This term has come to represent a rallying cry for at least four conflicting sectors of the university community and in the process the concept for which it stands has been rendered increasingly powerless. A major source of confusion may be the incompatibility of the twin functions demanded of the university today: the preparation and certification of incumbents of specialized roles (requiring supervision by society) and the transmission and construction of verified knowledge (requiring protection from both the surrounding society and various groups within the organization.).

PAT DUFFY HUTCHEON

Academic Freedom: An Evolving Concept?

Increasingly, the crisis in North American higher education is being defined in terms of academic freedom. To those of the rebellious young sincerely concerned with improving the universities it is the lack of this particular freedom as applied to the student that is the major cause of the present malaise. To those members of faculties and administrations similarly concerned, it is the probability of the adverse consequences for academic freedom (as applied to the university community as a whole) of the current wave of violent campus confrontations that makes the situation so worrisome. In addition there exists a third university-based agglomerate (including members of student, faculty, and governing bodies) who, for a variety of ideological and expedient reasons, are not primarily concerned with the improvement of learning conditions in higher education. The term "academic freedom" is being utilized more and more by these people merely as a superbly effective political slogan or propaganda tool.

Included in this third category are two ideologically opposed but equally cynical groups. On the one hand there are the militant revolutionaries intent on destroying the fragile social order inevitably typical of a federal, pluralistic, relatively open and politically democratic society plagued by grievous social and economic inequalities. They see the university as the most vulnerable underflank of this hated society. While this group is usually vocal in seeking the cover of the "academic freedom" umbrella, the concept itself would seem to hold little meaning for them. For those who despise the psychologically repressive tolerance of the representative democracy more than they fear the physically repressive intolerance of totalitarianism, the very principle of academic freedom which allows their continued privileged membership in the university community must itself be an object of scorn.

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The other cynical group includes many of the academic power-brokers, high level bureaucrats, and professional empire-builders who perceive the modern university as a business enterprise to be operated for their own advantage and convenience, or for the greater glory of their particular profession, department, or discipline. These professional academics likewise are prone to calling the "academic freedom" umbrella into service whenever the question of their ultimate accountability to the welfare of humanity is raised. To them, this freedom means the freedom not to be committed to the goal of abundant life for the "party of humanity", but rather to their own short-term gain or to something that a few of them perhaps still really believe is possible: a totally detached, "objective" search for an absolute Truth.

The very fact that academic freedom has come to represent a rallying cry and an ideal for at least four conflicting sectors of a polarized organization indicates that the term may already have been rendered powerless as an instrument of communication. It may well be that there is no longer sufficient consensus among the users of the term as to its definition for any degree of meaning to be conveyed by it. This means that if the term is to be retained for purposes of rational discourse and knowledge construction, it is imperative that the concept for which it stands be analyzed and its necessarily changing nature publicly recognized and clarified.

Concepts define and order relations in empirical reality. Those representing social relations must of necessity evolve in meaning as patterns of social interaction change over time. Unless one denies the fact of biological and cultural evolution, one cannot assume that academic freedom as understood in the late nineteenth century setting represents an absolute "right" for any particular sector of the modern university community. It is necessary instead for the concept to be redefined in terms of the behaviors by which it might be expressed, supported, or destroyed *today*. It must be defined as well within the cultural and societal context in which the modern educational institution functions.

Since the 1930's we have witnessed a trend toward ever greater integration of education with government and business. During and after the second world war this was accelerated, with higher education increasingly supplying the needs of business and government in terms of personnel, information, and sophisticated techniques for the achievement of all manner of non-academic objectives. During the past decade this partnership has taken a new and forbidding turn, with the drastic alterations which have been occurring in the very nature of the society being served by the university. American society, especially, has become increasingly polarized. On the one hand, industry, education and government seem to be amalgamating into a huge, all-powerful complex, while, on the other hand, we have a growing alienated and revolutionary segment beginning to challenge

the power monopoly and life style of the "establishment". In this situation the function of higher education must be carefully re-examined, as must the meaning and relevance of academic freedom.

It seems abundantly clear that where the university is serving as the handmaiden of the established social and economic order, academic freedom as applied to the institutional role of education can have little meaning. We all know that intellectuals can be enslaved by their nation-states in at least two ways. They can be removed or they can be bought. A university which exists to serve a particular national "establishment" will be manned by professors who will know "what side their bread is buttered on". Where this relationship is allowed to develop in a relatively democratic society, those whose ideas are not considered "safe" or "supportive" will not be jailed as will their counterparts in more totalitarian regimes. They will merely not be rehired, or will be encouraged to resign if they have tenure. This is why, if a university perceives its institutional function to be to respond to the immediate dictates of society (as articulated by the most powerful of the organized groupings within it) academic freedom cannot exist in any meaningful sense.

But there is a paradox here. Is not this role of handmaiden precisely the relationship that *must* hold between our post-secondary preparatory organizations and society if our social system is to evolve rationally? If the university claims as its prerogative the task of preparing and *certifying* incumbents of specialized roles in an organizational society does not that same university then have a responsibility to maintain a reasonable correspondence between certified supply and societal demand and between role expectations of candidate and organization? Where is the justification for academic freedom to ignore and resist society's articulated values and needs in this situation? Might not such academic freedom operate as an obstacle to effectiveness—as an excuse for gross educational inefficiency with its accompanying costs in terms of disillusioned, cynical, corrupted or wasted young people? Could it be that our universities today are trying to "have their cake and eat it too" at the expense of the society which maintains them?

It is time that we reconsidered this problem of the role of higher education in a highly organized, industrialized society and the implications of recent changes in this role for academic freedom. The paradox discussed above has its source in the fact that two distinct and even conflicting tasks are now being required of higher education in Canadian society: that of providing individuals with specialized social and technical competencies and that of liberalizing, or of encouraging intellectual growth in yet uncharted directions. Perhaps we should be developing two distinctly different types of organizations for the performance of these tasks — recognizing that while academic freedom is the prerequisite of the second task, it may well inter-

fere with adequate performance of the first.

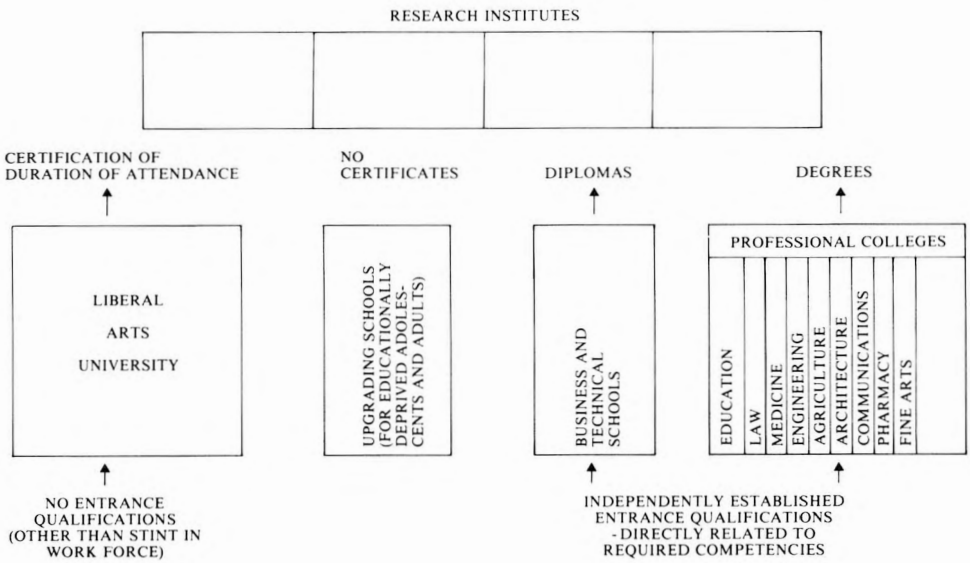
University education, if it is to be defined as a liberalizing experience — the process of questioning the assumptions of one's culture and of constructing new knowledge — can only be a force for change. It can never serve to perpetuate the status quo. This is why Catholic, Lutheran or Mormon universities in North America and Communist universities in some other states are contradictions in terms. They are bound to place limitations on academic freedom, if only to ensure their own survival as enculturating agencies. However, if the university is not to perform merely a disintegrative function for the group as a whole, it must, while liberating individuals from narrow dogmas, at the same time provide a fertile seed bed for the development of individual morality and wisdom and thereby the evolution of group norms and knowledge. Otherwise the society concerned is doomed to nihilism and self destruction. As *one* of the parts of the educational institution then, freed from a service relationship with the established social order, the liberal arts university is potentially the most significant moral and revolutionary cultural force. ("Revolutionary" here is used in the psycho-cultural sense only, implying radical alteration of individual affective and cognitive structures.) It is for the performance of a humanly responsible moral and intellectual leadership function that the university must remain free from societal control. Only in the pursuit of this objective is the demand for academic freedom justified.

However, as mentioned previously, higher education has another function. Some type of post-secondary organization must also prepare people for the specialized roles required to maintain a complex society. This *is* a service function which must necessarily be controlled jointly by government representing the perceived needs of society as a whole and by the business, professional and research establishments concerned. I suspect that it is the confusion of these two quite opposing functions and the encompassing of them by the same organization that is largely responsible for the present crisis and controversy over academic freedom.

I am convinced that the only way to free the university from inhibiting societal pressures sufficiently to ensure academic freedom to engage in its "liberating" cultural role is to isolate it from the selecting, certifying and allocating function which it is performing (rather poorly) today. The latter tasks should be restricted to independently operated professional schools or colleges. Unlike those professional schools the university should be concerned neither with the grading of students nor with the granting of degrees. The university experience would then be a liberalizing one — a general education for living, available to adults of all ages and for any desirable duration. Academic freedom, defined as freedom for *all* members of the university community to inquire and learn, would no longer be undermined by the coercive power of professor's grades and societal demands.

The professional colleges, on the other hand, would of necessity be closely articulated with the current demands of society. Their degrees would represent a specific level of performance in specific tasks: performance amenable to relatively objective measurement. Here the concept of academic freedom would apply to the student only in that he should have a right to have his programs tailored as much as possible to his individual needs and aptitudes and the right to a wide choice of schools, programs and teachers. For the professor in the professional school academic freedom would mean freedom to incorporate into his teaching research findings in his field. But it would not entail the right to establish his own learning objectives and student-achievement criteria without the involvement and consensus of the profession or business and the government. External comprehensive exams (not necessarily written) developed by instructional or evaluational teams would be appropriate here. In this way the individual professor would be freed from his contradictory roles of "judge" and "priest" and the student's academic freedom would not be vitiated by biased teacher-grading.

These professional colleges would establish their own entrance qualifications. The School of Education, for example, might demand, in addition to a certain skill and information level and certain personality attributes, a two-year period of study in a liberal arts university. Or the School might require that time be spent in the work force, perhaps as a teacher aide. Or it might require a term in the university *after* a probationary teaching period and *before* the awarding of the final certificate of professional competence. Under this scheme the post-secondary educational stage would be organized as follows:



If we could agree that the concept of academic freedom is applicable in its broad cultural sense only to the university and the research institute, the issue would be clarified considerably. We could then move our discussion to the organizational level, assuming that research institutes and liberal arts universities are the organizations in question. In the organizational context it is possible to define the concept in more concrete, behavioral terms. What implications, for example, does academic freedom have for the role of administrator, teacher and student in the liberal arts or research setting?

Most administrators would no doubt agree that they perform a protective role in resisting community control. In addition, they have a more positive part to play. Theirs is the responsibility for providing the type of organizational environment in which academic freedom (to learn and to inquire) will flourish for both teacher and student. It is this freedom for the student to learn and the scholar to inquire beyond the threshold of present knowledge that must have primacy over all other freedoms which might contend for priority. It is the reason for being of the liberal arts university and compared to it the freedom merely to *teach* what one wishes must pale into insignificance. For freedom to teach involves, as well as inquiry, the right to indoctrinate and to incite, in order to achieve planned behavioral change. Only if the teacher's efforts at accomplishing behavioral change contribute to the student's freedom to learn are they justified and worthy of protection by the organization. They must be assessed in this light in the particular university setting concerned, rather than in terms of some abstract, absolute ideal of freedom for professional academics.

This means that in recruiting teaching personnel, administrators must make a conscious effort to provide for a clash of ideas and a variety of modes of perception at the classroom level in each discipline. People representing as many diverse ideological commitments and intellectual frames of reference as possible should be sought after and encouraged to develop and defend their positions on the philosophical and social problems of the day. The responsibility that professors, given this type of freedom, must accept is to identify clearly and honestly to each class their value premises on such vital matters as the nature of reality, of man, of knowledge, and of desirable goals for humanity.

In the case of the physical sciences where a high level of consensus exists regarding knowledge paradigms or theoretical frameworks, little further identification of premises would be necessary. However, in the social sciences and humanities, which are still primarily at the preparadigm stage of development, teachers have the additional responsibility of elaborating for their students the particular paradigms and disciplinary "schools" to which they are committed intellectually. Only if this kind of intellectual rigour and integrity is scrupulously maintained are students forewarned and

forearmed sufficiently to be able to assess the professor's conclusions and his selection of data for presentation. And it is only through such assessment that sutdents are equipped to select a broad, representative sampling from the concerned administrator, and thus are assured of academic freedom.

Such academic freedom can be obstructed from without (as when weak administrators bow to interest group pressures in the hiring and firing of staff) or from within. Professors can contribute to the destruction of the academic freedom of the total organization through intellectual dishonesty and/or ignorance of their own beliefs and values, as well as by simple incompetence as intellectual guides to student inquiry. They can subvert the university's cultural function also, by using their prestigeous and influential positions in active efforts to recruit, from among the student body, members of movements based on their own ideological commitments. Thirdly, by inciting students to unlawful, direct action on campus professors set into motion an escalating series of confrontations which inevitably have unfortunate consequences for the academic freedom of the university as a whole.

This is not to say that university professors should not participate in social movements. Indeed, if they have anything positive to offer students in terms of intellectual and moral leadership their commitment to certain human values may necessitate such involvement. But this participation will be in the larger community, where they will be forced to give and take in the political arena on equal terms with other citizens — not enabled to attack from the portected confines of the ivory tower. Academic freedom for the professor, then, has relevance and must be ensured *only* within the confines of his inquiring and researching role. As a scholar or researcher he is involved in the construction of knowledge; within this realm academic freedom is an imperative. But as a teacher he may quite legitimately be involved in indoctrinating and inciting to appropriate action. Here it is the academic freedom of the student to inquire and learn which has prior claim. The teaching performance is for the sole purpose of contributing to this; therefore in his teaching role the professor's behavior must be evaluated by the university community as a whole. And this evaluation must be according to the criterion of academic freedom *for the student.*

There is at present a great deal of confused thinking surrounding the issue of the hiring, firing, promoting and granting of tenure to professors, and the relationship of this process to academic freedom. Administrative decisions in this area must be guided by the necessity of furthering the academic freedom of the university to perform its cultural function as the seedbed of instrumental intelligence and morality. The scholarly endeavours of the professor should be evaluated on this basis by those of his peers most qualified to judge. His teaching competence, on the other hand, must be

assessed in terms of the contribution that he makes to the intellectual and moral growth of his students. He has no absolute right to teach independent of the consequences for the students' right to learn. Where the professor's freedom to teach infringes upon the student's freedom to inquire, the latter must always assume priority. This implies that any valid mechanism for the evaluation of teaching effectiveness must allow for student participation as well as for that of other segments of the university community. The professor who is fired for teaching incompetence or demagoguery on the basis of such an assessment is not justified in claiming infringement of his academic freedom. His academic freedom as a *scholar* would be the issue, however, if he were refused promotion or tenure due to his ideological premises — assuming that these were being acknowledged openly during his teaching.

Similarly for the student, academic freedom is meaningful only within the context of the "student as scholar" role. A student as scholar is one who is within the university setting not to disseminate ideas but to pursue them; to participate in the miracle of the creation and advancement of knowledge and norms. Given this definition, "student power" can only mean the intellectual and moral power of young people engaged in building knowledge about the "real" and the "good". Nothing can be allowed to interfere with this endeavour — not the power elite within the community, the administration, the faculty, nor militant youths using the campus as a centre for political activity.

But what about freedom for individuals to attain this privileged status of student? Surely academic freedom is meaningless so long as economic factors are allowed to operate to restrict this role to particular age, ethnic or class groupings. For the student, then, academic freedom requires equality of opportunity to assume the status in the first place, and to maintain it for a reasonable period, while temporarily freed from the grim necessity of making a living. A reorganization of higher education along the lines proposed previously would contribute to greater equality of opportunity to learn. This would be so especially if entrance requirements were dissociated from high school achievement and if post-secondary education of the upgrading, liberalizing and specializing variety were all government supported. And of course the liberal arts university — freed from its selecting and certifying role — would no longer function as the coveted channel to society's most highly rewarded positions. The resulting readjustment of salaries for varous types of societal roles would also greatly enhance long-term prospects for equalization of opportunity. (If everyone with the desire and aptitude to study law were provided with the means whereby, would judges still be paid so much more than miners — given the "borin' nature of minin' as compared to judgin'"?)

In addition, academic freedom for the student requires that he must be

guaranteed the opportunity to select freely from among a variety of post-secondary educational organizations, programs, classes and teachers. One of the major responsibilities of administrators is to ensure that the student is not being forced to take irrelevant classes taught by professors who use the marking system as a club for enforcement of conformity to their pet rituals, theories or ideologies. This situation is all too common today, and where it exists the university deteriorates into a devastatingly effective tool for the corruption (rather than the education) of youth. Under the system proposed here, however, only the professional and technical schools would be grading and certifying, and thereby subject to this danger. And because professional and technical competence conceivably can be expressed in terms of measurable behaviors, this danger possibly could be eliminated in the future.

The freedom for students to pursue the knowledge and value quest without fear of reprisal or consequent economic loss is the most crucial aspect of academic freedom. It is ignored by senior members of the university community at the peril of the entire educational institution and of the human species whose evolutionary process it serves. If this freedom is not planned for and protected by administrators and provided by professors, then it must be pursued relentlessly by the students themselves. This can be done, if necessary, through the use of the most legitimate, powerful and seldom-used weapon at their disposal: the wholesale boycott of specific classes. However, although academic freedom for the student implies the right to choose *not* to study with any particular professor, it does not include the right to exert direct control over what or how any particular professor teaches. This is no more justifiable than is a similar control exerted by any other pressure group. This issue requires clarification, as there is a great deal of pseudo-democratic nonsense being expounded upon it. It is certainly desirable that sutdents participate increasingly in those academic choices which are subject to group decision-making: as voting members of Discipline, Personnel Policy and Program planning committees, for instance. But even here, this participation can only be in terms of individual student members who have earned a position in the "community of inquiry" by their intellectual endeavours as scholars. It can never be a prize for the power hungry: something to be demanded and seized by force.

What is required as a definition of "citizenship" in the community of inquiry. Mere formal registration as a student is not a sufficient criterion; some demonstration of scholarship and integrity in knowledge-building is essential. Preferably, each liberalizing or researching community would establish its own standards for voting membership. However, in the context of liberal arts education there can be no absolute, inalienable "rights" to political power within the organization — only to the intellectual and moral power achieved through individual endeavour and commitment to free

inquiry.

Again, as with the professors, students should be free (and indeed encouraged) to participate actively in social movements out in the community. For example, if students were more actively concerned about economic and organizational restrictions upon freedom to study at the university, and with the latter's increasingly corrupt and corrupting selecting and certifying function, the public might long since have demanded a major organizational change such as the one proposed in this article. But the campus is not the place for demonstrations on this or any other issue. It is the *community* which must be persuaded so that the necessary political action can follow.

The campus, of all places, must be kept free of militancy and vandalism. Intereference with the academic freedom of students and professors who happen to dissent from the aims of the militants is inexcusable in a community of inquiry. In fact polarization and confrontation are always obstacles to reasoned inquiry. In addition, such activity invites control from without, and this further loss of academic freedom renders the entire organization powerless as a source of the new knowledge necessary for cultural modification and rational social change. It is imperative for the preservation of academic freedom in today's imperilled university that no member of the community of scholars abdicate his moral responsibility for protecting this precious institution from those self righteous citizens, manipulative politicians, reactionary administrators, and neo-fascist "non-students and teachers" in radical clothing who would seek to impose arbitrary restraints upon the knowledge quest. In a world where, increasingly, knowledge is power, such abdication on the part of the university community means that it has given up its sole justification for existence as an autonomous entity, and thereby its hope of influencing the course of humanity through the development of individual instrumental intelligence capable of participating *in* and providing direction *to* the process of social evolution.

There are many battlegrounds available for those who would engage in a political struggle against society's ills and injustices; there is only one battleground for those who wish to engage in the struggle to open new and revolutionary horizons in the minds of men. If academic freedom — the freedom for scholars in either the student or teacher role to engage in this struggle — is to survive, the university campus must not be given over to mob and ultimately police control. As in former "times of troubles" the church stood as a sanctuary, now the liberal arts university must be established as an enclave where reason and morality can prevail, and where sincere and dedicated men and women can be safe from violence and surveillance and free from economic pressures so that they can participate in the only truly revolutionary kind of confrontation — the clash of contro-

versial ideas. For out of this kind of confrontation there may well emerge radically new paradigms for viewing and ordering reality, which is, after all, what a cultural revolution is all about.