

*The author looks at current practices of university government in Britain, Canada and Germany and pinpoints some issues raised by recent proposals for administrative and constitutional changes in universities. He suggests that Canadian social scientists could help resolve some of these issues by systematically sorting out and objectively appraising these proposals.*

MURRAY G. ROSS\*

## Models for University Government

There is no question that major decisions are being made, and will be made, this year in respect of university government. These decisions will vitally affect the future of universities in Canada. I am concerned that each proposal for change is looked at separately, almost in isolation, and that there is no systematic exploration of various models of government that might be considered by those most concerned, namely the faculty of our universities.

In most problems with which the researcher is interested, he begins by positing a variety of models for his project. Indeed, a major responsibility of the social scientist is to extend the range of models or alternatives that might be considered in dealing with a special problem such as that of university government. I am surprised, therefore, to find most social scientists in Canada as passionately involved in heated debate about how the universities are to be run as their students and academic colleagues. No one, to my knowledge, has suggested a range of alternatives with an objective appraisal of each for those of us who are daily puzzled about the next steps to be taken in university reform.

What I am about to outline is a plan of study. It is of necessity brief and incomplete, but I hope nonetheless suggestive of the kinds of questions and the kind of exploration that require consideration before decisions are made that will bind us for the next several decades.

We need to look at the practices and proposals of various universities that can be studied in some depth. But we should go far beyond this to study other institutions with somewhat similar problems of internal management and others with similar relationships to government bodies. We have tended in the university to be extremely introspective; to consider our own community and our own problems quite unique. Most of the reports now appearing on discipline and university government sel-

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\*Professor, Division of Social Science, York University, Toronto.

dom look over the ivy walls to see if there can be any help from neighbours. I would suggest, then, that some examination of new institutional forms and structures could conceivably help us. All the possible solutions need then to be considered in light of certain beliefs and values we hold for the university, for it is in light of these latter that we will have to choose or create a form of government for the university of the future.

Briefly then, the study might begin with some examinations of prevailing forms of government and proposals for new forms of government in the university.

(1) *The prevailing two-tiered system.* Here there are, in effect, two governing bodies: the Senate, composed primarily of faculty members responsible for the academic affairs of the university, and the Board, composed primarily of lay businessmen responsible for financial affairs. Legally, the Board is the senior body, with ultimate authority; but, in fact, it seldom interferes in academic affairs. This form of government assumes that the university is (a) an academic community, (b) a large, expensive public corporation, and that (c) different kinds of people and different kinds of skills are required to operate each.

The weakness is said to be that lay people should not have final authority in the university, that academic policy cannot be separated from financial policy, that students have an insufficient role in decision-making, and that this structure denies the principle of a self-governing community. The advantages claimed for the system are absolute control by faculty of matters such as admission, curriculum, academic standards, graduation requirements, etc., freedom for faculty from concern about business and financial matters, and solid public representation in the affairs of the university.<sup>1</sup>

(2) *The German Proposals.*<sup>2</sup> The universities in West Germany are in a period of transition and it is not possible to talk about them as if all issues were settled. What I will report is primarily the system in Berlin which is likely to be influential throughout the nation.

The important units of government in many respects are the departments in which all teaching and research are carried on. The department is governed by a Council composed of 7 professors, 4 assistants, 3 students, and one clerk. The Council decides curriculum, examinations, appointments, research programs and research grants. The Senate, which is the supreme academic body, is similarly composed and among other responsibilities it elects the President and Vice-Presidents, who form a strong central executive group. This latter group has a good deal of authority in administrative matters; it deals directly with the government

<sup>1</sup>The very best defense of this system that I have seen is a statement by Dr. A. J. Corry, published in the *University of New Brunswick News* (Winter 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Gerhard Hess *Universities in Germany (1930-1970)* Inter-Nationes Bad Godesberg; *Documentation Concerning University Reform* (West German Rectors Conference, July 1969).

on financial, building, and long-term planning concerns, and is responsible for the budget and financial affairs of the university.

This form of government has not been in effect for a sufficient time to be properly evaluated. Older professors are sceptical because they can, if all others agree, be outvoted on policies they consider critical, e.g. research; radical students believe the Senate and Councils should have some control of financial policy; many think the Councils will become political forums with various vested-interest groups battling for a balance-of-power position. On the other hand, many see this new government as the first step toward "democracy in the university," as giving the various groups in the university something to say about decisions which affect them, and as shifting the power-base away from the senior professors to a broader base which includes students and assistants.

(3) *The University of Toronto Plan*.<sup>3</sup> The very detailed proposal of the Commission on Government being considered at University of Toronto seeks to decentralize much of the power now vested in the Senate and the Board of Governors. What is proposed is ". . . essentially a 'three-tiered' university government: departments, faculties, governing Council, with control over internal academic matters resting for the most part with the first two . . ." Departments and faculties would be controlled by Councils, in which the Commission recommends 40 percent representation for staff, 40 percent for students and 20 percent for administration. The Chairman and Dean are given major administrative responsibilities, particularly for promotions and appointments, but are always accountable to the Council. The Governing Council of the University, it is proposed, would replace the present Senate and Board, and would have ultimate responsibility for "the government, management and control of the University and of its property, revenues, expenditures, and business affairs, including all matters of educational and academic policy . . ." It would be composed of 66 members: 20 lay members, 20 elected students, 20 elected academic staff, 6 ex-officio members. The Commission stresses the need to decentralize authority, to provide for flexibility and a large degree of autonomy for faculties, and the principle of openness and of parity (i.e., equal faculty and student representation in governing councils and committees). There is a rather confusing section on the need for "clear recognition by the academic community of the right and responsibility of the university support staff to contribute to shaping the institution as a whole," but there is no recommendation that "support staff" be given representation or membership on any of the Councils.

These proposals are viewed with favor by many. They are seen by some as removing the archaic Board structure yet keeping some community representation in the government of the university, of bringing

<sup>3</sup>*Toward Community in University Government*. Report of the Commission on the Government of the University of Toronto (University of Toronto Press, 1969).

together financial and academic affairs and thus making effective planning possible, and of allowing all members of the university to participate in its government. The disadvantages are said to be that with the abolition of Senate, the faculty loses control of essential academic policy decisions and can be outvoted in the governing Council if students and community representatives so decide; that a council of the size and membership proposed is ill - equipped and perhaps not competent to deal with many of the major problems of the university; and that, in any case, the government could not give such a council (in which students and faculty predominate) a hundred million dollars a year without placing very strict conditions on how the money could be spent, in which case the university would gradually lose its autonomy.

(4) *The British System.* Apart from Oxford and Cambridge, and certain special universities in Britain, the standard constitution of universities calls for a Council with a majority of lay members, but with academic representation as well, responsible for buildings, finances, and appointments; and a Senate made up of members of faculty and responsible for all academic matters. On numerous questions such as academic priorities appointments, the Council is required to (or in any case does) take advice from Senate. Sir Sydney Caine, in *British Universities*, says: "All the universities have tended to move therefore, so far as detailed administration is concerned, in the direction of full academic self - government. . . ." <sup>1</sup> While extensive informal means of consultation with students have been developed there seems no provision, or disposition to provide, for student membership in any of the executive authorities of the university. Nor is such provision made for administrative staff members.

Supporters of this system say that it works for Britain, that members of faculty have carried their responsibilities well, that the organization of Vice - Chancellors is a more effective means of dealing with government than lay members of Council, and that responsibility for operating the university is, with the exception of a few matters, placed where it should be: in the hands of the members of faculty. Obviously there are those who disagree: students want representation on executive bodies; many feel the Council is an antiquated organization and should either be dropped or revitalized; some believe the system worked well as long as professors were willing to allow administrators in the university to carry the burden of work, but with the politicalization of the university by younger faculty members, there is little time for a professor to do his own work; some think the real control has, in any case, passed into government hands and little is left to local university judgment.

There are other university models that require study, particularly in Brazil and Argentina. When a sufficient list of models is developed, it would then be useful to explore precisely how certain key decisions are

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Sydney Caine *British Universities* (University of Toronto Press, 1969).

made and by whom in each model. For example, who decides about appointments, promotions, budget distribution, parking policy, salary scales, publication policy, research policy, etc.? In addition, there should be exploration of other types of institutions to ascertain if there is anything to be learned in whole, or in part, that could be of value to the university as it plans for the future. Does the C.B.C. or Ontario Hydro, for example, have built into their structural relationship to governments any protection to freedom of operation that would be of value to the university? Does the relation of the medical staff to the Board of Trustees of a hospital inform us in any way regarding the role and function of professionals and laymen in a single organization? Are there organizations in which consumers participate in the determination of policy and, if so, with what results? What is the model of government in such experimental colleges as Rochdale, Reed, Antioch, and how are they to be evaluated? One can see a whole fascinating field of investigation here that might broaden immeasurably the range of models for our consideration.

Further, one might well explore whether certain kinds of programs of higher education require different systems of government. Are professional schools such as Medicine and Law, for example, less able to adjust to a governing structure which includes students and laymen than Humanities and Social Sciences? Some professors with deep interests in scholarly activity and research want nothing more than to be left alone in their work. Should such people have the opportunity to work uninhibited in a different kind of institution than the university, or should whatever form of government developed in the university seek to protect them from student harassment and political activity? Should the university reject the pressures to be huge multiversities by establishing separate units of higher education, e.g. community colleges that grant degrees, separate health sciences units, separate graduate and research units, undergraduate self-governing colleges? Again, there is a field of exploration here the results of which might widen our vision and our range of choice.

However far we proceed in detailing various models that might enlighten our discussions and decisions about university government, ultimate choice will depend on attitudes, beliefs, and value-judgments in respect of certain fundamental questions about the university. But here again, a dog-fight might be prevented if the questions were clearly and objectively stated. It is not my purpose at this time to do this, but I might suggest a few areas in which further work might be done.

*The Purpose of the University.* Views on this matter range all the way from the traditional "uninhibited teaching, unhurried thought and reflection, undistracted probing of the mysteries of the frontiers of knowledge . . ." to the view that in the modern day "the university must be an agency of social reform. . . ." Obviously, one's judgment on this issue

will influence one's choice in respect of governmental structure. Perhaps, however, if concensus regarding purpose is impossible a wider range of institutions of higher education should be considered so that there can be quite distinct institutions each with its own unique purpose and form of government. Why are all universities in Canada essentially the same? Is one of our difficulties that we are trying to put too many people, too many divergent ideas, too many different objectives under one institutional umbrella, i.e. "The Canadian University"? Is it possible to stretch our minds sufficiently to posit a whole system of post - secondary - school education in which there could be relatively autonomous colleges, professional institutes, graduate schools, research institutes, and in which there would or could be rather different purposes and rather different governmental structures?

*The Autonomy of Universities.* Almost all within the university wish for a high degree of autonomy, yet every year university autonomy is being eroded by government fiat. Perhaps this is inevitable, given the increasing degree of government support. If so, the universities should at least identify priorities in this respect, i.e. a list of items, in order of importance, which are considered essential for the health of the university. The question then is which form of internal government will provide for those elements of autonomy we must have. The German and British universities may be instructive here, for my impression of their view is that the greater the degree of student participation in the executive bodies of the universities the less autonomy the government will permit. Perhaps this attitude will change with time, but we may need to consider various "trade - offs," e.g. how much "community participation" to secure what degree of autonomy, how much power to the (Ontario) Committee of Presidents in order to keep the Committee of University Affairs at length? Certainly there cannot be autonomous self-governing universities to which governments will give unlimited, unconditional funds. Which are university priorities and what are the proper "trade - offs"?

*Democracy in the University.* Here again we need to know what we want and what price we are willing to pay for it. Views range from the concept of the university as a political community in which the principles of democratic politics should be applied, to the concept of the university as a center of teaching and research directed by senior scholars in which power and authority are closely tied to function. Some appraisal requires to be made of the implications of each position of the spectrum of views of democratic participation. I saw in one German university the president heading a "reform party," seeking to win adherents to his views, and organizing both students and faculty to vote for his candidates for seats on Council and Senate. This was less terrifying than I had expected, yet the atmosphere in the university was unlike any I had known. It was not one in which I would care to work. But if one

believes that political democracy should prevail, that atmosphere is a logical consequence.

If one accepts the British position of government by senior faculty members there is little, if any, room for student participation in the major decision-making bodies of the university and the university is far from the "self-governing community" that many seem to want. Similarly, for each position on the democracy spectrum there are implications that require evaluation.

What I have attempted to do in this article is to sketch a pattern of study, the results of which might enlighten and inform all those who must make decisions about the nature of university government in Canada. There are bold solutions with strong advocates on all sides, but there is little systematic sorting and weighing of alternatives. Surely this is "a natural" for the social scientist. We need new breadth as well as depth in our analysis of university government.