

Inside: Looking Out

A festschrift ought not to be gloomy, since it is a happy occasion in which to recall the life of a colleague. So on that score we feel pleased to be able to publish the following documents—especially since they capture so well the nature of the internal debates and the humour (rare enough perhaps) of which Allan Bevan was a connoisseur.

The first two documents were produced by two members of a committee as part of a brief being prepared by the Faculty of Arts and Science at Dalhousie. The Provincial Government had struck a Royal Commission charged (in terms that could well have been more precise) with investigating the state of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia, and the committee in question met throughout the summer of 1983 (on an average of about once a week, for two or three hours), engaged in the process of guessing, discussing, writing, criticizing, rewriting and so on. When the committee's work was completed the brief then had to be considered by a general meeting of the Faculty (potentially a meeting of 350 people). Before that it was to be discussed by the Council of the Faculty: a group of 15 elected members of the Faculty who act as an advisory body to the Dean and a clearing house intended to streamline Faculty business. At the end of that process, some seven months after the committee first began its work, the brief would be forwarded to the Senate of the University, to be stapled in to the University's overall brief. And about one month later the whole package would be sent to the Royal Commission.

The committee itself naturally had its own internal tussles, but on the whole it was good-natured. Its most intense moment of political crisis occurred over what may be called the 'rhetoric' of the brief; with one sub-group wanting a more relaxed, humorous, conversational and less academically stuffy approach. Another sub-group felt that it was necessary for academics to appear as academics when facing the public, so as not to lose the persuasive advantage of academic authority. A matter of symbolism. This latter attitude was characterized by one member of the first sub-group in the following manner: "ACA-

DEMICS—Scholars and Scientists—wrap themselves in the garb of Old Gall—their fancy medieval costumes; and raising their eyes to the heavens, bless themselves in the name of their highest ideals: learning; science; enlightenment and truth; *lux et veritas*. They exclaim, 'Are not universities the very stuff of civilization, as much as families, churches, a democratic political system?' " For whatever it was worth, the rhetoric of "Old Gall" won out, and the passage just quoted did not appear in the finished brief.

In a similar attempt to make its brief lively and entertaining as well as seriously informative, the committee thought of including a collection of vignettes, anecdotal and personal, that would give Commissioners and tax-payers a useful look inside the university. Two such vignettes were written, addressing themselves to two sensitive areas: the use of a professor's time during the lengthy summer recess and during sabbatical leave. The committee itself struggled over these pieces, especially the first one, since some members thought it was perhaps too defensive a reaction for professors to appear so anxiously to be looking out for themselves on the first occasion they found somebody looking in. Nevertheless, the committee opted for the inclusion of the two pieces. At two lengthy meetings of the Faculty Council, and then at a meeting of the Faculty, the chairman of the committee defended the inclusion of the two vignettes. Both of the latter bodies, however, voted against them, so they do not form part of the formal submission to the Royal Commission.

The two vignettes in question are printed immediately below, one dealing with the summery life of "Professor Green", the other with the sabbatical activities of "Dr. Blue". Following them we reprint, with Decanal permission, extracts from the minutes of the meetings of Faculty Council and of the Faculty of Arts and Science. These minutes provoked an open letter to Council from Professor Braybrooke, which is also reprinted by permission. Dr. Blue has not been heard from to date.

— Ed.

David Braybrooke

**Appendix B, or
A (Summer's) Day in the Life of a Professor of Philosophy**

People will not be especially surprised to learn that professors in chemistry and physics spend the summer working on experiments in their laboratories. In geology, oceanography, and biology, many of them are away from the campus doing research in the field. So are many professors in the social sciences and the humanities. Professors of French, for example, try to spend a recess time in France, which would be a useful thing for them and their students if they just practiced speaking French there. In fact, they have reading, writing, and research in French libraries to do as well. Summers are the time to do reading of scholarly material that isn't tied to their classes, the time, too, to get ahead with the projects - the books and articles that they cannot concentrate upon writing under the distracting pressures of term-time. Many professors take their stipulated month's vacation during the four-month recess, spending the other three months on research - in many cases, on teaching as well, because even during the recess, teaching goes on with graduate students and in two consecutive summer sessions for undergraduates. When their research consists of reading and writing, however, their working time tends to spread out over the whole recess. Whatever vacation is taken is taken little by little, in an afternoon here, a day off there.

Among the professors for whom this is true we find a certain professor of philosophy. Let's call him Green. Green is perhaps an exception in keeping up his writing all through the year, in term-time and out; and an exception, too, in doing his writing entirely in his office, to which he repairs every morning, seven days a week, holidays included. Many other professors, however, put in the same amount of work year by year, though they work on different patterns. They may, for instance, do their reading during term-time; when the term has ended, they put in days at a time at their typewriters. Green does his intensive reading of scholarly material, except for the reading (rereading) tied to his classes and the minimum necessary to keep on with his writing, in the summer. A typical summer day for Green begins at 7:30,

half-dozen pages that she has typed since yesterday of an article that he finished last week. At quarter to 4, he walks home again and settles down for an hour with a philosophical work on *a priori* knowledge. He goes for a swim at 5 and then is occupied until 7 or 7:30 with preparing dinner, eating it, and washing up afterwards. Some evenings he will not be doing any work at all, not even any serious reading. But typically he will be reading one or another book from the pile beside his living-room chair; tonight it is Fernand Braudel's *The Wheels of Commerce*, a history of everyday practices during the development of capitalism, that occupies him. (He will have a chance to draw upon some of the information in this book next week, in a debate with other philosophers about the power that private property gives some people over others.) An interruption occurs at 8:20: another member of the team with which he is collaborating on a picture book about 19th Century architecture in Halifax calls to discuss the current stage of this project. At 9:30, he turns to lighter reading, though even this may have a bearing on his work. He is currently reading Edmund Wilson's diary for the 1940's, and he takes that up again, putting it down after a while to look through a book of 20th Century watercolors. At 10:30 Green is ready for bed; and so to bed he goes.

* * * *

R. S. Rodger

Appendix C, or Sabbatical Leave

Academic staff in universities are usually eligible, after six years of service, to apply for leave on reduced salary for a year. Such sabbatical leave is intended to allow scholars to write scholarly papers for publication, or books; to extend their knowledge by deep and prolonged study; to consult sources of information extensively which are not normally available to them (e.g. material in the British Museum, or

observations taken in the North West Territories); and to extend their research skills in collaboration with colleagues in other institutions.

Let us consider the leave taken by a professor of psychology, Dr. Blue. This lady's major interest is the mathematical aspects of the discipline and, over the years, she has developed a series of new techniques for the analysis of data from experiments. These are derived from an interpretation of what data analysis is about, which is radically different from the outlook of most present-day research workers. Blue is quite aware of that: she says the others have not thoroughly thought out the bases of data analysis. Dr. Blue has been publishing her views and techniques, but she needs a prolonged visit with colleagues knowledgeable in data analysis in order to test her arguments out face to face.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada awarded her a Leave Grant to assist her in the added costs of travel and the research. She travelled to an institution in North Carolina which has a reputation for data analysis. After settling in there, she gave the first colloquium of the academic year. Over 150 scholars turned up from all over the campus, the room was packed, and some very vocal members of the audience were quite opposed to what Blue had been doing. The colloquium ran well over schedule due to the on-going debate. Blue felt she had not got her message over clearly, so she was not entirely happy. This quickly changed when a number of graduate students approached her and asked if she would give them a series of talks on her new techniques and interpretation. That she did during the year.

Developments had been taking place in other aspects of mathematical psychology over the preceding ten years which Blue had been unable to keep abreast of. A young professor was giving a seminar series on this material throughout the year; so Blue was able to sit in on that and learn a great deal about this unfamiliar territory.

Blue also read a large number of books and papers on mathematical linguistics, set theory, automata theory and Markov chains. She made extensive notes on all this material because she was preparing a long paper showing how to apply the theory of grammars to the analysis of discrete events such as sequences of actions by animals. The paper referred to two computer programs Blue had written to analyse discrete events, under the guidance of a human user, and find a grammar for behaviour. The ideas in the paper were tried out at a meeting of the Animal Behaviour Society held in the American Museum of Natural History. Since biologists do not usually think of things in terms of grammar, the meeting was very helpful in showing where further clarification was needed. A modified version of the presentation was

made some months later at the Annual Meeting of the Behaviour Genetics Society. That seemed to go quite well; so the paper was completed and was published some eighteen months later.

The institution in North Carolina did project work for the U.S. National Institutes of Health; so Blue arranged to join the group co-ordinating various data gathering and analysis. This was with a view to applying to the N.I.H. to bring a project to Dalhousie University for the co-ordination of a clinical trial of a drug used with heart-attack patients. The application was made, but was not successful in competition with other centres.

Finally, Blue completed work on a project that had been underway for about ten years. That involved a great deal of numerical integration by computer of a function which is difficult to integrate. The result was a set of new tables useful in data analysis and these were published. It is amusing to note that the original mathematical work on which these tables are based was classified as secret during World War II. After that work was published late in 1945, it was very largely ignored until Blue took it up over thirty years later. The continuity of knowledge is easily disrupted and but for the energetic use made of sabbatical leave, important advances in understanding could well be delayed for much longer than thirty years.

* * * *

Excerpt from

Faculty Council Minutes - FC83/84.1 September 8, 1983 Page 5

Professor A. asked what Council was trying to do at the moment. Would Professor B. go back to the committee and rewrite the report? Would the report be transmitted to Faculty with various caveats entered by Council? Or should the committee be thanked and the report simply transmitted to Faculty? He held the discussion was quite interesting but desultory. As for the report he thought this was quite good enough for a Royal Commission.

Professor Z. said that he thought the report failed to recognize the contribution made by graduate students who also served as teaching assistants. Professor H. said he could not make any useful comments.

He found the document difficult to debate, and suggested that members of Council should communicate with Professor B. on an individual basis.

The Dean noted that the brief was a Faculty brief and would need to be submitted to the Senate. The Senate could adopt it or Faculty could submit it to the Royal Commission independently. Professor R. said she wanted to comment on the tone of the document. She agreed with almost everything in the brief. It seemed to her orthodox and traditional, and she would be very happy if Faculty as a whole agreed with it. But, she asked, did the committee consider what the commissioners' conception of their task was? Professor B. said the committee had had difficulty in deciding what the commissioners' minds were like. The committee had not been able to figure out what they wanted; it had begun with certain fears. The question, however, was impossible to solve. Professor R. said she would not expect that but what did the Commission think it was doing? Clearly it had two implicit mandates from government. The first was to try to produce economies in post secondary education, and the second to produce economies that would not alienate votes. She thought a third objective of the Commission would be to search for some ideas which would enable them to make innovative recommendations. With respect to the brief, Professor R. said that she thought there was a tactical error in the early pages which were condescending and arrogant. This was impolitic. If the commissioners were put off by the brief at the outset, then they wouldn't read the rest of it. She asked if consideration had been given to bringing on the Royal Commission as an ally, to saying in effect, these are our problems and this is what we would like to do about them.

Professor T. said he wanted to thank Professor R. for clarifying things in his mind. In his opinion the document began defensively and had difficulty in reaching more positive conclusions. Professor A. suggested that a debate about the style of the document would not be helpful. The important question was whether the document said what we thought was important to be said.

The Dean drew attention to the hour and the fact that there were other items to be discussed for which members had been invited some of whom had other duties to perform. It was understood that the Steering Committee would make arrangements for further discussion of the brief to the Royal Commission.

**Excerpt from
Faculty Council Minutes - FC83/84.2 September 29, 1983 Page 6**

Professor Y. said that he thought Appendix B, A (Summer's) Day in the Life of a Professor of Philosophy, was undesirable. Its formulation was objectionable if indeed this was intended as a strategic document. People had read this and thought it ridiculous as a portrayal of a serious person's existence. It was a mistake, which worked against the general impact of the brief. Professor B. said that members of Council would recall that this passage had originally been included in the brief. It was now presented as an appendix so that it could easily be dropped. The Dean called for a straw vote. Professor W. said that he thought it was important to indicate that work did go on in the summer. Professor D. said she was in favour of removal. Aside from the frivolity, the appendix suggested that Professors had no family or domestic concerns. Professor F. said that he remembered saying at an earlier meeting that this section was the part that he had enjoyed most. If it were removed, he hoped that a suitable footnote might yet take its place.

The Dean called for a motion to deal with the matter. It was moved by Professor L., seconded by Professor T.,

that Faculty Council recommend to Faculty that Appendices B and C be omitted from the Faculty Brief to the Royal Commission on Post Secondary Education.

Professor W. asked what was the objection to having something about what Professors do in the summer. He did not see the harm in addressing these questions seriously. The Dean said that was the committee's view. Professor B. said there were no paragraphs in the brief itself which bore on this question.

The motion was carried with one dissenting vote and three abstentions.

* * * *

**Excerpt from
Faculty Minutes F83/84.2**

October 11, 1983

The Secretary said that the report had been discussed on two occasions by Faculty Council and as a result there was a recommendation from Faculty Council to Faculty which he would move. The Secretary moved, seconded by Professor D.,

that Appendices B and C be deleted from the document.

The Secretary said that Faculty Council had felt that these appendices did not achieve their objective. It was recognized that what the committee had tried to do was to represent the fact that Professors work during the summer and while on sabbatical leave; however, the form of these appendices it was felt by Council would be counterproductive in achieving this objective.

Professor B. said that he felt it was necessary to defend Professors against assumptions of idleness. It was a natural reaction to want to explain what we do during the summer. He said that one member of Council had said that this was the only part of the brief he had enjoyed. Professor B. said that the appendices were anecdotal and personal and might achieve some sympathy for professors. Professor O. said that if it came to revisions, was it a question of dropping the appendices or keeping them. He thought they could be moderated somewhat. If this were not possible, he would support the motion. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried by fourteen votes to eleven.

* * * *

An Open Letter, from David Braybrooke

Faculty Council, Arts & Science
Dalhousie University

Friends:

I showed the minutes of your meeting of 29 September to Professor Green and held a conversation of sorts with him. He told me that in general he had felt, turn by turn, amazed, mortified, and amused by the

reception of the literal (though selective) account of one of his typical days. "Amazed," he said, "at the variety of reactions. Some enjoyed it, but thought it gave a picture too enviably agreeable. Others thought it unbearably grim." He went on, "I was mortified to find so extensive a mismatch between my colleagues' sense of humor and my own. Not only, it appears, do we differ in the number and kinds of things we find funny. We evidently strongly disagree on whether the least bit of life and humour has a place in a public document." "Really," I said; "I suspect you're ready to put in a joke anywhere." "Whenever I think of one," he replied, without, it seemed to me, a trace of penitence.

"But what," I asked, "amused you about the reactions?" "Why," he said, "they were at such cross-purposes. Some said the account was ridiculously far from giving an accurate picture of a serious person's existence. Others evidently thought the degree of industry that it described was wildly improbable. Where was the time needed for family and household concerns, not to speak of relaxation? Some specially gifted people managed at one and at the same time to think it too frivolous and too serious besides."

"Ah," I said, "maybe that's because you yourself make a mixed impression. Come clean: Which is the real you, too frivolous, or too serious?" He rejoined, emphatically, though rather unhelpfully, "Both. But the frivolous side hardly showed up in this account. Like G. E. Moore I'd rather give close study to *The National Lampoon* any day than write philosophy, and there was nothing about that." I protested, "Didn't Moore speak of reading novels? *The National Lampoon* wasn't even around in his day, for goodness' sake."

Green said, "I read novels, too; besides, I'm much more frivolous than Moore was. I thought whoever wrote the account was a bit heavy-handed. In fact, it looks to me as though he himself had an overdose of public solemnity. I understand he left out a lot of colorful data as not being to the point. Even so he didn't succeed in being solemn enough, did he? Nothing about romance, kisses, fond embraces, making music, sharing an apple with Cherubino (the canary), playing fetch and tug with the Corgi - though he did get something in about dishwashing." I pointed out, "If any of that stuff had been in the account, it would have struck even more people as completely frivolous." "Exactly," he said; "yet it would have been truer to life."

I put it to him: "Do you mean to say that the picture as it stands is more serious than frivolous?" "I do," he said. "But," I asked, "don't you realize that either way it has jeopardized your chances of exercising any influence in faculty affairs? What chance, for example, do you now have of being elected to the tenure committee, or the promotions committee, or Faculty Council?" He grinned; but it was not merely a

grin; it was a gleeful, even exultant expression. It was as if, to everybody's surprise, including his own, he had just pulled off a minor coup.

"It may be worse for you," I said, "if you're seriously taken to be living by such a standard of industry." A look of concern crossed Green's face. "I wouldn't want to be taken," he said, "to be leaving no room for *joie de vivre*. Shouldn't any serious academic find joy in his work, research as well as teaching? 'We work', declares Delacroix, 'not only to produce but to give value to time.' If enjoying work at least as much as I do is uncommon at Dalhousie, then I must say it will be a better university when the enjoyment is more common. I hope some people who feel the same way will continue to creep into those committees, if only by accident."

I asked, "Where did you get that nugget from Delacroix?" He answered, "From my frivolous side; I was reading a book of aphorisms, when I should have been doing something more ambitious." "Joking again," I commented; "what are you going to do now, spared for the rest of your career the prospect of serving on any of those committees?" This time he smiled, just like Moore, seraphically. "Ah," he said, "I'll never want for something to do."