedingly difficult to fulfill its prime commitment to scholarship. Events in recent months, and more especially those in G'town obviously cannot be ^{responded to} ~~addressed~~ by a know-nothing, head-in-the sand reaction. On the other hand the dangers of an institutional partisan response must also be guarded against. The Senate and Council have ^{on occasion} made ~~it~~ ^{their} ~~perfectly~~ clear their opposition to the politicisation of the Univ. perfectly clear. Univs have not always been responsibly inclined ^{in this respect} ~~to~~ ^{Medieval} of town-gown riots in Oxford, Oxford/Cambridge proclivities in Cromwellian Civil War, vestiges of effects still to some extent apparent to-day.

It has taken ~~so~~ yrs of toil & patience to build Rhodes up to its present form. Univs are fragile plants. Intemperate & ill-conceived action could destroy in 80 wks or 80 days or even 80 hrs what has taken so long to establish. Witness what has happened to ^{certain} ~~hence~~ proud names. Makerere in Uganda, American Univ in Beirut, where the principal was recently brutally assassinated.

Perhaps I am citing extreme examples of civil disorder, but what about N. Ireland? Last year, on a visit to Austria I had the good fortune to sit next to a staff member from Q.U., Belfast on a 45 min train ride. He was a lecturer in Econ Hist and a member of the exel of their

Staff Association, what he had to say in response to my query as to whether the Troubles in that ~~the~~ ^{an} epidemically strife-torn land had spilled over onto the campus, was ~~the~~ immensely heartening.

Did they have bombs on the campus, arson, boycotts, etc, etc. The answer to all these queries was "No, not at all". He explained why.

The Univ in 60-40 Protestant-Catholic, an explosive mixture as one could imagine.

When the Troubles heated up in early 70's there were ^{on} unusually responsible Staff Association + SAC in office. Consensus throughout the university was reached that whatever dispensation finally emerged in Ulster, the province would still need a university. It was a collective responsibility to see to it that the Univ was not destroyed. In some cases the Univ has gone to great lengths to conserve delicate balances. If the hiring of secretaries, Result Univ in an island of peace & civility in a sea of strife.

I also liked his account of what he told his colleagues at the meeting in that all of us.
The Chairman ^{on the point I am making} I do not think I need elaborate any more ~~the~~, Your Association has ~~an~~ a ~~minima~~ great opportunity and a great challenge. I have no doubt that the Association and the Univ in general ~~the~~ possess both the ability and the will to rise to it. Whatever dispensation ultimately emerges ^{for S.A.} in the years ahead, it will have an even greater need than is the case today for educational institutions with the traditions and ethos of RU.

Let us go forward together in ensuring that all that is best in our great tradition remains intact for the benefit of the generations yet unborn.
