

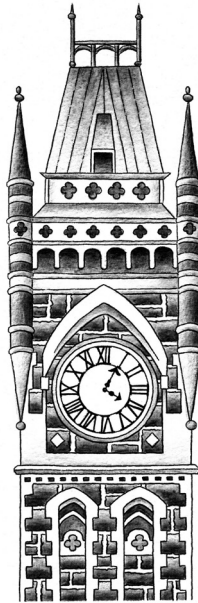
# TOWER TURMOIL



**Characters and Controversies  
at the University of Otago**

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the University of Otago**



**The Time Keepers**

Department of History, University of Otago

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## About this Book

This book was created as part of a combined History and English paper, *Engl404, Writing for Publication*. The paper's purpose was to introduce fourth-year students in the History and English disciplines to all aspects required in creating a book. The course coordinators, Barbara Brookes (from the History Department) and Shef Rogers (from the English Department) chose the topic, "Controversies at the University of Otago," and the students were able to choose a subtopic from a list.

Many of our readers may have lived through the events discussed in some of the chapters. Our work is based on the University Archives held at the Hocken Collections/*Uare Taoka o Hākena* and those records form the basis of our interpretations. We are confident that others may have alternative readings of the events discussed here. If so, please send them to the History of the University Website at <http://ouhistory.otago.ac.nz/>. This is by all means a disclaimer.

As well as writing their individual articles, the students were delegated tasks incorporating the various factors of publication, including: cover design, the textual layout of the book, its dimensions, obtaining permissions, organising the book launch, promotion, editing and many other taxing and at times seemingly menial tasks. The book was created to a deadline of a single semester (a period of around four months), so the students were under a tremendous amount of pressure to produce a well-researched article, as well as perform their various publishing tasks. This put not only the students, but the course coordinators Shef and Barbara in a stressful situation.

The class met for a three-hour marathon session every Monday morning in which guest lecturers would speak on topics with relevance to both the writing, research and publication aspects of the course. Following the guest lectures, and then a tea break, the students would discuss issues regarding the final product (of

the book) in a democratic “boardroom” manner. This served to reinforce the fact that book production was a group effort rather than an individual task, and enabled the students to engage in (sometimes heated) debate on the issues that were pertinent to production efforts. It also forced them to recognise that compromise was necessary in order to reach a decision.

But do not worry yourself reader! The very existence of the pages you are reading is evidence enough to suggest that all hope was not lost. Indeed, when faced with certain intellectual breakdown, the students subconsciously reacted to produce, and to produce well. The students were able to take their own initiatives in their individual work, and to work well as a team, even in disagreement!







## Introduction

A university is traditionally defined as a place of “higher learning” or a “diverse institution,” but these bland classifications exude none of the life of the actual controversies that result from the diversity of views within an academic institution. This book brings together some of the stories, heated debates and even broadsheet burnings that have made the University of Otago what it is today. These controversies often had at their centre the Otago University Students’ Association (OUSA), the student newspaper, *Critic*, or the University Senate and Council. The opinions of the non-academic community were also frequently represented in the pages of Dunedin’s newspapers at the *Otago Daily Times* (ODT) and *Evening Star*. Debates related to freedom of speech as well as the rights and responsibilities of both individuals and institutions have been commonplace from the University’s inception to its most recent past. While the University of Otago has evolved into a progressive institution, this certainly has not led to any less controversy.

The birth of the University of Otago itself was shrouded in debate as settlers decided whether or not to establish the first university in New Zealand. Only half a dozen years after it had been decided that a local university would provide a greater social benefit to the community, corporate bodies and the Church began to disagree over ecclesiastical power at the University of Otago. While Otago did eventually eschew the Church’s influence, the controversies continued as students objected to the restrictive role which Halls of Residence, influenced by the Church’s moral principles, placed upon women but not men. By the 1960s students

charged that the University had no right to regulate any of their out-of-school behaviour. This was firmly connected to the debate over freedom of speech at Otago in which students as well as staff declared their free will to not only do as they please but also to say and write.

Whether in support of pacifists or radical and obscene literature, defenders of free speech have been kept busy at the University of Otago. In the 1930s the University was criticized for appointing a librarian who held communist views. An alternative student newspaper, *Falus*, incurred the wrath of the Student Council and of *Critic* in the 1960s because of its scathing and at times vulgar commentary on the University. As late as the 1980s the issue still lingered, when an offensive capping magazine, *Thrust*, broke taboos and challenged the University's limits on free speech. During World War II the University Council, Senate and *Critic* unanimously denounced conscientious objectors and pacifists. Although many staff, students and members of the public endorsed these denunciations, controversy surrounded the University's role as judge and jury.

Freedom also entails responsibility within the community, however, and numerous individuals as well as institutions were criticized for playing outside, and at times not playing up to, their roles. The first Professor of Economics evaded his responsibilities at Otago and ran for the House of Commons in England in the 1930s. In 1947 OUSA President John Child was expelled from Otago by the Council for delivering an audacious and controversial speech. But was his responsibility to the Council or to the students, who fully supported him through the ordeal? Later in the dying years of the Vietnam War, Professor Flynn led a move to regulate military funding for academic research. More recently, issues of university autonomy were raised when a central government decision forced the transfer of the Department of Mineral Technology to Auckland University. The department, created from the former Otago School of Mines, was eventually moved north, but not without a fight.

These controversies mark steps along a path of transformation which the University of Otago has undergone over its 140 years of

existence. While the historical change that has taken place in the University has mirrored the changes occurring in society at large, at times the University has led the way. This pioneering has largely occurred because the University has remained as a place where no topic was, or hopefully ever will be, taboo. Only in such an open atmosphere can the University of Otago remain what it has been since its inception, an institution in which the free expression of ideas inevitably leads to controversy.





## Here or There? The Founding of the University of Otago

Mark Galvin

*That in the opinion of this meeting,  
the time has now come, when  
decided steps should be taken for  
the founding of a New Zealand  
University or College, and that the  
Assembly be strongly urged to do so  
immediately.*

—John Bathgate<sup>1</sup>

Most of us have never heard of John Bathgate, and few may appreciate the debate incited by his proposition, yet all of the staff, alumni, and current students of the University owe a debt of gratitude to his ideals and intentions. For the institution that we all hold in the highest esteem had an uncertain and controversial beginning. Though the notion of a New Zealand university was noble in principle, many in the community initially discredited the idea as impractical and unnecessary. Instead, they favoured setting up a scholarship fund, to send the brightest young men to be educated at British universities.<sup>2</sup> With the future of the proposed local university hanging in the balance, a public (and at times heated) debate erupted over which path Otago should take. While we know the result of this controversy (the establishment of the University of Otago), the circumstances leading to this decision long ago passed out of mind and into the pages of history.

In order to understand this controversy, we must first briefly consider the early attempts of the pioneer immigrants to establish an education framework in the Province. When the first settlers arrived in Otago in the mid-1840s, they brought with them a concerted desire to establish within the region a Christian community based upon the social models prevalent in their native Scotland.<sup>3</sup> One of the key components of this model included the intrinsic linking of religious and educational institutions and philosophies. It was a strong connection that had developed since the sixteenth century, when the Protestant Reformers established the highly successful national parish school system.<sup>4</sup> Admirable in intention and execution, the Scottish education framework was a source of great national pride because it offered a viable alternative to the aristocratic English model, and had led to the highest university attendance rate in Europe.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence of the desire to create a similar framework in New Zealand, one-eighth of the proceeds derived from the purchase of land from the New Zealand Company was set aside for the use of future religious and educational institutions.<sup>6</sup>

Though the province had definite goals for the future, it still lacked the citizens to realise its dreams. However, as word of the new settlement spread, Otago began to attract aspiring Britons with the alluring promise of unclaimed opportunity. Aboard the first ships came the skilled workers that the settlement would need to develop into a viable society. These immigrants included a schoolmaster and several teachers (four male, two female), who soon helped to establish the region's first primary school, in Dunedin.

Yet despite the good intentions of the Council and the community, expansion of the region's educational facilities floundered. After the initial wave of immigration, land sales in the province tapered off, falling below projected targets. To make matters worse, the region now had a disproportionately young population of singles and newly married couples.<sup>7</sup> Without a suitable number of school-age children or young adults, there was little demand for the services of the region's immigrant teachers, and two soon left.

Despite these problems, the Provincial Council remained loyal to the ideals they had set forth for the community. In 1858 the members of the Council passed a series of resolutions securing land and monetary resources “for the benefit and advancement of education, and for the endowment of a High School and College in Dunedin in all time coming.”<sup>8</sup>

The merits of this decision were realised when gold was discovered in Otago during the early 1860s. The sudden flow of settlers into the province, combined with the increasing prosperity of the community, significantly boosted the ambitious aims of the Council. There was now sufficient reason to create an institution devoted entirely to higher education. This second stage in creating a Scottish tertiary system came to fruition in 1863, with the opening of the region’s first secondary-level institution, Otago Boys’ High School.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland took important steps to ensure that there were sufficient programs through which religious young men could train for the ministry. One such provision was the Presbyterian Church Lands Act of 1866. This act allocated one-third of the Church’s revenues to an Education Fund, to allow for the endowment of a theological chair in any future college or university in Otago.<sup>10</sup> By setting aside these provisions, the Church adhered to the aspirations and actions of the Council, thereby ensuring that the Scottish link between religion and education would remain dominant within the province in the foreseeable future.

By the mid-1860s, the pioneers had made significant progress towards establishing the vital social institutions that were required if Otago were ever to realise the admirable vision that the Reverend Thomas Burns had initially proposed. Under efficient leadership the city had grown in prosperity and population and now boasted both primary and secondary schools that were “a great credit to the Province.”<sup>11</sup> Yet there was one institution that the colony still lacked, and if New Zealand were to thrive on its own, it was a resource that the Province could not afford to overlook.



With the first generation of Otago-bred boys now approaching manhood, there was an increasing desire to provide access to services and institutions that would allow these young men to develop into productive and valuable members of the community. In the opinion of a regional committee convened to discuss the matter, the day had passed when a rudimentary competency in “the three R’s” could constitute a sufficient level of education for a young man. Indeed, science was now so integrated into the core professions that it was felt there were very few occupations, “not even that of a ploughman,” where a greater level of knowledge was not desirable.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the committee realised that the time would soon come when the ageing leaders of the Province would be required to relinquish their control to the next generation of leaders. While the immigrant settlers had made great progress in establishing the core services of the region, the continuing growth of Otago would ultimately lie in the hands of her native sons. There was a fear amongst the community that if first-rate educations were not available to those generations, the colony could fall into the hands of “ignorant men” who would be incapable of fulfilling their civil duties as leaders.<sup>13</sup> Tertiary education needed to be available immediately, or the colony would face an uncertain future.

In 1867 the Rector of Otago Boys’ High School, Mr. Frank Simmons, travelled to Wellington to raise the issue before the Houses of Legislature. In his address, he expressed his firm belief that a scholarship system should immediately be set up to enable those boys who had achieved a distinguished level of excellence in the higher school to attend university in Britain. After careful consideration of Mr. Simmons’ proposal, the House of Representatives concluded that before a final decision could be reached, it would first be necessary to ascertain public opinion on the matter. To achieve this, the House appointed a Committee to construct and distribute a comprehensive questionnaire throughout the provinces of the colony.<sup>14</sup>

With this pending questionnaire in mind, the Court of the

Dunedin Resident Magistrate held a public meeting on 15 August 1867 to discuss Mr. Simmons' proposal. Though the impetus of the meeting had been to discuss the formation of a university scholarship fund, Mr. Bathgate asked those gathered to consider the obvious alternative: that a New Zealand University should immediately be established in Otago.<sup>15</sup> Faced with two vastly different scenarios, the public now had to consider not only which plan would be most advantageous to the Otago youth, but ultimately to the long-term tertiary needs of the community.

Those attending the Dunedin meeting unanimously agreed that the failure to provide Otago's youth with tertiary education would in time pose a serious threat to the province's success. However, the community could not reach a consensus when it came to deciding between the alternatives. Consequently, the community split into two opposing parties: those supporting a scholarship scheme, and those supporting a regional university. The issue at the centre of the debate was whether a local university was even feasible. No university had yet been established in New Zealand, and Otago, though a main settlement, was still a relatively young province.

It was not that the scholarship supporters were opposed in principle to having a university in Dunedin, it was that they believed there was little chance the institution would succeed. In their opinion a regional university would be insignificant on the world scene, and consequently of very little value to the community. Furthermore, they feared that such an institution could stifle the growth of the region. The cost of constructing and maintaining the university could place an overwhelming financial burden upon the local community.

The pro-scholarship camp pointed to the perceived failures of Melbourne University as a clear indication that a New Zealand University was not the right option. In the opinion of Mr. Simmons, Melbourne University had floundered since its inception, struggling to recruit more than a dozen new students each year. While he welcomed the proposal for a regional university, he did not think that the time had yet arrived for such an institution.<sup>16</sup> There could

be nothing more likely to retard the progress of the new province than to take on such a commitment merely on the grounds of pride.

Mr. Bathgate rebutted these claims by suggesting that the Melbourne statistics were incorrect, and that in fact the previous year's enrolment had numbered 101 students. He and his fellow supporters did not believe such numbers indicated that Melbourne was a struggling institution.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, even if Melbourne's successes were deemed to have fallen short of its initial goals, there were insufficient similarities between the two regions to conclude that a university in Otago would suffer the same fate.

The Reverend W. Will also took issue with the scenario that Mr. Simmons suggested would eventuate. He did not believe that there would be any problem recruiting potential students to the institution, as the colony was full of aspiring young men who would be eager to step forward to take such a coveted place in society. Even if the initial successes were limited, it would be better to sow the seed now and to watch it grow, than to foolishly discard the potential of such an institution. If the region had established successful Law Courts and telegraphic systems by starting out small and building them up over time, then he could see no reason why Otago should refuse to have a university on the grounds that it would not equal the likes of Cambridge or Oxford.<sup>18</sup>

Robert Gilles, one of the founders of Otago's educational system, agreed with this stance. He suggested that it was necessary that "every institution of the sort ... must have its sickly childhood." He believed that with time the university would pass its weaning stage and become an admirable asset to the community. Ultimately, the gift of a "sound liberal education" was the best inheritance Otago could leave to future generations.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, some in the community chose to sit on the fence in the debate, favouring the immediate creation of a scholarship fund, to be followed at a later date by the establishment of a regional university. Mr. McIndoe, a prominent Dunedin citizen and supporter of the proposed regional university, did not think that

the two-step plan could succeed. He believed that the compromise was “antagonistic” and “suicidal” to the chances of establishing a university in the years to follow.<sup>20</sup>

Mr. Gilles aired his concern over what he saw as critical problems in the nature of the compromise. He realised the importance of creating a university that was organically born out of the community’s needs. In his opinion, waiting until Otago had the monetary resources to copy the full British model was likely to create a “lifeless steam engine.” While Otago had been successful in imitating the education framework of the homeland, to imitate the institutions themselves would be a gross miscalculation of the differences between the nations. This “cut and dried” method would surely prove with time to be a dismal failure.<sup>21</sup>

Though the Dunedin public considered the economic consequences of each proposal to be vital to their decision, the potential social benefits and disadvantages were also thoroughly discussed. While the chosen scheme should fulfil the educational needs of the students, the needs of the community had to be met to ensure success. Both sides unanimously agreed that the benefits arising from the advanced education of Otago youth must not end with the individual. In the long run the path chosen would need to benefit the province, and the colony. But despite this agreement between the parties, they could not agree on the merits of each proposal. The scholarship supporters believed that their scheme would bring the greatest benefits for both the students and the colony. They reasoned that in Britain, where the tertiary institutions had a proven track record of success, Otago’s young men would receive a very high quality of education. In Britain, the students would develop into conscientious men who would one day become great leaders of the province. On the other hand, the proposed regional university would be an unknown entity, and would thereby put the long-term goals of the community at risk. There could be no guarantees that suitable learned and distinguished gentlemen could be recruited to teach at the institution. If the university fell short of its own aims it would be detrimental to the students and,

in the long run, the province.

The supporters of the scholarship scheme foresaw their proposal producing significant benefits for the colony. In their opinion the students taking part in the scheme would serve indirectly as “immigration agents.” With their warm-hearted tales of the colony, these young New Zealand “ambassadors” could dispel any pre-conceived notions circulating in the homeland.<sup>22</sup> This would certainly inspire young ambitious Britons to immigrate to this part of the world, in the knowledge that they would be warmly welcomed into a society where opportunity was bound only by the imagination.

However, the university supporters did not share these beliefs. They felt that rather than attracting new citizens, the scheme risked losing existing ones. Any young New Zealanders studying in Britain would be less likely to return home at the completion of their tertiary education. In their opinion, the students, having formed close relationships abroad and having integrated into the British system, would not care to return to a land where they would have diminished opportunities for academic or professional prestige. In the opinion of one writer to the *Otago Daily Times*, if they were to return they would certainly be dejected souls, who would forever yearn for the joy of their university days, and lament what might have been.<sup>23</sup>

They also foresaw potential immigration advantages arising out of their own proposal. If a successful tertiary institution could be established in Otago, it could attract wealthy families to the region in the knowledge that their children could receive a “first-class education” here. Whereas, if Otago failed to establish a university and another province took the initiative, it could lose families for the same reasons.

The university supporters also took issue with what they perceived to be critical failings in the proposed scholarship system. Their chief argument was that such a scheme would only be advantageous to a small number of Otago youths, who would be graduates of the Boys’ School, and most likely come from affluent

families. In response to these claims, Mr. Simmons suggested that the scheme would have beneficial effects for many Otago boys, whether or not they were awarded scholarships. In his opinion, a higher proportion of students would remain in school until the completion of their secondary education, in the hope of attaining such a scholarship.<sup>24</sup> However, the university supporters rejected this theory. They believed that the likely recipients of these honours would be known well in advance and that consequently parents would not allow their children to waste time on the remote chance of success when they could be learning a trade elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

After all of the relevant arguments had been heard and thoroughly debated, the findings were relayed to Wellington via House of Representatives' questionnaire. While the committee recognised that public opinion was divided in Otago, the majority of the colony's university graduates had agreed that a regional university was premature. Therefore the committee reported to the House that they could not "recommend any attempt to be made at present for establishing a New Zealand University, great as the advantages of such an institution would in some respects be."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the colonial powers decided to proceed with the creation of a scholarship scheme. In 1868, the New Zealand University Endowment Act was passed to provide eight scholarships of £250 each to British universities.<sup>27</sup>

Yet many in Otago still firmly believed that such a scheme could be nothing more than a temporary measure. The educational demands of the community would continue to increase, and the only viable long-term solution was the establishment of a university in the colony. If Otago failed to take the initiative, another province would surely step forward. With the region already starting to lose some of its status to settlements in the north, it could not afford to lose the opportunities that would arise from a regional university. Furthermore, the province that established the first university would be able to lay claim to an important historical step in the colony's move towards social independence from Britain. Such an honour for Otago could help to tip the balance of power once again

to the southern settlements. With these considerations in mind, the regional university supporters continued their campaign, and in June 1869 the Provincial Council passed the Otago University Ordinance.<sup>28</sup>

The ordinance gave legitimacy to the proposed Otago University, as it endowed the institution with the power to confer recognised degrees.<sup>29</sup> With their final legal obstacle now cleared, nine influential community and business leaders formed a university council to begin preparations for the founding of the institution and the hiring of its staff. Their first task was to outline the educational programme for the university, including the creation of the three initial Professorial chairs: Mental and Moral Philosophy, Classics, and Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.<sup>30</sup> Soon after, a fourth Professorial chair in Natural Science was added to this list.

The next step was to place advertisements for the four Professorial chairs in British newspapers. The Council felt strongly that the successful applicants would need to be respectable individuals who were graduates of a recognised British university. The Council received over 60 applications for each chair, and subsequently appointed George Samuel Sale, John Shand, and Dr James Gow Black to these positions.<sup>31</sup> The Presbyterian Church received eighteen applications for the chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy, and appointed Duncan MacGregor to the position.<sup>32</sup>

Having selected the successful candidates, the committee now turned to finalising the administrative matters of the institution. Three of the Professors were paid a salary of £600 per annum, and the fourth, Duncan MacGregor, who was appointed by the church, was paid £550 per annum. An additional £50 was paid to the new Professors to choose suitable books that would constitute the university's library. John Shand, the Professor of Natural Philosophy, was also granted £200 to purchase experimental equipment for a laboratory.<sup>33</sup>

Following the delegation of administrative matters to suitable local figures, the appointment of the four Professorial Chairs, and the construction of an educational mandate, the University of

*The Founding of the University of Otago*

Otago was finally ready, in 1871, to open its doors to the public. Initially, the university was housed in the Exchange Building on Princes Street. This building was originally intended to serve as a post office, but on completion was considered to be too good for that purpose.<sup>34</sup> The university remained there until 1877, when it moved to its permanent home upon the grounds that it now occupies.

The University of Otago's success in establishing a functional academic framework and recruiting qualified staff dealt a serious blow to the Scholarship scheme. Other provinces now looked to Otago and asked: why not us? As a result no council ever awarded a scholarship under the 1868 Endowment Act.<sup>35</sup> Instead, efforts



The Post Office Building (later known as the Exchange Building), Princes Street. Completed in 1868, it was used by the University of Otago from 1871–1877. The building was demolished in the mid-twentieth century. Photo c/n E760/5. Pictorial Collections, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, Dunedin.



in both Canterbury and Auckland to establish tertiary institutions gathered pace. Realising that their power had been severely undermined, the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council recommended that the University of Otago immediately be amalgamated into a new Colonial University.<sup>36</sup> However the University of Otago was not impressed by this suggestion, and consequently a power struggle between the regional and colonial governments emerged. This development resulted in the temporary incorporation of the institution into the New Zealand University.<sup>37</sup> Though this measure was subsequently reversed and the University of Otago was again empowered with autonomy, it was only the first of many struggles that the institution would face.

Throughout its 134-year history the University of Otago has witnessed many controversies. Divisive characters, questionable decisions, and social revolutions have strained harmony on the campus. Yet there is no denying that the institution is a success. Since its founding, the roll of the University of Otago has continued to grow steadily, and the range of degrees offered has continued to expand into new areas. Graduates of Otago are highly respected, and regularly achieve success in New Zealand and overseas. The departments of the University have reached a high academic standard, and produce internationally significant research in many competitive fields of study.

Today the University of Otago is not only the primary intellectual institution in the region, but also an integral part of its identity. It has forged a place within the heart and soul of Dunedin, and developed into a significant economic and social factor in the governance of the community. In recent years the University has spread its influence farther afield, attracting students from throughout New Zealand, and from across the globe. The diversity that such recruitment has introduced to Otago has enriched our society with new cultures, new philosophies, and most importantly new ideas.

It is always with hindsight that the true merits of a decision can be determined. We can now see that we owe much to the local

pioneers, for without their unwavering commitment to higher education, there might not be a university in Otago. Even if their initial attempts had faltered, and the university had arrived at a later date, it surely would not be the university we have today. For the passion from which the university grew led not only to the founding of the institution, but also to a university ethos that encourages open discussion and appreciates individual talent. Consequently, the University of Otago has surpassed even its own high expectations. Although the university has certainly met its initial goals of providing the Otago youth with a high quality education, it is the passion of the individuals who have walked through its arches that have made the institution the success it is. In the words of the Reverend D. M. Stuart, a key supporter of the proposed university, “Buildings do not make a university. Give us right men – men of head and heart – and we would then have a University in fact.”<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

1. 15 August 1867, Provincial Government public meeting, Dunedin. “The Education Question: A New Zealand University, and Colonial Scholarships,” *Otago Daily Times*, August 16 1867, 4, col 7.

2. It should be noted that although I refer throughout this essay only to males attending university or filling scholarship positions, it is not a result of any prejudice held on my part, but rather a sign of the times I am writing about. In 1860s New Zealand, equal opportunities for men and women in academia did not exist. The newspapers of the period all assume a patriarchal stance when discussing the controversy and the proposed university. Today the University of Otago attracts an almost equal proportion of male and female students.

3. One of the first leaders of the settlement, The Reverend Thomas Burns, wrote that “It seems to me, that under God, the effect of planting in that most interesting quarter of the world, a

carefully selected section, in all its integrity, of our home Christian society, would far exceed that of any other mission whatever.” Cited in W. P. Morrell, *The University of Otago: A Centennial History* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1969), 1.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. *The Otago Journal*, No. 1, January 1848.

7. Morrell, *Centennial History*, 2.

8. *Votes & Proceedings: Otago Provincial Council*, session 7 (1858), 3.

9. Morrell, *Centennial History*, 3.

10. Ibid.

11. The Chairman of the Dunedin School Committee made this statement. *Otago Daily Times*, 15 January 1867, 4, col 7.

12. *Otago Daily Times*, 16 August 1867, 4, col 7.

13. Ibid.

14. The questionnaire was sent to sixty prominent New Zealand gentlemen (Morrell, *Centennial History*, 4).

15. While he did not ask the meeting to stipulate where the New Zealand University would be located (such a matter was not necessary at that point), he did express that were he to be asked his opinion, he would say “Have a College in Otago.” *Otago Daily Times*, 16 August 1867, 5, col 1.

16. Ibid, col 4.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid, col 7.

19. Robert Gilles, “Scholarships (To the Editor of the *Otago Daily Times*),” *Otago Daily Times*, 19 August 1867, 6, col 6.

20. *Otago Daily Times*, 16 August 1867, 5, col 5.

21. Robert Gilles, *Otago Daily Times*, 6, col 6.

22. Andrew Hamilton, “Scholarships (To the Editor of the *Otago Daily Times*),” *Otago Daily Times*, 17 August 1867, 5, col 3.

23. Letteris Deditus, “Scholarships (To the Editor of the *Otago Daily Times*),” *Otago Daily Times*, 17 August 1867, 5, col 1.

24. *Otago Daily Times*, 16 August 1867, 5, col 4.

25. Ibid, col 5.

26. Morrell, *Centennial History*, 4.
27. Hugh Parton, *The University of New Zealand* (Auckland and Oxford: Auckland University Press and Oxford University Press, 1979), 15.
28. Ibid.
29. Parton, *The University of New Zealand*, 16.
30. The Chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy was to be paid for by the Presbyterian church using funds set aside for a future “theological chair” in the Presbyterian Church Lands Act of 1866.
31. George Samuel Sale, MA (Canterbury), appointed Professor of Classics. John Shand, MA (Aberdeen), appointed Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. Dr. James Gow Black, MA, DSc (Edinburgh), appointed Professor of Natural Science (Morrell, *Centennial History*, 9, 10).
32. Duncan MacGregor, MA (Aberdeen), MB, CM (Edinburgh), appointed Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy. The Free Church and United Presbyterian College selected this chair (Morrell, *Centennial History*, 10). For a discussion of MacGregor’s contribution to the university and Otago, see chapter 2 of this collection.
33. Minutes of the Council of the University of Otago, Nov. 10, 1869. Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, Arc-0018.
34. Hardwicke Knight and Neil Wales, *Buildings of Dunedin: An Illustrated Architectural Guide to New Zealand’s Victorian City* (Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1988), 173.
35. Parton, *The University of New Zealand*, 15.
36. Ibid, 16.
37. For a complete discussion of this controversy see Hugh Partons *The University of New Zealand* (Auckland and Oxford: Auckland University Press and Oxford University Press, 1979).
38. *Otago Daily Times*, 16 August 1867, 5, col 3.





## **Divinity, Darwinism and the Curse of the Chair**

Kim Sullivan

The 1870s were a time of global transformation and turbulence. American society was picking itself up after a brutal civil war, Alexander Graham Bell was burning the midnight oil to bring us the telephone, and Imperial Britain was preparing to scoop up sugar-laden Fiji on its march across the globe. One of this Empire's earlier acquisitions, perched on the southern fringe of the sparkling Pacific Ocean, was stretching its wings into a fourth decade of colonial existence. The fledgling nation, New Zealand, was caught up in turbulence of its own as it struggled to achieve social and political cohesion. During these tentative times, most of the colony's pivotal institutions, from its churches to its schools, were only finding their feet. As such they were often compelled to lean on one another, simply in order to survive.

In this constitutionally delicate environment, inhabited as it was by a glut of ambitious young ideologues, little ripples of localised discontent frequently developed into rollicking swells of national turmoil. Just such a thing occurred in the province of Otago in 1876, when a quarrel between a principled cleric and an opinionated academic threatened to unbalance the uneasy affiliation that existed between their mutually dependent, but ideologically distinct, institutions—the Presbyterian Church and the University of Otago. By the time their dispute had unravelled to its full potential, it had challenged the unspoken ecclesiastical domination over the region's secular enterprises, ripped open a gaping wound in the mechanisms of central government, and returned to its point of origin ultimately unresolved.

However, as the dust settled four frustrating years later, one tiny revelation of the utmost clarity did emerge from the fray—that for an educational body, lack of autonomy was ultimately more dangerous than lack of money. From that moment the University of Otago vowed never to allow any external benefactor, regardless of its financial influence, to dictate its moral character.

When the University of Otago opened its doors for the first time in 1871 it was already caught up in a critical relationship with the region's Presbyterian Church. The latter badly needed a place to train new ministers, while the early survival of the former was chiefly reliant upon the financial goodwill of external community bodies. The bridge between the two was the Chair of Moral and Mental Philosophy—a position created and paid for by the Presbytery in order to satisfy its own theological needs while simultaneously enabling the University to expand its educational profile. The Chair would eventually come to symbolise the prickly co-dependence between the two, but initially the partnership held great promise.

Its inaugural appointee, Duncan MacGregor, seemed ideally suited to straddle these collaborating worlds, being both a devout Christian and an inquisitive intellectual. However, he swiftly became living proof of an inherent contradiction between his two sponsors—a true Christian was devotedly unquestioning. An academic, by definition, was the very opposite. It was only a matter of time before MacGregor's religious patrons perceived that he had crossed the acceptable line of scholarly curiosity during the course of his work. In the event, the challenge came directly from one minister, James Copland. Like so many of their colonial contemporaries, these two characters, Copland and MacGregor, were strong-willed idealists with very definite beliefs about how the moral tone of their burgeoning society should develop. To understand how their personal disagreement could have blossomed into such complex and far-reaching turmoil, some introductions are required.

James Copland arrived in New Zealand from his native

Scotland in 1865, aged thirty and brimming over with energy and ambition.<sup>1</sup> His intention was to become a medical missionary elsewhere in the South Pacific, but his first port of call at Otago turned out to be his last.<sup>2</sup> At this time the region's barren hinterland was luring thousands of "godless" prospectors to the gold-seams it had lately revealed. This, in turn, lured the pious James Copland to those prospectors and the colossal challenge of converting them into devotees of God rather than gold.

Copland was ordained as a Presbyterian minister within months of his arrival. He based himself in Lawrence and from there he worked tirelessly to maintain a formidable presence in the surrounding mining settlements. This was no ordinary parish for the young minister, inhabited as it was by a highly scattered and religiously ambivalent flock. But Copland was not to be deterred – in 1869 he began editing his own Presbyterian magazine, *The Evangelist*, which proved an effective vehicle for spreading God's word to the far corners of the goldfields without actually requiring the minister's presence.<sup>3</sup> As the first journal of its kind in the colony it brought Copland a great deal of positive attention from his Church colleagues. Soon afterwards he was headhunted for a new challenge in Dunedin—that burgeoning hotbed of gold-fuelled heathenism.

At his new post, St. Stephen's Church in the north of the city, Copland's characteristic vigour and zeal were immediately evident. A future minister of St. Stephen's would later observe from the church records that only six days into Copland's tenure he had requested a sum of money from the management committee to pay for repairs to the brand new pulpit.<sup>4</sup> A rumour emerged that Copland had thumped it excessively hard during an overly impassioned sermon—a memorable introduction indeed for his new congregation!<sup>5</sup>

Pulpit breakages aside, Copland was an exemplary minister, involving himself in a staggering number of influential community groups. He devoted his energies to many of the city's charitable aid organisations, including a refuge for women, and helped to found



the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland—an administrative body that dealt with the allocation and use of the Church’s assets.<sup>6</sup> The Synod, with Copland very much to the fore, became instrumental in the establishment of the colony’s first university in Dunedin through its generous endowment of a professorial chair. This gift stood as a proud symbol of the Church’s educational ethos as well as its community spirit; not surprisingly the search for an appropriate appointee was thorough and exacting. An elite panel of British academics was drafted to the task of scouring the Old Land for that one exceptional man who could carry the Church’s high aspirations on unfaltering shoulders.<sup>7</sup>

In 1871, while the indefatigable Dr. Copland was busy juggling his plethora of commitments at St. Stephen’s, another feisty, charismatic Scot was sailing across the globe with a clutch of weighty tomes under his arm, ready to take on Dunedin with comparable vigour. Duncan MacGregor, a twenty-seven-year-old newly-wed with a feral beard and piercing eyes, was on his way to fill a very special appointment indeed.<sup>8</sup> He was to become the University of Otago’s inaugural Professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy—the position created and funded by Copland’s beloved Synod. Although Copland’s part in MacGregor’s appointment had been indirect, the vigorous new minister of St. Stephen’s was quick to register his approval (and perhaps also his vested interest) on the pages of *The Evangelist*, to which he still found time to contribute: “When it is remembered that [MacGregor] is the unanimous choice from over 18 candidates ... we may rest satisfied that he is no ordinary man.”<sup>9</sup>

It is not hard to understand why someone like Copland might have felt elated by the selection of this particular candidate; the two men had more than a little in common. Duncan MacGregor was born within nine years (and a hundred miles) of James Copland with whom he also shared the experience of an austere Presbyterian upbringing.<sup>10</sup> Both men had excelled academically, and in remarkably similar fields—Copland’s first qualification was

in theology, MacGregor's in philosophy, and each had followed up with a degree in medicine for good measure.<sup>11</sup> Even in physical appearance, as their imminent first encounter would no doubt reveal, there was a considerable likeness. Certainly, untamed facial hair was the fashion in late nineteenth-century colonial society (among the men at least), but buried beneath the bushy brows and woolly chins of these two gentlemen lay a mesmerising intensity, framed in stark relief by their mutually lean features.

Cut as they were from the same cloth, and driven by a common moral and intellectual zeal, it perhaps seemed, as one man stepped off his ship into the other's domain, that a meeting of minds loomed. Fate, however, had other plans, for James Copland and Duncan MacGregor did differ in one critical area—their feelings on the plausibility of evolution. It would take some years to come to a head, but when these two cerebral titans eventually clashed over the loaded issue of social Darwinism, the disagreement reverberated to the core of Church-University relations in Otago, bringing the wider question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over secular institutions rippling uncomfortably to the surface. The tremors of this quandary even reached Wellington, where it put the infant central government's own procedures to the test. Four years and a Royal Commission later, the dispute landed back where it had started, ultimately unsettled, with a trail of constitutional destruction in its wake. Yet despite the gravity of the outcome, the unlikely catalyst was nothing more than a magazine article.

In 1876, five years into his professorship, Duncan MacGregor published a long thesis on the subject of poverty and the human condition in the popular *New Zealand Magazine*.<sup>12</sup> He was an astute observer of the poverty question in industrial Britain, where it appeared to him that the swift emergence of a capitalist class of liberal do-gooders was mirrored by an equally swift rise in the number of people pleading destitution with their hands held out. This led MacGregor to believe that charity and poverty were in fact two sides of the same coin, the former endlessly perpetuating the latter in a perverse cycle of supply and demand.<sup>13</sup> According

to the professor, an entire stratum of British society had come to exist in an artificial state of poverty because the constant flow of aid pouring from the benevolent organs of the guilt-ridden middle classes had removed the impetus from many individuals to help themselves. In MacGregor's stern opinion, if you were able-bodied and of sound mind, you had no right to charitable assistance, but as long as certain benevolent institutions continued to provide relief to all and sundry without any means-testing, people who were perfectly capable of making their own way in the world were being cruelly mollicoddled beyond all motivation and self-respect.<sup>14</sup>

Worse still, as a consequence, those unfortunate creatures who were the involuntary inhabitants of MacGregor's professed "common sewer of society," namely the "ignorant, the thriftless, and the stupid"—were being robbed of aid which was theirs by right.<sup>15</sup> These "hopeless paupers" were the only truly deserving recipients of charitable relief because they alone were incapable of improving their lot in life.<sup>16</sup> The kindest course of action, MacGregor mused, was to provide shelter and comfort to these cursed dregs (and no opportunity to procreate) until they shuffled off the cruel earth, taking their mortal deficiencies with them.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, their lazy and undeserving brethren ought to be siphoned off as a separate concern and forced into compulsory work camps where a solid moral conscience could be drummed into them through hard labour.

To MacGregor, the self-indulgent and misplaced kindness of voluntary aid groups perpetuated a destructive weak strain in the human evolutionary cycle. For any other species, the "eat or be eaten" instinct naturally weeded out the lowest common denominator.<sup>18</sup> For the human species, simultaneously blessed and cursed with a conscience, the genuinely weak and the downright lazy were wrongly lumped together into an indiscriminate "weltering mass" and carried along on a wave of benevolence, ensuring that pauperism became a permanent feature of society.<sup>19</sup> Britain was already awash with the "foul pestilential sediment" which resulted from conscience-driven acts of charity, and New

Zealand, according to MacGregor, was hot on its heels.<sup>20</sup>

When Dr. Copland read Professor MacGregor's seething indictment against the motives and methods of voluntary charity groups, he interpreted it, with characteristic over-zealousness, as a direct attack upon the benevolent activities of his own beloved church.<sup>21</sup> In Copland's view, it was the church's unwavering duty to provide charitable relief to all who sought it—without question, for to question was to play God rather than to humbly serve Him—an ethical *faux pas* of the highest order. MacGregor's perceived arrogance in suggesting that there was a distinction to be made between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor was anathema to Copland, who found himself confronted with a moral dilemma: how could he, as a member of a Christian body that had approved and funded MacGregor's Chair at the University, continue to support this man whose views on the human condition were so at odds with those of the established Church, and of course, with his own?<sup>22</sup>

Copland was not the only prominent Dunedin figure to have developed reservations about the outspoken professor, although he was alone in perceiving menace in this particular article. Thomas Hocken, the city's pre-eminent doctor and philanthropist, also read MacGregor's essay, but his response, scribbled in the margins of his personal copy, was altogether different. "Self-made, of forcible character, terse, vigorous language, but of no great influence," he observed in his brusque, inky scrawl.<sup>23</sup> Hocken took MacGregor's diatribe as nothing more than the innocuous ramblings of a man not known for keeping his marginal opinions to himself. MacGregor was, after all, no shrinking violet—on his self-appointed quest to seek out "the truth" in all matters, he was a veritable tempest in a top hat, often startling students and contemporaries alike with his mesmerising, unconventional oratory.<sup>24</sup> This did not necessarily make him a threat to decent society, yet James Copland felt strongly enough about the article in question to act in society's defence. At the next meeting of the Synod, he attempted to use his considerable influence to have MacGregor disempowered within

the University.

The minister's timing was uncanny. The Synod was preparing to endow a second chair at this very juncture, but were entirely undecided on what the subject should be.<sup>25</sup> The wily Copland took full advantage of his colleagues' ambivalence in order to promote an alternative plan. He proposed that the second endowment be used not to introduce a new discipline, but rather to subdivide MacGregor's existing responsibilities into two separate chairs, thus undermining his current authority.<sup>26</sup> Curiously, none of Copland's fellow Synod members had themselves identified any doctrinal threat in MacGregor's prose.<sup>27</sup> Even Reverend Stuart, a towering icon of staunch Presbyterian piety, held no quarrel with the professor's Darwinist theorising. In fact, Stuart's praise for MacGregor was nothing short of gushing:

As a teacher, he possesses great force of character, striking originality of expression, and wealth of argument and illustration in expounding his lofty themes.... I, who have often spoken to him as a citizen, scholar, teacher, and Christian, know that his soul is in touch with the good, the beautiful, and true – in short, with truth and righteousness.<sup>28</sup>

Stuart saw MacGregor's intellectual forays as integral to his role as a teacher, and as such did not regard him as a subversive just because his ideas crossed swords with the values of the Church. As Copland spent the long Synod Sessions of 1877–78 persuading his colleagues of the need to rein in the “dangerous” Duncan MacGregor, it was clear that there was more to his grudge than religious sensitivity.

There was, in fact, something else that the intense young minister felt especially passionate about, and that was education. Copland's working life was peppered with forays into the realm of education, which went well beyond his involvement in MacGregor's Chair at the University. In 1875, for example, the minister took a sabbatical from St. Stephen's, purportedly to unwind and restore his health.

However, Dr. Copland was not a man to put his feet up. Instead, he chose to traverse the Middle East through sweltering heat and stinging sands, writing vast scholarly papers on the cultures he observed there, and posting them back to New Zealand where they clogged up the pages of *The Evangelist* for several months.<sup>29</sup> Upon his return, the unrelenting minister undertook a self-commissioned lecture tour across Otago, determined to further impart his hard-won knowledge, just in case anyone had missed an instalment of his literary travelogue.<sup>30</sup>

Copland was also at the forefront of the Presbyterian Church's "Bibles in Schools" campaign, maintaining that a sound Christian-moral foundation was imperative to producing well-balanced citizens.<sup>31</sup> Further, he believed with near-obsessive ferocity that education ought to be egalitarian at every level—and here he found himself embroiled in another war of words with yet another professor at the University of Otago.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the winter of 1876 a very public fray between Copland and Professor Sale (Classics) unfolded on the pages of the *Otago Daily Times*. Sale had commented that the university's all-inclusive enrolment policy, while admirable and progressive, was incompatible with the existing high-school education system. The University's doors were indeed open to any youngster who had completed higher education, much to the approval of the Church. However, high-school standards of the day were far from consistent, and as a result the University was accepting a growing number of enrolees who were simply not equipped to handle degree-level studies.<sup>33</sup> Sale's concerns met with broad public support, but a lone dissenter joined the debate in the form of Dr. Copland, who misinterpreted Sale's view as an elitist attack on the University's proud egalitarian principles, rather than the cry for a standardised high-school system that it actually was.<sup>34</sup>

The ever-feisty Copland, unable through his initial rage to see that he and Sale were actually on the same side, engaged the professor in a futile public quarrel, which eventually descended into a series of personal affronts, culminating in a rather supercilious admonition from the otherwise well-mannered Sale:

The best advice I can give you is to attend the University classes while I am here, and try to pick up, if you can, a little intelligence and civility.... Poor Dr. Copland! He certainly is the very prince of muddlers.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, James Copland could not resist meddling in educational matters, whether compelled to dabble in his own brand of teaching, or to vet the opinions of those who had actually been appointed to educate. He evidently had a problem separating his professional life from his private interests, and so he cast himself in the imaginary role of moral policeman to the region's educational bodies. Arguably, it was this peculiar lack of professional distance that saw Copland unleash his unwarranted attack upon Professor Sale, who had done nothing more than point out a discrepancy in the current system. Imagine, then, the extent to which he was prepared to battle Duncan MacGregor, who had not only expressed a tangibly unchristian view, but had used his sacrosanct influence as an educator to do so. As those long Synod Sessions wore on, and no strong opinions on the new endowment emerged, Copland's campaign to subdue MacGregor found a valuable foothold, and became the Synod's official line. But when the "split-chair" proposal was put before the University Council, nobody could foresee the turmoil that was about to unfold.

The very fact that the Synod felt it was operating within its boundaries by interfering with an existing professorial appointment sent alarm bells ringing through the Council. By even intending to intervene in the matter of the current professor's function, the Synod was acting as though its financial stake in the Chair of Moral and Mental Philosophy entitled it to dictate the terms of employment. As far as the University Council was concerned, it alone held that jurisdiction—the Synod's interest went no further than its provision of the salary.<sup>36</sup> Copland's stirring had brought an uncomfortable revelation bobbing to the surface of the Synod-Council relationship: the terms of authority over Church-sponsored appointees had apparently never been clarified.

What unravelled from Copland's vendetta against MacGregor

was a profound stalemate between two major institutions whose terms of collaboration were far from explicit. Each body assumed that it alone held the power of professorial appointment and dismissal; the Church, on account of its provision of MacGregor's income, and the University, on account of its status as his employer. As one historian of Otago's Presbytery observed, "The acute differences of opinion had to do with Synod's understanding of itself in relation to trust monies."<sup>37</sup> But as the Council was quick to point out, the Synod's stance, based on its financial clout, created the outward impression that the University was subservient to ecclesiastical authority, a notion that was "highly injurious to the present and future prospects of the University."<sup>38</sup>

The Council had ample grounds for objecting to the idea of sidelining Duncan MacGregor, in addition to its fear that bending to ecclesiastical pressure would undermine the university's independence. On one hand the professor was doing a fine job of meeting his current obligations. He was neither overstretched nor under-resourced and as such there was no practical reason to subdivide his duties.<sup>39</sup> He was also immensely popular and effective as a lecturer. As one former student commented:

He was as unlike a mere "cram" teacher as any man could be. He scorned all the methods of the coach and I recollect his telling me, when I explained the work I was doing, that I was "a Strasbourg goose, being uselessly stuffed with pellets of indigestible knowledge." It was not the work of a professor, he said, to make notes for his students and ram them into their heads.<sup>40</sup>

Despite his brusque language and bold opinions, MacGregor was an inspiring teacher, who stimulated his young charges to think for themselves. That so many of them would later emerge as provincial and national leaders was a testament to his influence.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, the University was still rather limited in the subjects it taught. What it desperately needed, the Professorial Board informed the Synod, was a Chair in English Literature—a critical



subject in this era.<sup>42</sup> The University thus launched a multi-faceted defence of the invaluable MacGregor, based on the theoretical dangers of religious partiality, the indisputable fact of MacGregor's professionalism, and the urgent need for the introduction of new subjects.

But the Synod could not see beyond that first critical point—its perceived right to control the fate of an academic it was funding. Further, it did not understand what harm its influence could possibly have on the University, situated as it was in a province founded entirely on religious principles. Independence, to the University, meant total philosophical autonomy. To the Church it appeared only to mean autonomy within the boundaries of Christian doctrine, something Copland successfully convinced his colleagues that MacGregor had breached with his poverty thesis.<sup>43</sup> At this juncture, the matter was irresolvable. Each party had conferred upon itself the ultimate authority over professorial appointments, each had divergent notions of the University's role in the emerging society, and neither was willing to back down.

Their predicament was, in a sense, symptomatic of the colony's infancy. To ensure their respective long-term survivals in the newborn nation, each institution had been forced to lean upon the other, but given their ultimate philosophical differences, a clearly defined relationship was critical to maintaining the delicate balance between them. The vociferous Copland had unwittingly triggered a wobble which, for two bodies still finding their feet swiftly developed into a major constitutional tremor. The seriousness of the standoff attracted national attention, and an old friend and former student of the embattled Professor MacGregor stepped into the fray, raising the whole issue to the lofty heights of central government.

Robert Stout, then the country's Attorney-General, put the matter before Parliament in 1878.<sup>44</sup> He was fully confident that his ministerial colleagues would see as he did that the fate of an academic ought to lie with the institution that employed him, regardless of who was paying the bill. However, before Stout's

defence of the University's jurisdictional claim could even come up for debate it spawned a problem infinitely larger than itself.

The trouble was that this whole matter concerned a disagreement over the terms of power attached to a private endowment donated by a private body, namely the Presbyterian Church. As such, it had absolutely nothing to do with the public purse, and therefore it was almost certainly beyond Parliament's jurisdiction to intervene. This was the argument swiftly put forth by the Synod as soon as it caught wind of Stout's involvement, cutting off his intended Bill before it reached the House floor.

The rules of the House stated that "private" Bills could not be brought up for Parliamentary, and therefore public, debate, without the consent of all affected parties. Stout had not consulted the Synod before raising the issue in Parliament, therefore he had technically overstepped his own political jurisdiction.<sup>45</sup> Without the Synod's consent the matter could only be dealt with by the Private Members Committee, the mere mention of which sent forth a round of grumbles from the gathered MPs. The Private Members Committee was reputed to be a black hole into which Bills were sucked, never to be seen again. As a consequence, it had become the common, if illegal, habit of politicians to sneak technically "private" matters under the radar of the House Speaker simply so that they would be heard.<sup>46</sup>

Stout attempted to salvage his Bill by this very method, arguing to the Speaker that the wellbeing of the University was a very *public* concern indeed. The University's public credibility was at stake; the Church's private endowment was not the issue. Further, he suggested that to place the right of professorial appointment in the hands of the Church would set a "dangerous precedent" for other secular institutions relying, as many did in these early colonial days, upon the financial support of external patrons.<sup>47</sup> A Mr. Montgomery concurred with Stout's position, noting:

If the Council of the University had not power over its own Professors, it could not perform its duties. Of

what use would that body be if some outside body could interfere with its functions.<sup>48</sup>

A fug of doubt descended upon the House as the Members jostled with the fundamental nature of Stout's contention. The seriousness of the matter inspired a general reluctance to pass it into the hands of the dreaded Private Members Committee, but it was legally dubious to keep it before the House when it clearly involved a private party whose permission had not been sought. The fact was that, like the University at the heart of the Bill, Parliament too was a burgeoning institution, taking its first tentative steps as the central authority in a country that had only abandoned provincial governance three years earlier.<sup>49</sup> A minor tremble of uncertainty, such as Stout's Bill raised, was enough to disturb Parliament's equilibrium and expose areas of its own operation that were not yet watertight. The day's session ended ambiguously, and the Bill was shelved until the more serious matter of Parliament's own right of jurisdiction could be clarified.

The following year, with Parliament still engrossed in its own quandary, the Church-University impasse was put to a Royal Commission. However, the shrewd Synod deflected this new attempt at Governmental interference with a familiar argument—what right did a *Royal Commission* have to intervene in a dispute which involved the terms of a private endowment?<sup>50</sup> Once again the issue ran into uncertainty, and ultimately landed back in the laps of the Synod and the University Council, whose standoff had not thawed in the intervening years.

Throughout 1880 the question of the Government's right to intervene in private disputes continued to hover over Parliament, unresolved, like a murky cloud. Back in Dunedin however, the storm that had produced the cloud finally passed, thanks to the conciliatory efforts of two patient but frustrated Synod members, the Reverends Morice and Waddell.<sup>51</sup> Exhausted by Copland's stubborn refusal to put aside his personal feelings about MacGregor over the pressing matter of a second endowment, his two colleagues conspired to pass a motion that the new chair be

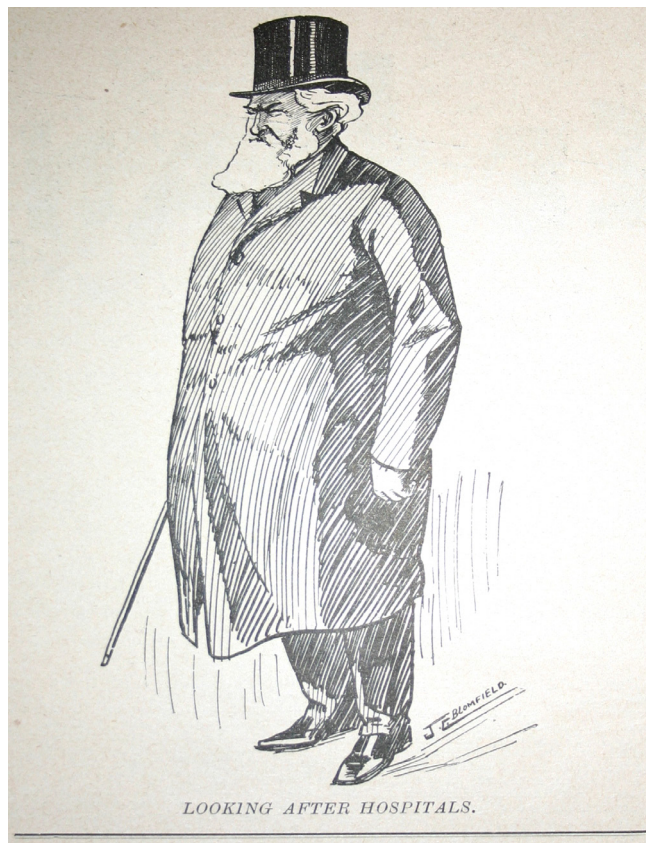
one of English Language and Literature, Political Economy and Constitutional History. Although this left MacGregor's chair safely intact, Waddell made a timely appeal to the Synod's spirit of peace and harmony, asking that its members "take the opportunity of burying the hatchet."<sup>52</sup> The motion was passed and, at least for the time being, the skies above the Church and the University cleared.

As the decade unfolded, however, the weather closed in around campus once again. Unfortunately for Duncan MacGregor, the whole experience with the Synod had left an enduring bitter taste in his mouth. He felt violated by Copland's meddling, and despite the University's ultimate victory in maintaining the Professor in his original position he was never able to occupy his chair with quite the same comfort again.<sup>53</sup> Duncan MacGregor, the man who had crossed oceans to take up this lifetime appointment, resigned in 1886 after only fifteen years.<sup>54</sup>

He spent the rest of his days serving the Government as Inspector of Asylums and Hospitals. MacGregor used his new position to put into practice the very ideas he had expressed in his offending 1876 article. However, he found himself swimming against the tide of public (and Parliamentary) opinion. He was never supported in his desire to introduce individual needs assessment to those who washed up in his institutions, and so his life became an endless cycle of nationwide hospital and asylum visits, personally weeding out the "undeserving" recipients of care, only to have them taken in again once he had moved on.<sup>55</sup> Yet despite the fruitless and thankless nature of MacGregor's self-appointed mission, his energies and intellect engendered enormous respect from all who encountered him. In fact, Margaret Tennant, a chronicler of the charitable aid movement in New Zealand, maintains that MacGregor's voice can be heard echoing down the barrel of the country's contemporary social policy, informing the "user-pays" and "means-testing" measures which came to characterise welfare provision in the late-twentieth century.<sup>56</sup>

And what of that other energetic and opinionated Scot? Like his

old nemesis, James Copland also gave up his original calling during the 1880s and turned to his medical training for a new vocation. He had a falling-out with the Church Session in 1881 over his desire to bring his congregation under the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand—a move that the local Session overruled.<sup>57</sup> He resigned



A caricature of Duncan MacGregor in his last year of life—a tempest in a top hat to the end. J. F. Bloomfield, 'Looking After Hospitals,' *New Zealand Freelance*, 21 July 1906. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena, University of Otago.

with familiar abruptness, and set up his own medical practice in the city.<sup>58</sup> But James Copland did not loiter in the shadows for long. In 1885, on hearing of MacGregor's imminent resignation, the good doctor all but fell over himself to ensure that his name was on the list of potential replacements.

He also chose this very moment to publish a vast anti-Evolution treatise over which he had been mulling for some years. In it he chastised pro-Darwinists *en masse*, for displaying a collective "air of superciliousness, arrogance, and dogma" in their promotion of theories that blatantly denied the *obvious* role of God in the creation of life.<sup>59</sup> "Practically," Copland berated, "[Darwin] excludes all Divine direction in the accomplishments of the results which we see in the animated world."<sup>60</sup> However, Copland's timing was about as coincidental as his criticisms were universal. In the preface to his work, entitled *The Origin and Spiritual Nature of Man*, he apologised in advance for any typographical errors incurred by the fact that he had rushed through his final draft so that it might aid his bid to become the next Professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy, "for which Chair, now vacant, I am a candidate."<sup>61</sup> It requires a monumental leap of faith not to view Copland's discourse as a direct attack upon one bearded, wild-eyed, Scottish Darwinist in particular.

In the event Copland was hugely outvoted in favour of another Synod member, William Salmond, whose selection brought the as-yet unresolved dispute over the power of appointment bubbling back to the surface of Church-University relations.<sup>62</sup> The Synod had taken it upon itself to replace MacGregor with a candidate of its own choosing, only consulting with the University Council in order to announce its decision. As it happened, the Council agreed with the Synod's choice, so opted to let the matter go on this occasion, but it was apparent that despite those four long years of wrangling for an equitable solution, neither party was any clearer as to who held the ultimate authority over academic appointments.<sup>63</sup> Copland eventually returned to the ministry, and died in 1902 at Gore, his final parish.<sup>64</sup>

Oh, who would think a crazy chair  
A four legged thing that's stuffed with hair,  
Could set the Godly in a flare,  
And raise their Adam,  
And make them curse and well-nigh swear,  
As if old Nick Had 'em ...<sup>65</sup>

This anonymous poem, allegedly found by a Dunedin resident near the gates of the First Church in 1886, and subsequently published in the *Otago Daily Times*, captured the general public feeling that the whole matter had been a groundless and protracted farce. How could something as benign as a professorial endowment have caused so many ruptures at so many levels of society? But the real “chair” was no inanimate entity—it had a life force of its own. With Duncan MacGregor perched upon it, the chair in question had wobbled perilously between two institutions whose core philosophies were naturally in opposition. Worse still, the jurisdictional terms between those parties—surely a matter of great importance given their essential differences—had never been formally clarified. As a result, the curse of the chair ricocheted all the way to Wellington where it exposed an embarrassing flaw in basic Parliamentary procedure. The hair stuffing inside this chair, it seems, had been ripped out and replaced with an overabundance of turmoil, contradiction and strife.

At the heart of the matter were two rambunctious personalities whose comparatively trifling conflict revealed to tremendous effect the constitutional delicacy of the infant colony they had come to call home. With no clear boundaries hemming it in, their initial disagreement had unravelled far beyond its origins, ultimately challenging the moral grip of the Church over the various emerging secular institutions it had helped to launch, including the University of Otago. Yet despite the extensive financial sway that the Presbyterian Synod held over the University, the colony's first tertiary institute courageously defended its freedom of expression and thought, and never for a moment wavered in its support of

Duncan MacGregor. It was an admirable stance for the fledgling university and signalled a lively future ahead, full of debate, conflict and controversy, but never, as time would reveal, a dull moment.

## Notes

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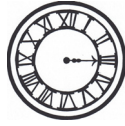
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## The Curious Case of Professor Pringle

Matthew Littlewood

The story of Professor Pringle is fraught with contradiction: he threw himself enthusiastically into his professorship upon arriving in Dunedin, yet eighteen months later, while on leave in Britain, Pringle effectively abandoned his commitments to the University to run for a British parliamentary seat. Pringle preached honesty and moral fortitude in a series of powerful addresses given to the Workers' Educational Association in Dunedin, but he was economical with the truth in his dealings with the University.

In March 1921, William Henderson Pringle, a 43-year-old Scotsman, accompanied by his wife Annie, arrived in Dunedin to become the first Professor of Economics at Otago. In August 1922, Pringle returned to Britain, having been granted compassionate leave for the rest of the academic year to attend to his son, John, who was suffering severe depression, probably as a result of his service in the First World War.<sup>1</sup> At the time of his departure Pringle was held in high regard by Otago University, and there was a clear expectation that he would return for the beginning of the 1923 academic year.<sup>2</sup> As it turned out, Pringle was effectively dismissed and never returned to Otago University.

Pringle arrived in Dunedin to the welcome expected for the city's first Professor of Economics. The *Otago Daily Times* heralded his appointment with great enthusiasm, and one tribute to Pringle, from the former organising secretary of the University of London's Economics Department, Mr Archibald Rammage, stands out:

I have seen brilliant tutors fail, their class withering away or splitting from top to bottom, but Professor Pringle did not fail. He had that humility and breadth of mind that calls forth the response in loyalty and work. He believes in Education and not every lecturer does.<sup>3</sup>

The operative word in that tribute is “loyalty,” a quality that Professor Pringle did not, in the end, display towards the University. This “loyal” man had within two years sacrificed his professorship by standing as a candidate for the British Parliament while on compassionate leave. There is further irony in another tribute from James Johnston, a friend and former colleague, quoted in the same *Otago Daily Times* article:

[Professor Pringle] is a true scholar, not a mere bookworm, but a far and deep seeking student of history. He is equally proficient as a scholar and a writer. He is a keen politician; an ardent Liberal, with a wide conception of the task of Liberalism has to carry out in this disturbed world.<sup>4</sup>

While his political engagement might have been admirable, Pringle was employed as an educator at a university 13,000 miles from the House of Commons. The article’s headline, a “Man of Many Interests,” was particularly apt, but double-edged: his interests in British politics were ultimately to conflict with his employment at Otago University.

The establishment of a Chair of Economics was a significant advance for the University. At the time there were 120 undergraduates, out of a total enrolment of 1,240, studying the combined subject of Economics and Commerce.<sup>5</sup> Two years earlier the University had celebrated its fiftieth anniversary jubilee and the institution was undergoing a period of rejuvenation after the fiscally shaky period immediately following the First World War.<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Education had increased subsidies in several departments; along with Economics, there were new heads of department for the Dentistry, Medical and Home Science Schools.<sup>7</sup>

By all indications, Pringle appeared to have the right credentials for the job. He had completed an MA in Economic History at the University of Edinburgh in 1897, followed by an LLB in Law and Jurisprudence at Glasgow 1901.<sup>8</sup> During the First World War, he served in the Ministry of Munitions.<sup>9</sup> At the time of his application, he was a lecturer and examiner at the University of London. A man of progressive views on adult education and Labour relations, Pringle had been in charge of Workers' Education Association tutorial classes for the University of London, his letter of application revealing that he had helped "in the establishment of nearly thirty joint bodies of employers and employed" for the British Ministry of Reconstruction from 1919 to 1920.<sup>10</sup>

Otago's new Chair of Economics had drawn international interest, particularly after the University Council had advertised the position in *The Times* and *The Scotsman*. Appointed over fourteen other applicants, including four others from Scotland, Professor Pringle was to be paid £750 a year, which was to rise in £50 increments to £850 by the close of his five year-long contract.<sup>11</sup> Compared to a carpenter, who would have earned roughly £200 per annum, this was a considerable salary.<sup>12</sup> The examination of potential candidates was very thorough too, with the New Zealand High Commissioner presiding over the University Board of Advisers for the interviews.<sup>13</sup>

The University Council expected its new employee to serve as a leader of the community as well as an ambassador for his subject. A letter to the High Commissioner states that "part of the Professor's duties will be the undertaking of [several] classes in connection with the Workers' Educational Association."<sup>14</sup> The expectation was that the appointee would to be sympathetic towards this movement and able to teach in a manner "such as to gain the men's confidence."<sup>15</sup>

Formed in 1915, the Workers' Educational Association was established as a means to promote learning to those who worked in factory and day jobs. Regular evening classes and meetings were held on a wide variety of subjects, and the association organised

public lectures by prominent figures. According to political historian Barry Gustafson, the WEA became a neutral ground in which the ideological militants and “moderates” could meet, debate and come to know each other. Several attendees of the early meetings were to become prominent members of the Labour Party, including future New Zealand Prime Ministers Peter Fraser and Michael Joseph Savage.<sup>16</sup>

Originally classes in Dunedin were to be held once a week and be two hours in length. A pamphlet advertising the Workers’ Educational Association, reprinted in G. E. Thompson’s *A History of Otago: 1869-1919*, explains the system: “the standard of lectures is high, and in no way inferior to that of the day lectures at University of Otago. A study circle consists of groups of persons—about ten or twelve or more—who meet together to study a particular subject under the guidance of a leader.”<sup>17</sup>

The newly appointed “progressive” Professor was suited to the city’s social climate, as he was following in the footsteps of his similarly “progressive” predecessor, Harry D Bedford. Bedford, who had held the combined chair of Economics and History, had been a strong advocate of the redistribution of the country’s wealth during the First World War. Bedford was also a political Liberal, standing for the Dunedin West seat in the 1911 Parliamentary elections.<sup>18</sup> He died in a boating accident in Whangarei in 1919, shortly before the severance of the Economics and History departments.<sup>19</sup> The University Council, in choosing Pringle as Bedford’s successor, appears to have approved of liberal, possibly even leftist, views of labour relations and education.

Pringle’s strict Presbyterian background (both his father and grandfather were Ministers of the Scottish Presbyterian Church) may also have proved in his favour. Historian James Belich, in his book *Making Peoples*, estimates that at least half of Dunedin’s population was of Scottish ancestry or born in Scotland. It is safe to assume that the majority of Scots were Presbyterian. As Belich says, we can “consider Presbyterian to be Proxy for Scottishness.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, it was entirely suitable for the University to induct

a Scottish Presbyterian, given that the Presbyterian Church had partly funded the salary of the Professorship, enabling separate chairs for Economics and History.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the *Otago Daily Times* article of welcome praised the new Professor for being a “Scotsman of the best kind, a son of the manse and an inheritor of a family tradition of learning.”<sup>22</sup> As the first Professor of Economics at University of Otago, Pringle initially performed nearly flawlessly: he was a popular lecturer, was heavily involved in adult education and possessed of a social conscience. To Pringle’s credit, he immediately occupied himself in his professional duties. His frequent addresses to the Workers’ Educational Association were well attended. At the same time, he oversaw several different classes including Economic Law, Economic Geography and Economic History of England.<sup>23</sup> By the beginning of 1922 as well as his educational activities, he was also involved in a campaign to heighten New Zealanders’ awareness of the League of Nations, convinced the League could prevent another Great War.

Unfortunately, affairs in England were not going as well for Pringle. His son John was seriously depressed and required parental support. Pringle was granted leave to return to Britain on 1 August 1922. He could have arrived in Britain no earlier than mid-September and must have put his name forward as a political candidate soon after his arrival in Britain in late September as he stood in the November general elections as an Independent Liberal in the Berwick/Haddington Borough.<sup>24</sup> The decision to run for the British parliament seemingly contradicts the impression given in Dunedin of a man enthusiastically committed to his life and work in Dunedin. It certainly suggests that Professor Pringle was not entirely happy in Dunedin. After all, why would someone run for Parliament in Britain while holding a Professorship on the other side of the world?

Searches of the public press for reasons for his decision have proved to be inconclusive. While Pringle was a lecturer at the University of Otago, The *Otago Daily Times* published several



reports of his speeches to the Workers' Education Association as well as occasional opinion columns on the current affairs in Europe during 1922, but there is no subsequent mention of any dismissal or resignation. An *Otago Witness* article of 10 April 1923 written by Pringle about the "Political Situation in Britain" comments, rather obliquely, that he was "recently Professor of Economics at the University of Otago."<sup>25</sup> A later 1925 notice in the *Otago Witness* of Pringle's new employment as Principal of the Birmingham Commercial College suggests that he retained some contact with Dunedin.<sup>26</sup> The puzzle is that the newspapers fail to mention the nature of his departure. The University and the media, having welcomed Pringle with fanfare, were probably reluctant to admit that his departure did not reflect well on either Pringle or the university.

In light of the lack of written material addressing Pringle's motives, we are left with the facts alone. The facts of Pringle's employment are as follows: firstly, it appears that he was given leave on full pay from 7 August to 3 December 1922, although £20/month was to be deducted from his salary to pay for relieving lecturers.<sup>27</sup> The election for the Berwick/Haddington seat was held on 22 November 1922, three weeks before Pringle sent his first letter of resignation.<sup>28</sup> (He was unsuccessful, but nonetheless gained more than 22% of the vote, which placed him third in a four-candidate race won by the New Liberals.). On 12 December, the University received a cable from Pringle: "Regret medical son's health necessitates resignation March 1. Letter and certificates to follow. Pringle."<sup>29</sup> The letter from Pringle's Harley Street doctor, which warned that "it is likely to be a matter of a good many months before we can say that [Professor Pringle's son] is out of danger" was posted to the University the same day, and arrived in early January.<sup>30</sup> When the University Council met in December, after Pringle's leave period had ended, the members decided not to accept Pringle's resignation, postponing its decision until the doctor's letter arrived.

By this time the situation was becoming well known in wider

academic circles, presumably on information from Pringle himself. On 20 December 1922, only eight days after the University received Professor Pringle's initial cable of resignation, Professor D. B. Copland, Head of Economics at Tasmania University, posted the following letter to the Registrar, suggesting the appointment of a fellow Australian:

I am informed that Professor Pringle has resigned the Chair of Economics at your University. I am taking the liberty of writing to you with a reference for a possible vacancy. My reason for doing this at this early stage is that Mr J A Johnson, Principal of the Training College in Hobart, will be visiting New Zealand during this summer and will be in Dunedin for some time.<sup>31</sup>

The Registrar, informing Mr. Copland temporary arrangements were already in place for the current year, nonetheless replied that he would "be very glad to give you full information as to the vacancy when the Council decides to appoint a permanent professor."<sup>32</sup> Professors Copland and Johnson were not the only ones quick to express interest. J. W. MacIlraith, a New Zealand Inspector of Schools inquired about a vacancy, to which the Registrar replied on 22 January 1923, clarifying to Mr. MacIlraith that it was "not likely that the position will be advertised for the current year."<sup>33</sup>

While his eager replacements eyed the chair, Professor Pringle backtracked, perhaps regretting the loss of a prestigious academic post and salary. On 29 January 1923 the University fielded another telegram, this time retracting his original resignation: "No reply received. Can return in six months. Boy improving. No salary March to August. Kindly cable. Pringle."<sup>34</sup> Although the records do not supply the precise date, the University discovered from the public press sometime between Pringle's first and second telegrams that he had been a candidate for the House of Commons. However, by the time the University Council held a follow-up meeting on 2 February 1923, sympathy for Pringle's plight had clearly diminished. Despite Pringle's telegram retracting his resignation,

the University Council no longer wished him to return.

Accordingly, the meeting passed a resolution accepting Professor Pringle's resignation from 1 March.<sup>35</sup> In addition to accepting his resignation, the Council also invoked clause 11 of Pringle's contract, stipulating that should Pringle step down as professor he was to refund the Council his relocation expenses.<sup>36</sup> The University Council therefore asked for a refund of the £300 paid to Pringle for his relocation from England. On the advice of lawyers, who believed that it was "immaterial whether the salary was due before or after the receipt of the first cable," the Council determined that Pringle was liable to pay back £300 advanced for travel expenses. Pragmatically, the Council compromised, retaining the £166 in salary due to Pringle for the period from November 1922 to March 1923.<sup>37</sup>

Professor Pringle responded on 18 May 1923, still refusing to accept the arrangement:

as the acceptance of my resignation was not verified to me before the resignation was withdrawn, I am in no way legally entitled to pay the £300 that you paid to me in respect of passage money.... I shall be glad, therefore, to see a draft of [the money] due to me at early convenience. Kindly make it payable to me at the Bank of New Zealand in London.<sup>38</sup>

There the registrar apparently let the matter rest and Pringle accepted the Council's compromise.

Following Pringle's dismissal, the University of Otago settled on Archdeacon Woodthorpe as a temporary replacement for Chair of Economics, from 1923 to the end of 1924.<sup>39</sup> When the Chair was advertised in June 1924, more than thirty professors and educators from universities as diverse as Southampton, Edinburgh, Sydney, Auckland and Glasgow vied for the position of Professor of Economics.<sup>40</sup> The strong response was no doubt a relief to the Registrar, who had persuaded the Chancellor not to merge Economics and Geography under a single head of

Department.<sup>41</sup> More to the point, it shows that University of Otago was fast becoming a respected institution.

While the University of Otago searched for a new chair of Economics, Pringle returned to Britain and quickly found gainful employment. While teaching at the London School of Economics from 1924 to 1925, Pringle unsuccessfully stood for Parliament in 1923 and 1924. Appointed Principal at the Birmingham Commercial College in 1925, he remained there until 1942, publishing two books: *An Introduction to Economics* (1928) and *Economic Problems in Europe Today* (1930) and continuing to contribute to debates surrounding his discipline.<sup>42</sup>

Pringle championed Economics as a discipline in an era when its future as a tertiary subject was uncertain, particularly in Britain. Even so, he disapproved of the movement to teach economic theory in secondary schools. He wanted students to learn the subject's history before they learnt the theory and considered there was insufficient funding of Economics at a tertiary level. Answering the challenge of a columnist in *The Times*, he penned a letter outlining his thoughts on how to improve the subject:

Much more attention should be paid by both educational experts and by the business and community to the organization of the work of schools of commerce in every city.... In financial endowment, in the provision of adequate buildings, equipment and staff for these institutions, even our largest cities are lamentably behind the great cities of our competitors.<sup>43</sup>

Pringle also continued his involvement in the Workers' Educational Association, in an attempt to "reach the dormant mass of opinion."<sup>44</sup> His involvement in various governmental committees received international exposure as well: he was interviewed in *Time* magazine after his appearance at a conference for the "British Association for the Advancement of Science" where he argued that commercial education could be best served in Britain by establishing half a dozen schools in strategic towns.<sup>45</sup>

William Henderson Pringle's appointment to a professorship at the University of Otago was a highpoint in his career. All available biographical material on Pringle refers to his professorship; he even signed his letters to *The Times* as "Professor" Pringle. In any published work or column, he describes himself as a "former Professor of Economics." As far as the written record is concerned, Pringle does not appear to have felt the need to either explain or apologise for his actions to the University. His entry in *Who was Who* mentions that he was Professor at the institution from 1921 to 1923, but, unsurprisingly, omits the details of his dismissal. Possibly, he believed that he was the victim and that the University of Otago had treated him shabbily in not reappointing him.

Pringle's obituary in *The Times* on 27 April 1967, called him both a "pioneer of adult education" and a "staunch internationalist," two attributes that he displayed during his brief period at the University of Otago, both in his lectures to the Workers' Educational Association and in his establishment of a New Zealand branch of the League of Nations union. He spoke in admiration of the "trained intelligence, lively will and determined sympathy" of those who attended the WEA meetings in Dunedin<sup>46</sup>—all qualities he apparently possessed, if the range of topics in his columns for the *Otago Daily Times* is any indication, displaying a wide knowledge of the political situations in Russia, France, and Britain.<sup>47</sup>

Pringle's political inclinations should not have been a hindrance to his holding the Professorship at the University of Otago: if Pringle had stood for a Parliamentary seat in Dunedin, it is likely that the University Council would have supported his political ambitions. After all, his predecessor, Professor Bedford, had been a political candidate, presumably with the tacit approval of the University. Moreover, the position of MP in the 1920s was only a part-time occupation of little remuneration. It was not so much his actions that caused the uproar; rather, it was his failure to disclose his actions. That said, running for the House of Commons in Britain while holding a position as Professor in New Zealand was an obvious example of a conflict of interest.

From a distance of more than eighty years, the feelings and opinions of the protagonists remain obscure. What is most curious about the case of Pringle is his failure to acknowledge the conflict between his actions and his obligations, as well as the University's willingness to relinquish a popular and effective Professor as soon as he revealed his disloyalty. If Pringle was diplomatic in not expressing any resentment toward Otago, the University was equally diplomatic, stating in a letter to the High Commissioner in London that Pringle had resigned "owing to the serious ill health of his son."<sup>48</sup> Pringle was neither the first nor the last academic at the University of Otago to engage in a politics yet his failure to disclose his activities in Britain proved his undoing. William Henderson Pringle enjoyed the prestige of being the first Professor of Economics at the University of Otago yet he was, in a sense, a missed opportunity. He never quite fulfilled his potential during his time at Dunedin, the University losing the best years of his academic career to Britain.

## Notes

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3. "Otago University: A New Appointment: A Man of Many Interests," *Otago Daily Times*, 9 February 1921, 8.

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5. *New Zealand House of Representatives: Appendix to the Journals* (1920), 26-27.

6. W. P. Morrel, *The University of Otago: A Centennial History* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press 1969), 128.

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8. Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections (email: Student Record Inquiry).

9. *The Otago Daily Times*, 9 February 1921, 8.

10. "Application for the Chair of Economics," Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-31/35. Pringle's contract was for "specific limited term," which was to finish on 8 December 1925, to be reviewed thereafter.

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18. Gustafson, 84.

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20. James Belich, *Making Peoples* (Auckland, Moa Beckett Press 1998), 270.

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27. "Articles of Agreement for the Chair of Economics," Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-33/12.

28. Craig, 550.

29. "Registrar's Letter to Messrs. Ramsay, Barrowclough and

Haggart,” 3 February 1923, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-33/12.

30. Ibid.

31. “D. B. Copland, Letter to the Registrar,” 20 December 1922, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-31/59.

32. Ibid.

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34. “Registrar’s Letter to Messrs. Ramsay, Barrowclough and Haggart,” Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-33/12.

35. Ibid.

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37. “Registrar’s Letter to Professor Pringle,” 22 March 1923, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-33/12.

38. Ibid.

39. “Registrar’s Letter to the Prime Minister,” 17 May 1924, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-31/080.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. On-line British Library Catalogue, <<http://www.bl.uk>>; use of the search engine and an enquiry via email was able to retrieve printouts of his book listings.

43. W. H. Pringle, “Economics for the People,” *The Times*, 24 August 1925, 6.

44. Ibid.

45. “Britons in Bristol,” *Time* Archive Article, 22 September 1930.

46. W. H. Pringle, *New Zealand’s Interest in the League of Nations* (Dunedin: Wilkes’s Print, 1921), 8.

47. See: W. H. Pringle, “Marxian Socialism in Russia,” *Otago Daily Times*, 8 August 1921, 10, and W. H. Pringle, “La Belle France: Her Social Characteristics,” *Otago Daily Times*, 13 August 1921, 10.

48. “Registrar’s Letter to the High Commissioner, The Hon. Sir James Allen,” 30 May 1924, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-31/080.







## **John Harris, Librarian and Alien Anarchist**

Dave Robertson

*Was there a man with soul so dead  
Who was not, in the thirties, red? <sup>1</sup>*

Winter mornings find the trees on the clocktower lawn leafless and dark, skeletons silhouetted in the chill Dunedin dawn. Morning mist and coal-smoke begin to disperse as the sun edges into a metallic sky. Within the bluestone walls, despite the frost outside, Chancellor William Morrell had reason to be pleased. After four years of the Great Depression the University of Otago was in urgent need of finance for expansion and the University Council had accepted the offer of a Carnegie Fellowship to provide a trained librarian and a grant of five thousand dollars per annum to purchase books. An excellent candidate, John Harris, had recently agreed to take up the Fellowship and planned to go to the United States to study Library Science. Harris, “a young student of the finest type,” was also a sportsman, a journalist, and an Oxford graduate. Morrell, confident that the Carnegie money would bring Otago’s library up to standard, and that he had chosen a person highly suited to the task, would have seen among his mail that morning both a letter from Harris and a telegram from the Commissioner of Police. We can only imagine the Chancellor’s reaction as he read Harris’s explanation that his entry visa to the United States had been refused because of his political views, and the Police allegations that Harris was a Communist agitator and Party Official.

Harris was born William John in 1903 at Oamaru. He attended Christ's College in Christchurch, where his father, Edward Harris, had been educated and where his grandfather, the Reverend William Chambers Harris, had been headmaster from 1865 until 1873. After four years teaching at Christ's College, John left in 1926 for England where he graduated in 1929, with an honours degree in History from Oxford University. Unable to gain academic employment due to the beginning of the Depression he travelled in Europe and sailed the Mediterranean with a Canadian friend. The pair decided to seek work in Canada, but on arrival found economic conditions equally tough there. Harris eventually found work as a lumberjack at Gogamo, several hundred miles north of Toronto, and spent a winter season labouring and then supervising in the timber industry. Having saved a little money, he travelled west to Vancouver, living as a hobo and catching rides on railway boxcars with, at times, up to two hundred fellow unemployed. Harris recounts hitching a lift through Alberta from a motorist who, "had a bullet hole in his windscreen, travelled fast and avoided towns so I had my suspicions. But he also had a four foot length of German Sausage which he shared with me at times and he obviously needed company."<sup>2</sup> After more adventures—including being mistakenly arrested by the Mounties and having his clothes set alight by sparks while lying on the roof of a train in a tunnel—he arrived in Vancouver to find that he could not afford a passage to New Zealand, and that there was no way to work a passage without a Seafarer's Union ticket. He joined other down-and-outs on Vancouver Island doing farm work for no pay but being allowed to eat the produce. Eventually his former Christ's College headmaster, E. C. Crosse, heard of Harris's predicament and sent him both an offer of a teaching job and the fare home. Teaching again at Christ's College, Harris's curiosity turned to experimenting with publishing. He helped found the Christ's College Press, and published a small volume of poetry there.<sup>3</sup>

As the effects of the Great Depression took hold in New Zealand, Harris became disillusioned with the lack of social and



John Harris, c.1940. 80-094 Box 7, Hocken Collections/ Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, Dunedin.

political progress. With several former Christ's College friends he purchased and reconditioned a 66-foot yacht, the *Waterlily*, and in 1932 set out to sail for England via the South Seas. After visiting Fiji they were wrecked on the reef in the Ellice Islands (now known as Tuvalu), and were ultimately returned to New Zealand on a passing freighter.

We may speculate that these formative experiences helped lead Harris—and many others at that time—to conclude that western capitalism was failing, and that perhaps socialism or communism would provide a better system of government and economic management. Leftwing sympathy was very much in

vogue at Oxford and Harris, while studying modern history, attended lectures on Marxism and took an academic interest in Communism. His experiences labouring, both in Ontario and shearing on high-country stations in New Zealand during school holidays, had acquainted him with the life and hardships of the working class, and his adventures as a hobo, although told light-heartedly to great nephew Michael McManaway fifty years later, were at times desperate and frightening and must have engendered a healthy mistrust of police and authority.<sup>4</sup> Harris's first thirty years of life experiences had set him up with an academic understanding of left-wing philosophy and a practical appreciation of the difficulties facing the working classes. What he may have lacked, was an appreciation of how the heady ideas of international political theory could come to affect him personally.

Back in Auckland without a job in 1933 Harris witnessed the hardships being suffered as a result of widespread unemployment and became associated with the Tomasevic Defence Committee, a group formed to try to prevent the deportation of Ivan Tomasevic, a Yugoslav immigrant with Communist views. Harris became secretary of the group, which later evolved into the Auckland Civil Liberties League. Harris represented the League on the Auckland Anti-War Council, and through these circles met Marguerite Darby, described by Ormond Wilson as "a staunch communist known to her friends as Rita."<sup>5</sup>

Harris made a living by giving public talks and radio readings about his ocean adventures, but wishing to marry Rita he felt the need for a more substantial and stable income. In 1934 he applied for several jobs, being rejected for a position with the New Zealand Broadcasting Board and as a school teacher in Fiji, but his application for the Carnegie Fellowship advertised by the University of Otago was received with interest. In 1931 the Carnegie Corporation of New York offered Otago University, along with the other three New Zealand universities at that time, a grant of \$5,000 per year for three years to "provide books for undergraduate reading." A condition of the grant was that the University must send a suitable

graduate for training in Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor or “other such school of similar nature.” Carnegie Corporation offered an additional \$3,000 Fellowship to cover the tuition, salary, and travel costs of the recipient who would, on successful completion of the year’s study, be appointed as the University Librarian.<sup>6</sup> Otago’s Librarian at the time, Ngarita Gordon, was still completing her Bachelor of Arts degree and so did not meet Carnegie’s requirements. Otago deferred acceptance of the offer until 1934 but then, as the offer was about to expire and still having no suitable candidate, the Council advertised the Fellowship and John Harris, a thirty-year-old self-described journalist from Auckland, seized the opportunity for a career in academia.

After an exchange of letters in which the University Registrar, Herbert Chapman, wrote that the Carnegie Corporation was seeking applicants who should “preferably be young, with the avowed desire of making librarianship a life’s work,” Harris replied, “I should be delighted at the opportunity to devote my life to the care of books.”<sup>7</sup> In mid-July Harris travelled to Dunedin to be interviewed. He later wrote to McManaway,

The points that really counted when it came to the interview, conducted by the Chancellor and full Council of the University of Otago in their Council Chamber, were ... more related to adventure than academics. Only two questions were asked: 1, Did I play games and if so what? To which my reply was yes! Rugby football and cross country running, at both of which I had represented my Oxford College. I had also, I said, bringing in a little local colour just to show my public relations experience, played for Christs College the year they beat Otago [Boys High School] by 13–7. This was no disgrace to O.B.H.S., I added, because it was an exceptional year for C.C. and we won every match we played.

This really stirred the old boys up. None of them

knew a thing about libraries but they did know a football and were prepared to appoint me on the spot without another question. All except one of them, the Professor of Mathematics, who felt that some gesture should be made towards learning. He was also a canny Scot from Glasgow and probably football to him meant nothing but soccer. His question hit my weakest spot. "As University Librarian," he explained, "you'll find that this University places more emphasis on the sciences than the arts. Now, it would seem from your Curriculum Vitae, Mr. Harris, that since matriculation you have avoided the sciences and specialized in the Arts. Will this not be a disadvantage to you in the development of our science collections?"

Desperately I racked my brains. All I could think was how right you are. Maths, Physics, Chemistry, I have avoided like the plague. The biological sciences, geology and other earth sciences [never even came into] the school curriculum of my day. Greek and Latin, History, English Literature, French, had been my school subjects, plus Education and Economics at University and History as my Honours subject.

Then just in time I remembered my struggles as navigator of the *Water Lily*. "It's true" I conceded, "that my formal education has been lacking on the scientific side but there is one science I have some acquaintance with—Nautical Astronomy. I took a course in navigation and navigated a ketch round the Pacific. All I can say is that my navigation must have been fairly satisfactory because in several thousand miles of sailing we always made our landfall. The islands were often the tiniest of atolls, the currents were varied, and I was the sole navigator. If I need to know something about other sciences for purposes of my library's development I've no doubt I shall be able to tackle them likewise".

Questions came at me from all sides. Where had I been in the Pacific, what was I doing, what was the name of the ketch, etc., etc. Then it turned out that several had known the Water Lily when she plied between Invercargill and Stewart Island, others had heard of her being sailed away to warmer seas, and all were convinced that a man who not only played football reasonably well but took a ketch sailing across the ocean would have no difficulty in bringing order to the books of Otago. No more questions, and as the Chancellor was an Oxford man and a classicist, and my only rival was from Cambridge, and played no games whatever, his interview was over in a matter of seconds and I was given the appointment.<sup>8</sup>

Two weeks later, Harris's Fellowship was to be ratified at a University Council meeting, but in the interim Police Commissioner Wohlman decided to inform the University about the political activities of their new appointee. Chancellor Morrell asked the Council not to place the University Seal on Harris' contract as he had received a "confidential telegram from Wellington raising questions about the Fellowship." The Council resolved to postpone its decision until the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor had an opportunity to interview Harris in Wellington.<sup>9</sup> The Council minutes here are minimal; it seems likely that Morrell did discuss the contents of the telegram with the Council, but discretion kept the details off the official record. On 3 August 1934, Walter Hoffman, the American Vice-Consul, sent Harris a curt message on Consulate letterhead officially informing him that a visa,

Has been refused to Mr. William John Harris, under ... the Act [which] debar[s] from the United States "Aliens who are anarchists," and "Aliens who advise, advocate or teach, or who are members of or affiliated with any organization, association, society, or group, that advises, advocates, or teaches, opposition to all organized



government".<sup>10</sup>

Harris, not renouncing his political opinions but denying the specific allegations made by the Police, was aghast at the personal implications. He wrote to Morrell to reassure the University of his character,

I can assure you that I shall never in any way, abuse the trust that the University Council have placed in me in approving my appointment to the Carnegie Library Fellowship. Whatever my personal political and economic views may be, I shall at all times as a Carnegie Fellow ... preserve complete academic impartiality in such matters. I shall also refrain from all active participation in political affairs. I quite realised when accepting the Fellowship that such a course would be expected from me and had resolved accordingly.<sup>11</sup>

An interest in communism, though perhaps unacceptable to middle-class New Zealand at that time, was not uncommon internationally or in academic circles. Although the Police allegations could be refuted, Harris saw no need to hide his true political stance from Morrell.

I can further assure you, that in my connection with the Communist Movement, there has been nothing which any honest man could condemn. I am not denying an interest in the economics of Marxism, the politics of Leninism and the experiment of Socialism in the Soviet Union. In the latter connection I have given two lectures in Auckland. Your informant is incorrect when he states that I was joint-secretary of the Auckland Communist Party. I am not a member of the Communist Party. Finally I can assure that my behaviour as a Carnegie Fellow or as Librarian will never give you any cause to regret your choice. I have nothing in my past to which any man could be ashamed and I have every confidence in my ability to perform to your entire satisfaction all

duties assigned to me.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever Chancellor Morrell's initial reaction to the revelations, he and the University Council decided to support Harris. Morrell was an academic and educationalist with a strong Anglican background. Whether he decided that his judgement of Harris was sounder than that of the Police, whether he perhaps resented the Police Commissioner's interference, or whether he wished to uphold the principle of a University as a place of freedom of thought and speech is not known. The Police alleged that Harris was "appointed as a [Communist] party organizer," that "communist correspondence and records were kept at his residence," and that he had "married Miss Rita Darby, also a member of the Communist Party."<sup>13</sup> There was nothing illegal in any of the allegations and the Police claims lack any substance other than purporting to show a political affiliation. Morrell was not impressed by the attempt at character assassination of a fellow Oxford graduate and Harris denied all the Police claims, maintaining his interest in Communism was academic. On a letter from the University to Harris, the Registrar had hand-written as a postscript, "the Chancellor wishes to express his sympathy for what has occurred."<sup>14</sup> In the context of 1930s Communism, the word *sympathy* has a certain resonance, but we would be extrapolating too far to conclude that Morrell's political views were aligned with Harris's. In a flurry of correspondence between Harris, Morrell, the Police Commissioner, and the Vice-Consul, Morrell suggested that Harris seek references from prominent citizens and then ask the American Consulate to reconsider. One such reference was provided by Dr. Frank Fitchett, Professor of Clinical Medicine at Dunedin Hospital.

I rang Maling this evening to ask if he knew if Harris had Communistic leanings. He pooh-poohed the suggestion, repeated that he had known him intimately since a baby, had seen much of him lately, and could vouch for him. He told me that on the strength of his

recent appointment Harris has since married a very nice English girl. Personally I know no more of him than I have gained in the course of luncheon and an hours [sic] conversation. I was very favourably impressed. His father Peter Harris, son of Archdeacon Harris, a former Headmaster of Christ College, was an old friend of mine and a very excellent fellow. He was killed in the War. His mother, sister of Robin Campbell of Otakaik, is an accomplished Englishwoman very popular in my own social circle.<sup>15</sup>

The letter is delightful if not very convincing, but Fitchett concluded his letter of reference, “I believe that if his appointment is confirmed he will soon be regarded as a definite cultural asset of the University.” This was to prove prescient.

At the same time the University cabled the Carnegie Corporation—in code at Harris’s request—appraising them of the situation and asking permission to send Harris to an alternative institution, the London School of Librarianship. Carnegie quickly agreed, and also exerted influence on the U. S. State Department which then ordered the Wellington Consulate to reconsider the case. When Hoffman still refused to issue Harris a visa, the only remaining course was clear, and Harris was able to proceed to make arrangements to study in London. The October University Council meeting “expressed hearty appreciation of the actions of the Corporation.”<sup>16</sup>

The Police attempt to interfere with Harris because of his political views had touched a nerve throughout academic and left-wing circles. The issue was ultimately raised in Parliament when Walter Nash asked the Minister whether the Police were intercepting the mail of private citizens and whether they had supplied information to the American Consul which had prevented “a young student of the finest type” from taking up a valuable fellowship. The minister, Mr. Cobbe, denied being aware of any such activities and Christchurch Labour MP Mr. Armstrong informed Parliament that “a man might be a good, law-abiding

citizen and a Communist at the same time.”<sup>17</sup>

After the Council ratified his appointment, Harris left immediately for London where he spent nine months studying at the University of London School of Librarianship, and at what was in his opinion the greatest library of all, the British Museum. At the London School, Harris was introduced to the work of the American librarian Henry Evelyn Bliss, who had been for many years developing a theory of classification.

On returning from London and taking up the position of Librarian in 1935, Harris soon set about bringing order to the book collections, which he described as either, “not classified at all [or] a hotchpotch of Dewey bastardized by a succession of untrained and overworked classifiers.”<sup>18</sup> Harris initially intended to use the Library of Congress system to classify Otago’s book stocks. The LC system was developed by Henry Putnam in 1897 and many of the classification decisions in its design were made to suit the specific needs of the Library of Congress, rather than on the basis of any theory of classification. Although the LC system had been adopted by many university and research libraries and had become a de facto standard, Harris decided to use the new Bliss system, considering it “superior to all general schemes of classification.”<sup>19</sup> Bliss, which did achieve some popularity in the United Kingdom but not in the United States, is based on a theoretical model of classification where knowledge is organised according to academic expertise, starting with the general and narrowing down to more specific facets. Harris later described its advantages as having a logical order of subjects, a simple and concise form of notation, and flexibility as it could be expanded indefinitely.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most significant testament to Harris’s character is the way that Otago’s Chancellor and Council supported him despite the accusations of the American Vice-Consul and the Police Commissioner. Prominent New Zealand librarian and historian Herbert Roth, summarising Harris’s achievements, pointed out that “Academic freedoms suffered greatly at the hands of university councils and it is to the credit of the Otago University

authorities in what is the most conservative of New Zealand's four main cities, that they upheld Harris's appointment."<sup>21</sup> Dunedin may be a conservative city, but Chancellor Morrell did not let any conservative political instinct sway the Council from a rational decision. At the Council meeting of 4 September Harris's appointment was again on the agenda. After an attempt to move into committee—to discuss the matter in secret—was lost, Dr. F. S. Batchelor moved that Harris's appointment be confirmed and the motion was carried with Mr. F. W. Mitchell recording his dissent.

The University's trust in Harris was well rewarded by his performance as Librarian. Harris's work at Otago is summed up by Herbert Roth, in the journal *New Zealand Libraries*;

[Harris's] entry into Library work, and in fact his period of fourteen years' service at Otago, coincided almost exactly with the term of office of the first labour Government, and [his] work at Otago and for New Zealand librarianship as a whole, was part of and contributed to the general social and intellectual renewal which marked those years. When he entered the New Zealand library profession, it was, in his own vivid phrase, "largely prostituted to handing out commonplace books to commonplace minds". Harris not only transformed the Otago University Library from a haphazard collection of mostly uncatalogued books into the best university library in the country, but also helped to transform the library profession in New Zealand into a vigorous and lively body of women and men, still overworked and underpaid, but aware of the problems that faced them and imbued with a justified pride in their achievement.<sup>22</sup>

After leaving Otago for Africa in 1948 Harris founded the library at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and served as Acting Vice-Chancellor for four years, then served as Professor of Library Studies at the University of Ghana, and went on to found yet another

library at the University of Benin in Nigeria. He received honorary degrees from both Ibadan and Loughborough Universities for his work and in 1978, forty years after leaving Otago, the University of Otago Council conferred on Harris an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. John Harris died in 1980 after retiring to Melbourne, but the Bliss cataloguing system he instituted remained in use until 1985 when Otago, to be compatible with other university libraries, began to reclassify all material using the Library of Congress system.

William Parker Morrell, son of Chancellor Morrell and author of the University's centennial history described the Carnegie Fellowship as "a turning point in the history of the University."<sup>23</sup> The turning point was both financial, as capital became available after the depression years, and academic as the University made its library a strategic priority.<sup>24</sup> Harris's appointment also marks a milestone in the growth of the University as it asserted its intellectual independence from the State and political whim. William Morrell's decision to appoint Harris despite the concerted efforts of the Police and the American Embassy was an application of the principles of academic freedom and political independence to life in New Zealand.

## Notes

1. Anonymous play on lines from Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, noted in Herbert Roth, "John Harris in New Zealand," *New Zealand Libraries* 42:2 (1979), 50.

2. John Harris to Michael McManaway, 28 September 1977, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, 80-094 Box 12.

3. Herbert Roth, "John Harris in New Zealand," *New Zealand Libraries* 42:2 (1979), 48.

4. John Harris to Michael McManaway, 28 September 1977, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, 80-094 Box 12.

5. Ormond Wilson, *John Harris: A Memoir* (Christchurch: Christ's

College, 1987), 15.

6. Carnegie Appointment (1934), Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-31/0202.

7. John Harris to University Registrar, 3 June 1934, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80-094 Box 7.

8. John Harris to Michael McManaway, *ibid.*, 9-10.

9. University of Otago, "Council Minutes 1932-1934," Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-1/10.

10. Walter Hoffman to John Harris, 3 August 1934, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80-094 Box 7.

11. John Harris to William Morrell, 3 August 1934, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80-094 Box 7.

12. John Harris to William Morrell, *ibid.*

13. Police Commissioner Wohlmann to John Harris, 27 August 1934, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80-094 Box 7.

14. Herbert Chapman to John Harris, 13 August 1934, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80-094 Box 7.

15. Frank Fitchett to William Morell, 1 August 1934, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80-094 Box 7.

16. University of Otago, "Council Minutes 1932-1934," Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, AG-180-1/10.

17. New Zealand, "Parliamentary Debates September 18 to November 10, 1934," Government Printer, Wellington, 1935.

18. John Harris, "Why Bliss?," *New Zealand Libraries* 3:12 (1940), 138-139.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Herbert Roth, "John Harris in New Zealand," 50.

22. Herbert Roth, 52.

23. William P. Morrell, *University of Otago, A Centennial History* (Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1969), 146.

24. Although perhaps not a practical priority. The first installment of the Carnegie grant was not received until eleven years later, because the Library lacked sufficient space to shelve the new books. In 1945 the upper Oliver lecture theatre was hastily converted to

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a library when it was realised that the Carnegie offer was about to expire. John Harris, “Library Report,” Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, 80–094 Box 17.







## **Students or Soldiers? Conscientious Objection during World War II**

Srinjoy Bose

*There are no doubt many kinds of reasons which lead men to become conscientious objectors, but I am convinced that the chief reason, and the most valid, is [the] sense of ‘solidarity of mankind,’ of ‘our membership one of another’.*

—Bertrand Russell

It had long been a recognized maxim of states “that the Government has a right to demand the services of [its] citizens in war.”<sup>1</sup> The advent of the twentieth century heralded an even closer relationship between the state and the individual that culminated in a commitment to mobilizing the whole of society to assist in war efforts. The further consolidation of the nation-state system in the aftermath of the First World War increasingly solidified this relationship between the citizen and state. The University of Otago endorsed this relationship on 7 June 1940, when William John Morrell, Chancellor of the University, wrote to the Governor General of New Zealand, Sir George Vere Arundell Monckton-Arundell Galway:<sup>2</sup>

The Council and all connected with the University, fully realise that the necessities of providing for the national defence and of giving the utmost support in our power to

Britain and her allies must come first, and foremost, and any difficulties or inconveniences caused to University work during the war period will be willingly and cheerfully borne. [Several] members of the staff and a certain number of undergraduates have enlisted, and others are serving in the Territorials.... Our students as a body will, I am confident, be found ready to answer loyally the call of duty in whatever form it may come.<sup>3</sup>

The University administration considered loyalty to the State to be the highest priority, and as such expected nothing less than full cooperation and commitment from its various constituents. Consequently, the University administration deemed it unthinkable for its staff and students (as citizens of the state and as members of the University community) to balk from answering the nation's call of duty—in particular, duty in the form of military service. Those students who resisted service faced public ridicule and institutional penalties. In this chapter I examine the treatment of University of Otago students within the broader historical context of anti-pacifist sentiment and conscription policies in New Zealand during the Second World War.

Rachel Barker defines pacifism as the “doctrine or belief that the abolition of war is both desirable and possible.” Conscientious objection, on the other hand, applies to an “individual objection which the state accepts as conscientious to some or all of a war effort.” Scholars, however, have frequently taken for granted that all those whose objections are based on the grounds of conscience, are conscientious objectors, whether or not their objection is accepted as conscientious by the state.<sup>4</sup> Some would even argue that all pacifists should in time of war automatically become conscientious objectors.

According to British philosopher Bertrand Russell, “The conscientious objector does not believe that violence can cure violence, or that militarism can exorcise the spirit of militarism” and therefore believes the furtherance of peace can only be realized through the renunciation of violence.<sup>5</sup> New Zealand journalist

and author David Grant argues that those who rejected military service (during a time when the nation “demanded” loyalty and cooperation from *all* its citizens) were considered by the public to be unpatriotic and cowardly.<sup>6</sup> The conscientious objector, embracing a different view of state authority, countered charges of unpatriotic individualism by asserting that the government did indeed enjoy a certain degree of authority but that this authority of the state was surpassed by the superior authority of religious law and morality.<sup>7</sup> R. K. Logan, a graduate of Otago University, presented a typical defense to the Wellington Armed Forces Appeal Board:

In its simplest terms, the basis of my appeal is my inability to solve the conflict between my duty to obey the claim of the State for my assistance in defending by force the institutions which form so large a part of my life, and the moral and religious duty to respect every individual human life, no matter how misguided or depraved.<sup>8</sup>

The Government of New Zealand, however, demanded loyalty and unquestioning service to King and Country. With the outbreak of war, the State demanded “equality of sacrifice” from all its citizens regardless of personal convictions. These differing convictions became the source of public antagonism and government hostility towards conscientious objectors.

The year 1940 “saw a clamp-down on civil liberties” in New Zealand, following the introduction of conscription on 22 July.<sup>9</sup> The Government proceeded to detain in Defaulters Detention Camps those citizens who refused to perform combatant or non-combatant duties when called upon by the State to do so.<sup>10</sup> The objective of detention was to protect the conscription system by imposing penalties that would deter citizens from holding out against military service. Conscientious objectors formed the majority of such resisters known as “military defaulters.”

Conscription therefore led the Government to create six semi-judicial Armed Forces Appeal Boards to ascertain and assess the sincerity of the objections of all who resisted conscription. Those

who failed to convince Appeal Boards that their objections to war service were genuine and who refused to report for military service, were arrested and sentenced to detention camps by magistrates.<sup>11</sup> During the war approximately 800 conscientious objectors were deprived of their civil rights and imprisoned in various detention camps as punishment.<sup>12</sup>

In retrospect, the Government's intolerance towards pacifists and conscientious objectors may seem unacceptable under modern human rights laws. The rise and prominence of the international community and Universal Human Rights obliges governments to adhere to stricter international standards of conduct, even with respect to treatment of their own citizens. Citizens today, especially students, have more freedom than they did during the tumultuous days of the Second World War to voice their convictions with regards to current social issues. During the war, however, the potential rise of pacifism amongst University students posed a much-feared threat to the status quo.<sup>13</sup> When conformity with the states' needs (manpower) and policies (compulsory military service) was deemed crucial, any wavering from the norm was perceived as a threat. As a result, the University's accepted role as critic and conscience of society was suppressed to limit ideological challenges to the war policies of the state.

Authorities of the University of Otago feared that not only could an increase in pacifist ideology prove fatal to the nation's war effort, but might also lead to a much-feared moral degradation of the nation. Mankind's "membership one of another" is an arresting example of a concept that was misconstrued by both the State and the University of Otago during the Second World War.<sup>14</sup> The University failed to support diversity of views within its community and instead strove to construct its own perceived notion of "solidarity of mankind"<sup>15</sup> by targeting the convictions of those members of the University who challenged the nation's war-time ideologies and objectives. The aim of the University was to bring about cohesion (in thought and action) amongst the students and staff, in support of the Allied war effort against fascist imperialism.

This desired cohesion encountered some resistance on campuses. The intellectual and social climate in New Zealand of the 1920s and 1930s had provided a background for the rise of pacifism, and consequently for the development of reasons for conscientiously objecting when war broke out in 1939.<sup>16</sup> The reasons were manifold, prominent amongst which was that World War I had sent a wave of horror and dislocation throughout the Western World, especially in New Zealand, which was countered by a rise in the idea of international brotherhood.<sup>17</sup> Within this political and social climate certain students throughout New Zealand became intrigued with pacifism, especially after the Oxford Union Resolution of 1933 in which some students at Oxford University asserted their intention *not* to fight for their country. This declaration greatly influenced the religious and political ideologies of the pacifist youths in Dunedin, and within two years a group of pacifist divinity students put a motion before the congregation at Knox Church seeking their assurance that the Church would provide moral support to conscientious objectors who refused to fight for his country on religious grounds.<sup>18</sup> Similarly in Wellington, the debating Society of Victoria University College in 1933, and again in 1936, passed a motion that they would not fight for King and Country.<sup>19</sup>

The public resented this apparent rise in pacifism among University students, especially after New Zealand entered the war against Nazi Germany (and when the threat of a possible Japanese invasion loomed large). Public opinion towards such objectors thus ranged from skepticism (from those who did not understand or refused to understand the motives and morals of conscientious objectors) to hostility (among those who wished to see objectors punished as shirkers and traitors) and even a sense of loathing (among those who considered objectors to be cowards).<sup>20</sup> In Dunedin, many citizens felt that the young, healthy male students of Otago University who were continuing with their studies during war were really shirking their duty to serve the state.<sup>21</sup> Various members of the University shared these sentiments and wrote

anti-pacifist, pro-war-service articles that were published in *Critic*. As early as 20 September 1939 *Critic* printed an article that attempted to restore the patriotic fervour of University students to defend their country.<sup>22</sup> The author argued that students at Otago had an inclination to think outside generally accepted norms—and as a consequence the public often saw students as being radical or even disloyal. The author, however, went on to defend such students by stating that, “in a time of emergency, side issues are dropped and every student is ready to defend his country.”<sup>23</sup> It appears the author was attempting to apologize for the students’ pacifism while simultaneously striving to affirm the students’ fraternity with the state in order to re-establish their rightful place within the community. By 1940, *Critic* noted that students were finding themselves “the object of sly remarks” about why they were not serving in the armed forces.<sup>24</sup>

The dominant tone of articles in *Critic* suggests that the students, staff and administration of the University encouraged a pro-war-service stance. Throughout the war *Critic* praised the sacrifices that men and women (students and staff members) of the University were making in the war effort. *Critic* listed students and staff who had joined the services and were in military training camps, giving special mention to those who voluntarily joined the services or had lost their lives in battle. *Critic* thus expressed the University’s gratitude and pride in such devoted servicemen.

The articles also reminded other students of their obligations to King and Country, while simultaneously belittling those whose views contradicted the Government views on the war effort and the war itself. Following Chancellor Morrell’s proclamation to the Governor General on 7 June 1940, *Critic* buttressed the Chancellor’s statements by asserting that the University of Otago should not be a hide-out for shirkers and pacifists. Moreover, *Critic* derided conscientious objectors as merely a “loud-mouthed minority” and stated that it would no longer “propagate the half-baked opinions of so-called intellectuals at University.”<sup>25</sup> During the war, very few articles were printed in favour of pacifists and conscientious

objectors. The few exceptions that emerged were written by authors under pseudonyms (such as “Ace”) for fear of being chastised by non-pacifists.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, the minority of University pacifists who expressed their convictions against war and violence fell silent for fear of public reprisal. As Sam Elworthy noted, pacifist dissent within Otago University was out by 1943.<sup>27</sup>

*Critic*, however, was only one of many voices that endorsed the war effort and ensured that minority opinions were suppressed. Communities throughout the nation were suffering as a result of the war. Those families whose loved ones had given their lives for a cause felt they had earned the right to chastise those who had not suffered loss, or were unwilling to make any sacrifice. Those who would not or could not fight for the State were expected to keep their views to themselves, as is revealed from a war propaganda poster bearing the bold title—“If you can’t fight, don’t be a drone and a drag on others.”<sup>28</sup> In July 1940, Chief Justice Sir Michael Myers reflected a common feeling towards pacifists when he commented in Court before sentencing a man to twelve months’ imprisonment for uttering subversive anti-war sentiments: “[loyal] citizens may be pardoned for expecting from [a pacifist] that he should, at least in times [of war], keep his views to himself.”<sup>29</sup> Such pressures may have forced a number of pacifists and conscientious objectors to remain silent for fear of being ostracised, imprisoned or worse.

On 5 October 1940, Walter Nash,<sup>30</sup> the Minister of Finance, wrote a letter addressed to a certain Rev. R. Taylor in Christchurch (who had previously written to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance), assuring him that although the Government did not intend to victimise genuine conscientious objectors, “[respect] for the conscientious beliefs of others tends unfortunately to be rarely practiced in times [of emergency and war].”<sup>31</sup> Nash thus implied that the rights of conscientious objectors were liable to suspension during times of crisis. This letter speaks volumes about the dominant political attitude of the Government. These same attitudes and policies were often reflected in the administrative attitudes of Otago University and in its own treatment of pacifists and conscientious objectors.



The most dramatic illustration of University's administrative policies reflecting Government attitudes was the case of the Dean of the Medical Faculty, Dr. C. E. Hercus, who wrote on behalf of the Medical Faculty to the University Council on 19 December 1941 to suggest that those medical students who refused to serve in the Medical Corps and the Medical Branch of the E. P. S. (Emergency Precautions Scheme) during the war, should not be included in the list of those selected for admission to second-year classes. The object of the Medical Faculty proposal was two-fold: firstly, the Faculty wished to punish conscientious objectors for refusing to participate in the war effort; and secondly, the Faculty wished to deter future students who might be tempted to pose as conscientious objectors. The Medical Faculty viewed the refusal of such students to co-operate with the central Government with the "gravest of displeasure."<sup>32</sup> The matter was eventually referred to the regional Armed Forces Appeal Board, pending a formal decision about how to manage such students.<sup>33</sup> In this manner the University exercised its power to discriminate against alleged conscientious objectors.

The Medical Faculty's position was probably a product of the moral and political disposition of its Dean, who had a distinguished service record in the armed forces. Hercus had held the rank of Colonel and served with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Egypt during World War I. He had also been the Officer-in-Charge. of the Otago University Medical Corps for some years. *Critic* had lauded Dr. Hercus's service and commented on his desire to preserve and continue the glorious record of the work done by the men of the University in the last war, and thereby maintain the glory and tradition of the University.<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Hercus's career and personality gives the reader an insight into his decision-making process. He was a patriot and a committed servant of the state. For him and likeminded colleagues, it was a moral obligation to serve whenever the state demanded service. To refuse to serve the state would brand the person concerned as "disloyal." Those (including members of the Otago University

Medical Faculty), who considered themselves patriots, and had previously served in the armed forces, had no wish to see so-called “shirkers” and “cowards” escape war service by hiding behind the walls of the University.

Universities have historically upheld and maintained the right to freely debate social issues, and have resisted outside interference.<sup>35</sup> During the war years, however, the University of Otago relinquished a portion of its long-cherished autonomy, possibly as a mark of loyalty and allegiance, only to have its freedoms subverted by the needs of the State. The Medical Faculty’s attempt to thwart views that contradicted the Government’s official standpoint reveals the depth of this relationship between the Government and the University administration. During the war years, society viewed the University as a sculptor, moulding the next generation of students into loyal patriots of the state. For their part, the universities accepted the necessity for increased accountability to the community.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, a relationship based on loyalty and reciprocity was crafted between the state and university.

The University’s close affiliation with the central government became especially apparent when a certain F. de Latour wrote to *Critic* on 18 March 1943 querying the attitude of the University Senate towards conscientious objectors, in particular asking whether or not detained conscientious objectors would be allowed to sit University examinations.<sup>37</sup> According to the University authorities, allowing a detained conscientious objector to sit examinations would effectively concede privileges to those who were being denied their civil rights. The issue was resolved when the University Senate decided not to establish special examination centres in defaulters’ camps.<sup>38</sup> Allowing defaulters to sit examinations would have contradicted the Government’s official verdict on such criminals and would have thus strained the reciprocal relationship that the University enjoyed with the State.

The Senate’s decision was obviously influenced by the predominant Government attitude of the time as well by public opinion. In this regard, *Critic* considered the opinions of the

Returned Soldiers' Association (RSA) to have influenced the Senate's decision. The RSA believed that no privileges of any sort should be accorded to defaulters who were charged by the State on criminal grounds.<sup>39</sup> The University Senate concurred and felt that a criminal conviction implied an automatic character disqualification, thereby making the person ineligible to sit a University examination.

The University of Otago, in this manner, achieved its objective of supporting the war effort by crushing the pacifist threat. Such punitive treatment of a nation's own citizens may shock a more accommodating modern reader. Given the structure of today's liberal society (at least in Western democracies)—where notions of what is acceptable or unacceptable have changed significantly—we may look upon the reactions, propaganda and policies of World War II with a sense of indignation. In addition, the recent New Zealand Education Act of 1989 guarantees to academic staff and students "The freedom ... to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular ideas."<sup>40</sup> As a result, within the New Zealand university community today, a usurpation of the rights to freely debate and discuss issues of social concern would be unlikely. During the war, however, as this essay has shown, narrow-mindedness coupled with dogmatic and uncompromising policies was the rule of the day. The University authorities perceived the opinions and actions of conscientious objectors and pacifists to be a threat that could be detrimental to the war effort by undermining the status quo. Accordingly the Senate and faculty members such as Dr. Hercus took measures to safeguard the nation from the perceived debilitating effects of pacifism. Their policies of discrimination against conscientious objectors merely reflected the dominant Government policies of the time and helped to reinforce the authority of the State.

## Notes

1. Bertrand Russell, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: Pacifism and Revolution, 1916–1918* (London: Routledge, 1995), 96.

2. University of Otago, New Zealand, *Calendar for the year 1940* (Dunedin: Coulls Somerville Wilkie, Ltd., 1940), 27.

3. Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, Records of Registry and the Central Administration: Annual Reports, 1937–1943, AG–170–7/02.

4. Rachel Barker, *Conscience, Government and War: Conscientious Objection in Great Britain 1939–45* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1982), 3.

5. Russell, 125.

6. David Grant, *Out in the Cold* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), 11 and 32; “Some Appeal Board members made no secret of their belief that ‘conscientious objector’ was no more than a euphemism for ‘coward’ or ‘traitor’.” Tony Reid, introduction to *Till Human Voices Wake Us*, by Ian Hamilton (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1984), ix.

7. Lord Hugh Cecil, quoted in Russell, 368.

8. Presbyterian Church Archives, Dunedin, New Zealand, Public Questions Committee: Conscientious Objectors, 1939–41, PCNZ/GA21.

9. Karen Michael, “Some Aspects of Conscientious Objection During World War II,” University of Otago, thesis submitted as a partial requirement of the B.A (Hons.) degree, 1985, 23; Grant, 80–83.

10. Grant, 144.

11. Ibid, 120–128 and 143.

12. These men were “hidden away in isolated camps” and forced to labour each day. “They were banned from working for the post-war Government and were not allowed to vote again in any general election until 1951.” Grant, 12, 117 and 143.

13. Michael, 46. War breeds conformity. Pacifists who refused to fight, therefore, threatened the success of that conformity. The

threat to New Zealand's unity and morale was a minor one if it existed at all, but the moral position of the conscientious objectors and the very idea of conscientious objection unnerved the Government and University authorities.

14. Russell, 101.

15. Ibid.

16. Michael, 43.

17. Michael, 43; Grant, 11. New Zealand lost nearly 17,000 members of its male population in the war effort. This was a significant blow to all aspects of civil and public life in New Zealand.

18. Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago* (Dunedin: Otago University Students' Association, 1990), 63. The motion was passed.

19. Michael, 45.

20. Grant, 12, 32 and 85–86.

21. Elworthy, 67.

22. *Critic*, 20 September 1939, 4.

23. Ibid, 4.

24. *Critic*, 20 June 1940, 2.

25. Elworthy, 69.

26. *Critic*, 9 April 1942, 5.

27. Elworthy, 69.

28. Gaylene Preston, *War Stories Our Mother's Never Told Us* (Columbia, 1995).

29. Grant, 85–86.

30. Michael, 8.

31. Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, Rodger Patrick Taylor, Letters and Clippings Relating to Pacifists and Conscientious Objection, 1940–1945, MS–0817.

32. Until late 1941, local bodies had statutory authority to administer emergency precautions schemes in their areas. From October 1941, the E. P. S. was brought under central Government control and soon thereafter, on 23 January 1942, the Government required all men aged between 18 and 65 not already in the armed

forces to enlist; Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, Records of Registry and the Central Administration: Council Minutes, Vol. 13, 1942–1945, AG–180–1/13; *Critic*, 4 July 1940, 2.

33. Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, Records of Registry and the Central Administration: Finance Committee Minutes, 1929–1942, AG–180–3/01

34. *Critic*, 4 July 1940, 2.

35. *Critic*, 29 February 1940, 2.

36. Parton, 156; *Critic*, 29 February 1940, 4.

37. *Critic*, 18 March 1943, 3.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. Government of New Zealand, *Reprinted Statutes of New Zealand: Education Act: 1989: Part XIV: Establishment and Disestablishment of Tertiary Institutions* (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 1996), 167.





## **Child of Controversy: The Expulsion of the OUSA President**

Emily Churcher

*Now John was a sensitive feller  
With a gentle vegetarian soul,  
But his mockery was too meaty  
For the Council to swallow whole.  
He was our man, but they done him wrong.*  
—(Verse from a Cappicade  
Prize Song, 1947)<sup>1</sup>

In 1947, the OUSA President of Otago University, John Child, was expelled for expressing his unconventional views on free love at a public event. John Child was involved in several major controversies throughout his life but this was certainly his most famous. The content of his speech was controversial in itself but the debate centred primarily on Child's right to express his personal views in an official capacity, as Student President. Otago University students, the Council, other organisations within the university, and the wider Dunedin community all held strong and differing views about the role of the Student President. The disparity of these views begs the question: should student presidents be primarily responsible to the Council or to the students?

The Dunedin of 1947 was a fairly conservative town due, in part, to its strong Christian heritage. However, after the Second World War students began to challenge traditional ideas about sexual morality and John Child's speech followed this trend.<sup>2</sup>



The trend was short-lived, as citizens of post-war Dunedin wished for stability after the upheaval that the war had caused and in the late 1940s and 1950s students felt the need for unity with the community.<sup>3</sup> Although they continued to become more independent in their living arrangements and sexual conduct, they chose not to make their activities public.<sup>4</sup> The controversy was amplified by the fact that Dunedin was somewhat starved for local news when Child made his speech and he therefore acquired celebrity status in Dunedin, which spread throughout the country and even overseas.<sup>5</sup>

John Child grew up in Beaumont and Lawrence, Central Otago. His mother was English and married a NZ soldier during the First World War. She strongly believed in the benefits of education and this must have helped to shape Child into the keen scholar he became.<sup>6</sup> After he finished high school in 1939, Child worked in the Education Department in Wellington for 12 months. As he was a recent high school graduate with no further qualifications, this work was most likely clerical but no information about his life at this time is available. He then studied at Dunedin Training College and one year into his studies, the College students elected him as their Student President. During this time, Child was also a part-time Arts student at Otago University.

In 1943, he joined the RNZAF and remained in service for three years.<sup>7</sup> He had always been fascinated by aeroplanes.<sup>8</sup> Here, he became involved in his first major controversy. All soldiers in the RNZAF in the Second World War had to undergo a psychiatric test which involved giving their reasons for joining the Air Force. Child was characteristically honest in his reply: he commented that the money, uniform, and food were all better than in other army divisions. He added that people referred to soldiers in the Navy as “men” while they called those in the Air Force, “gentlemen.” The authorities were not impressed with Child as this was not the required patriotic response. He was made to speak to high-level psychiatrists and was consequently taken out of the Flying Squad and put into Communications, a field in which he had no



John Child.

interest. Many of the soldiers became demoralized in this division, as there was not much to keep them occupied on the tropical island of New Britain, but Child spent his time swimming and studying economics and philosophy by correspondence.<sup>9</sup>

In 1946 he was discharged from service and resumed his studies full time at Otago University. In less than a year this time, Otago University students elected John Child as their Student President for 1947. He was an outstanding student and continued to study both economics and philosophy to honours level.<sup>10</sup> He was appointed to a junior lectureship in the Economics Department in 1947 and had been suggested as an Otago nominee for a Rhodes scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

One of his first official duties as OUSA President was to give a speech at the Freshers' Welcome, an event combining official speeches with a party and dancing to follow. Child, along with members of the University Council, including the Chancellor (Reverend David Craig Herron) and the Mayor (Stanley Rice),<sup>12</sup> sat on the stage of the town hall while the students milled about below, drinking and talking amongst themselves.<sup>13</sup> The crowd

increased from 9 pm onwards. Most freshers attended, though the majority were female, and their “bright, shining, innocent faces” filled the town hall.<sup>14</sup> *Critic* reported:

The old hands (plenty) were shooting their usual line to the unsuspecting opposite sex, who just “loved” those “elegant gentlemen” in the glory of their black blazer[s] and white silk scarf[s].<sup>15</sup>

According to tradition, Child’s speech should have encouraged students to study hard and uphold the good name of the University, but his address broke this tradition.<sup>16</sup> He ridiculed social conventions such as the assignment of separate bedrooms to males and females:

Both sexes wear slacks, raincoats, sweaters, and brogues. They are thrown together indiscriminately on all occasions. They all smoke to show they are grown up, swear to show they are educated, get drunk to prove that they are the intellectual elite, and talk a lot about sex to prove that they have lost their adolescent interest in the subject. The only differentiation between the sexes occurs in the assignment of bedrooms and the use of lavatories.... I ask you to give your full support to the movement for Bisexual bedrooms.<sup>17</sup>

Child’s speech contained some equally controversial comments on religion:

So if your style of beauty doesn’t fit the conventional pattern, or if you have been bludgeoned in your infancy into accepting the Christian myth, or if your social life is below par, or if you are one of those sincere misguided people who think the problems of the atom age will be solved by getting us all to come to Jesus, and be washed in the blood of the lamb, a process which seems repugnant to my delicate vegetarian soul; if you come into one of these categories, then the [Student Christian

Movement] is the place for you. Who knows, when the flickering camp fire dwindles, and the hymn singing dies away, but that a timid youth might put his arm around your waist (in a nice clean Christian way of course).<sup>18</sup>

The speech appeared to go down very well. The students cheered and the Council sat behind Child and clapped politely when he had finished. The President was surprised at their tolerance of his unconventional ideas but after he returned to his seat, the reason for the Council's applause soon emerged. One of the Councillor's wives leaned toward him and commented that it must have been a very amusing speech, judging by its reception.<sup>19</sup> The loudspeakers had faced the students and, with all the noise in the town hall, Council members had not heard the address at all!<sup>20</sup> They had appeared to support views which they later made clear they found repugnant. There were bound to be repercussions. Late-comers to the Freshers' Welcome found the place buzzing with excitement.<sup>21</sup>

Child's motivations for giving this speech should be made clear at the outset. As a returned serviceman, Child and his peers were more confident than most school-leavers. They had seen a bit of the world and felt that Otago University was somewhat conservative by comparison.<sup>22</sup> Child gave his speech at the Freshers' Welcome to stimulate intellectual discussion on moral standards of the time. In an article he published in *Critic* entitled "Child speaks out," he explained that the third objective of the OUSA, as set out in the constitution, was "to foster intellectual and social life within the University." It was in pursuance of this object that he made his statements at the dance.<sup>23</sup> Child's speech was also intended to be humorous. Unfortunately, many did not take it that way. When Child was asked to appear before members of the Council, he wrote to them explaining the rationale behind his speech and stated that he wished to "apologise sincerely to any person who feels that my remarks were offensive to him."<sup>24</sup> Child's remarks about the Student Christian Movement (SCM) were intended to provoke a reply from them, and were therefore another means of sparking

intellectual discussion. He felt the SCM had strong opinions and responded with some of his own.<sup>25</sup> Child's speech was intended to be provocative but it was by no means meant as a vicious attempt to upset moral standards.

As written copies of the speech circulated, the Council's indignation grew. Child had managed to offend not only the Council, but also religious bodies within the University and a significant portion of the community at large, due to the publicity afforded to the affair by the media.<sup>26</sup> Parents of some of the freshers at Otago University were particularly concerned about the environment to which their children were being exposed. Child was dismissed from his junior lectureship in the Economics department, which landed him in some financial hardship.<sup>27</sup> After some indecision, the Council offered Child two options regarding punishment for his impropriety. The first option was that Child could resign as President of the OUSA, agree not to accept re-election to that office *or* election to any other office within the Students' Association, and publicly apologise in a manner predetermined by the Council. If Child accepted this option he would be excluded from the University only until the end of term. The second option given him was that he could refuse these conditions, in which case he would be excluded from the University, and thus his presidency, until the end of the year.<sup>28</sup> The only benefit of this option was that Child would be taking more of a stand against the Council. Child attempted to enrol in Canterbury University but was unsuccessful due to his controversial status and so he reluctantly accepted the Council's first alternative, as missing one term of University was preferable to missing an entire year.<sup>29</sup> In addition to losing his junior lectureship, his presidency and being expelled for a term, Child also lost his chance at the Rhodes scholarship.<sup>30</sup> It is unfortunate that Child naively cooperated with the SCM's request for a printed copy of his speech, as this and consequent copies acted as proof of his misconduct. Without them, he would not have had to face these dire consequences.<sup>31</sup>

The students were solidly behind Child. Even though some of

them did not support his views, they unanimously supported his right to freedom of speech. One of the many roles of a university is to cultivate new ideas and therefore universities must hold freedom of speech in the highest regard. The students were surprised that a University Council would even consider punishing their President for speaking his mind. Such matters as touched on by Child with humour and maturity, some argued, should have been free for debate among free people, rather than decision by a controlling authority.<sup>32</sup> Did Child then, have the right to free speech denied him in this instance?

Another issue for the students was that the student body itself, and no one else, should ask for the resignation of its elected officers.<sup>33</sup> The University Council decided to expel John Child and its power at this time suggested that perhaps the role of student leaders was to answer to the Council rather than the students. Further, students elected Child in part on the same basis that he was dismissed. His controversial behaviour was no secret and yet students obviously felt that he was a suitable representative of the student body. This must have been at least partly based on his penchant for challenging generally accepted norms. In 1946, Child had participated in a debate concerning birth control and had commented that no one had mentioned the use of contraceptives by unmarried people. *Critic* reported:

Personally, having heard that the whole business was very enjoyable, he thought that their use should be encouraged among young people before marriage from the age of 16 onwards. The positive pleasure resulting would make for a happier nation.<sup>34</sup>

Since Child was elected to some extent because of his inclination to speak his mind, it seems unfair that he was dismissed on the same grounds. However, the body that elected Child was not the same body that dismissed him from office.

Child submitted an article to *Critic*, in which he thanked students for their contribution to the fight. He added that: "Losing is not

[as] shameful as surrendering at the outset.”<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that the students supported their President over the controversy, but this made little difference to the outcome of the situation.

The traditional role of the Council is important in their relation to this dispute. At Orientation today, which is roughly equivalent to the Freshers’ Welcome, the Council is nowhere to be found. In 1946, the Council was apparently more involved in student life. In a sense, the University was expected to fulfil the role of parent, especially to freshers, who were considered impressionable.

When Child was summoned to appear before the Council, Reverend David Craig Herron chastised him for “propagating evil” and “tarnishing the good name of the University.”<sup>36</sup> This gives a sense of where members of Council stood on the issue, although their tone was very different when they justified themselves to the public. The Council announced in an *Otago Daily Times* (ODT) article on 5 April 1947 that it recognised the right of free speech. The Council felt, however, that it was the duty of the University to ensure that this right was not abused. “The University is here to serve the community. If it is to be true to its traditions and functions, it must stand for and encourage its students to strive for ideal manhood and womanhood.” The Student President disregarded these obligations by “advocating a line of conduct which, if followed, would undermine the whole structure of society.”<sup>37</sup> This article functioned as the Council’s explanation to the public for its decision to expel John Child.

Those who found fault with Child took the position that the Student President was speaking in an official capacity and his position, in this regard, came with the responsibility of his office. While speaking in an official capacity, John Child was bound by his position to speak on behalf of all the organisations affiliated to the OUSA, which he represented. His professional responsibility was to support these institutions regardless of his personal valuation of them.<sup>38</sup> Some felt that Child abused his responsibilities as a President and that this was the real point of the issue. Several “Letters to the Editor” in the *ODT* commented upon this. “C.” stated

that freedom of speech was not the issue at hand and neither was the “rightness or wrongness” of Mr Child’s theories. The problem was the place in which he expressed them.<sup>39</sup>

The controversy surrounding Child’s misuse of his power in this respect has a parallel today. Larry Summers, President of Harvard University 2005, recently commented, in an official capacity, that the under-representation of women in the sciences might have a genetic basis. This point of view obviously offended many people and they were not comforted by the fact that Summers’ remarks were intended, like those of Child, simply to spark discussion.<sup>40</sup> As in the case of Child, the issue here is not one of freedom of speech, as presumably Larry Summers like anyone else, has a right to say whatever he pleases when off duty. But the President of Harvard, or the Student President of Otago University, always carries his office with him in public. His remarks can never be detached from the responsibilities of his position and John Child and Lawrence Summers both deviated from this responsibility. The two cases differ though, in respect to the consequences the perpetrators faced. Summers gave several public apologies and was acquitted, while Child’s punishment was more severe.<sup>41</sup> However, almost sixty years have elapsed and in 1947 the Council’s views on free love were more stringently bound by tradition and responsibility.

Since the Council announced to the public that their role was to be of service to the community and that this was a major influence in their punishment of Child, it is appropriate to gauge, as far as possible, the response of the wider community to Child’s speech. Dunedin society was split into those “for” or “against” John Child and his views on free love. Judging by the “Letters to the Editor” in the *ODT*, a significant portion of the community was offended by Child’s speech at the Freshers’ Welcome. The *ODT* ran a column headed “Student Morals” that ran from 25 March until 2 April 1947. Several parents aired their concerns via this column. “Mother” was disgusted. She felt the Student President should be “severely dealt with.”<sup>42</sup> “Mother” must have been pleased at the outcome of the affair. “Parent” suggested that



the University should appoint a “responsible person” to censor all student utterances and expressed her fears that Communism was establishing a hold in the University.<sup>43</sup> Other correspondents opposing John Child’s actions generally wrote along the same lines as “An Upholder of Decency,” who felt that succumbing to physical desires and refuting the wisdom of Jesus are the “beginnings of civic and spiritual disintegration.”<sup>44</sup> The Council served the interests of these correspondents in their decision to expel Child, but what about the others?

Roughly half of the letters in the *ODT* were less conventional in their outlook on the issue, which does not in any way indicate that the community was evenly split over the affair, but it does show that there were alternative views within Dunedin at the time. One parent had confidence that her children could make up their own minds about the issues at hand.<sup>45</sup> “Memphis Magog” was very concerned about the whole thing and wrote, “If this continues, I shall be afraid to tell Bill a very funny story in the [pub] on Saturday.”<sup>46</sup> The Council did not serve the interests of this segment of the community by expelling John Child, as traditional values triumphed. But even “Presbyterian,” who surely upheld traditional values by his faith, suggested that there was wisdom in John Child’s advice.<sup>47</sup>

At the Freshers’ Welcome, the Student President failed to speak on behalf of the Council, but what about the other organisations affiliated to the OUSA to which he was bound? How did they feel about the situation? The two major Otago University organisations involved in this dispute were the SCM and OUSA Executives. The SCM submitted a statement to *Critic* to the effect that the remarks made by Child did not, in any way, represent the body of student opinion. They advised the OUSA to publish a similar statement, so that freshers would not be misled into believing that Child’s views were held by the majority of students.<sup>48</sup> The SCM was caught up in the scandal in a more direct way too. It was rumoured that they gave a copy of Child’s speech to the Council, and although they denied this rumour, they failed to produce the copy of the

speech that Child had given them and the Council mysteriously obtained a copy.<sup>49</sup> Without this copy of the speech as proof of his misdemeanour, Child could not have been expelled. It is clear that the SCM did not feel suitably represented by the Student President.

The OUSA initially supported Child and told the Council they defended his right to freedom of speech. When the *ODT* began to publicise the case and two Executive members threatened to resign, the Executive as a whole backed down and sent a more placatory letter to the Council.<sup>50</sup> A further motion was put forward that the OUSA should request their previous supportive letters to be treated as withdrawn because they were unauthorised by the OUSA. This motion was lost and subsequently, the Vice-President of the OUSA, Mr Botting, resigned. He felt that OUSA relations with the Council and parts of the community had been irrevocably damaged.<sup>51</sup> Neither the SCM nor the OUSA (in the end) felt suitably represented by John Child and so he failed in his job as Student President with regard to most members of these organisations.

Child's expulsion from Otago University did not greatly affect him. The loss of his lectureship caused him some financial hardship but most detrimental to Child was the loss of the Rhodes scholarship, which was almost certainly his.<sup>52</sup> However, although he continued to cultivate a successful career in academia, controversy was never far behind him. About 1950 Child found himself at the centre of yet another controversy, again at Otago University. He was putting the University's cross-crediting system to use in order to gain a third degree, this time in commerce. The Department had hired a new professor, Professor Bernadelli. His statistics paper was vastly different from statistics papers of the past and as a result most of the class, including Child, failed. This was the only time he ever failed anything academic in his life and he was angry. Child asked for a recount and said that he knew the examiner, by which he meant that the man was acquainted with his academic status. This was misconstrued as an underhand attempt for special favour. Professor Bernadelli unwisely commented to an acquaintance of

Child's that he had deliberately marked him down as he felt he was a capable student and had not made enough effort. Despite the probability that his mark was biased, Child was denied a recount.<sup>53</sup> This controversy did not distress Child as much as some of the other commerce students. Those who would have completed their degrees with the points from the statistics paper were most affected.

Child's speech on free love was at the heart of his most famous controversy. It was not easily forgotten. Some years later, Child went to Oxford on a scholarship to study for his DPhil and his name preceded him. By this stage, he simply wanted to forget the whole affair. He regretted having made the speech in the first place because of the huge commotion it had caused, not to mention the consequences he faced because of it. Surprisingly though, he did not hold any grudges towards either individual people or Otago University. He greeted old adversaries cheerfully and in 1979 became a staff-member at the very University that had expelled him several decades earlier.<sup>54</sup>

John Child was a spirited man whose courage and honesty landed him in trouble several times in the course of his life. The consequences that John Child faced, for his speech on free love, were solely decided upon by the University Council, which would suggest that the role of student leaders was one of responsibility to the Council, rather than to the students. However, this was problematic because the Student President is elected by students for students. I would suggest that the Student President's role is one of responsibility to both the Council and the students and therefore, in the case of John Child, the students should have had more power over the outcome of this controversy. Otago University's responsibility to the wider Dunedin community and their social conventions led the Council to place limitations on John Child's right to freedom of speech, implying that the OUSA President was expected to answer to the wider Dunedin community as well. Smaller organisations within the University such as the SCM and OUSA equally demanded representation by their Student

President. In short, John Child's difficult role as Student President involved pleasing all of the people all of the time he was wearing the mantle of his office.

## Notes

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28. "Council's Decision," *Critic*, 21 April 1947, 1.
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31. S. A. H., "Censored," *Critic*, 27 March 1947, 1.
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42. Mother, "Letters to the Editor," *Otago Daily Times*, 25 March 1947, 8.
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46. Memphis Magog, "Letters to the Editor," *Otago Daily Times*, 27 March 1947, 4.

47. Presbyterian, "Letters to the Editor," *Otago Daily Times*, 29 March 1947, 8.
48. Jocelyn Rix, "Letters to the Editor," *Critic*, 27 March 1947, 1.
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## Halls of Residence in the 1960s: Curfews, Couples and Controversy

Catherine McLeod

*A university should be a place of  
light, of liberty, and of learning.*

—Disraeli<sup>1</sup>

Life in 1960s New Zealand was tumultuous. It was a time full of change: change in fashion, change in music and, particularly disruptive, change in the way young people saw their place in the community. Linked together by new technology, black and white television images of protests around the globe inspired New Zealand youth to begin protesting against unjust issues. The treatment of black South Africans, America's foreign policy manoeuvring in the Asia-Pacific region, New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam, and the drinking age of 21 were all topics of national interest. Student protest at the University of Otago took up "in-house" community issues—the lack of female representation on the Student Executive, the right to live in single-sex or mixed flats and, for women students living in St. Margaret's College, the unfairly restrictive leave and curfew regulations at their Hall of Residence.

Headed by Miss Vida Barron (rather unaffectionately dubbed "the Baron" by the residents), St. Margaret's College set its rules for the women while aspiring to "create an atmosphere conducive to study and making friends."<sup>2</sup> In offering a home away from home for women during their student years, St. Margaret's College was acting as an official representative of the University. The College



also therefore had to operate in accordance with the University's role *in loco parentis* for all its students. Influenced by changing attitudes in society, students coming to university in the 1960s were looking to break free from the parental restrictions of living at home. Another parent was exactly what they did not want. For many of their parents however, University rules were exactly the reassurance they were looking for in sending their children away to university. That the institution took an active role in the life of the students beyond their academic commitments was a relief for many. And the University of Otago "parent" took this responsibility of trying to protect the safety and morality of its students very seriously. What women students at St. Margaret's College in the 1960s were to take issue with was the seemingly stronger parental presence of the University in their personal lives than in the personal lives of their male student counterparts.

In 1961, the then monthly student publication *Critic*, was to be an important forum for the women of St. Margaret's College in airing their grievances. The officious, strict and impersonal style of rule of "the Baron" made her too formidable for the women to speak to about their concerns. Unwilling to interact with them (despite living in a suite of rooms in the same corridor as many) and extremely set in her ways, the Warden herself was a major source of much of the tension that overshadowed the Hall's Jubilee Year. So the women turned to *Critic*. The March edition sparked the beginning of a fiery year at the University of Otago. The issue of the curfew and leave regulations at St. Margaret's College quickly snowballed into a larger debate of whether halls or flats were better forms of accommodation for students.

It started with an article titled "Guess Where Girls."<sup>3</sup> This anonymous article condemned the strict leave regulations that women at St. Margaret's College were compelled to follow. The article made much of the rule which forbade residents to leave the college at night without first signing a leave book stating their name and intentions. When returning from their evening sojourn, the women had once again to sign the leave book to confirm

their return, under the watchful eye of the Warden who regularly patrolled the hallways.<sup>4</sup> The residents could stay out later than 10 p.m. only twice a week, one night until 11:15 p.m. and the other until 12:30 a.m.; neither of these to be taken on a Sunday or Monday evening.<sup>5</sup> If there were a ball to attend, this curfew could be extended until 1:30 a.m. but no later, even if it was an official University function and the event itself had not yet ended.

This lack of synchronization between University Halls of Residence and University functions was perhaps the ultimate frustration for the women. To be excluded from an official university event because it ran later than thought appropriate for young women (but not, apparently, young men) was infuriating. Sam Elworthy, in his social history of the University of Otago wrote, "As early as 1918 the practice of men and women wandering off from dances into the trees around the Leith or to the backs of cars had become something of an institution."<sup>6</sup> The University's view was that these opportunities for late night escapades could endanger students both physically and morally. In trying to protect



St Margaret's College, St Margaret's College Chronicle, 1961, Pictorial Collections, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, AG-157.

its charges however, the University “parent” created indisputable double standards, allowing its sons much more time out to play than their daughters.

The author of “Guess Where Girls” saw these regulations as casting unfair aspersions upon women living in Halls of Residence as less responsible or moral than other students. The regulations implied that if women were not made to stay at home in the evenings, not only would they not do their homework, but they also might tempt men of previous good standing into “sexual endeavour,” lowering the moral tone of the university. “It is apparently not necessary to apply either of these arguments to men,” the author pointedly remarked.<sup>7</sup> In assessing the continuing double standards of behaviour for women, the author wrote of the regulations: “It is an attempt to impose conformity to a certain moral code. It is a curtailment of intellectual freedom, which implies (among other things) the freedom to examine critically any moral code and accept it or reject it.”<sup>8</sup> Women at the University of Otago were simply not being treated the same as men.

A later edition of *Critic* stated that the anonymous author’s intention had been to begin a comparison of all the Halls of Residence at the University of Otago. This never eventuated. Instead, a fiery debate began about the most appropriate form of accommodation for students: halls versus flats. There were those who could not believe the outdated and restrictive regulations on women residents in halls and favoured the freedom offered by flatting, but there were also those who believed a community needed rules and regulations for stability.

Sheila Salisbury, a particularly active resident of St. Margaret’s College in 1961, wrote a snappy letter of reply to the article.<sup>9</sup> Her letter, published in the April edition of *Critic*, vehemently argued that “rules and regulations are necessary in communal life and that over the years these laws are gradually formulated to suit the best interests of that community.”<sup>10</sup> Margaret McLagen (also a resident of St. Margaret’s College in 1961) responded in the June edition of *Critic*, announcing herself as the author of the article and

reminding Miss Salisbury that:

rules and regulations can only effectively act in the best interests of a community provided that they have the support of the community and that they are subject to a constant evaluation—a process which involves accurate criticism, however provocative.<sup>11</sup>

This clash of ideas was individual debate at its most personal. Questioning the role of the University *in loco parentis*, and Halls of Residence as their practical form of “parenting,” these neighbours represented opposing sides of the controversy: conformity versus freedom, restrictions versus personal choice, and, eventually, halls versus flats.

The issue of halls versus flats grabbed the attention of the student body. *Critic*, in its June edition, wrote that the increasing number of students choosing to live in flats rather than halls while studying meant the University was losing a distinguishing feature of Otago student life.<sup>12</sup> Where a hostel or hall was a natural centre of student activities, for those outside the “four walls” it became much harder to be and feel a part of the academic community. The concern over the issue was so intense that the University even held a formal debate involving both staff and students to argue the topic “Are Halls of Residence superior to flats?” Professor Sawyer (Head of the Mathematics Department) chaired the debate that saw Margaret Dalziel (an outstanding academic from the English Department), the Rev. Luke Jenkins (Warden of Carrington), and student Jim Evans, argue the affirmative against Austin Mitchell (a new, young and outgoing History lecturer), Erich Geiringer (a very popular Professor from the Medical School), and student Ian Watson. University debates covered many controversial topics and were expected to be both formal in conduct, but also witty and fun. This particular hot topic drew an impressive crowd of over 200 students.

The Rev. Jenkins began the debate by outlining his position that the University did have a parental role over its students,

influencing how they turned out as people. Quoting Dr Aitken (the University of Otago's first Vice-Chancellor from 1948), he firmly reminded the room "Our aim is to produce sensitive, educated, competent citizens, produced, not by indoctrination, but by the free contact between all members of the University."<sup>13</sup> The Rev. Jenkins apparently did not realise the humble beginnings of this debate with some students unfairly excluded from this desired "free contact" at the University. Although well-meaning, his decades-old quotation demonstrated to many just how out of touch the University administration was with the needs and desires of students in their accommodation.

Austin Mitchell derided the Reverend's quotation as an example of homage to despotism and conformism. Mitchell went on to give examples of the "niggling" house rules that he declared brought social interaction down to the lowest common denominator—rugby and sex. These rules: "No drink in rooms. No parties. Leave restrictions."<sup>14</sup> "What," Mitchell asked,

can happen after 11 pm that cannot happen before?  
Students found with a friend in their room are liable to a fine of £5. Hostels don't seem to recognize the existence of a second sex, or courting. These stupid rules have been made by people with their feet firmly planted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That such rules have no effect on student morality is borne out by the fact that one hostel had as many as five shotgun marriages in one term last year.<sup>15</sup>

Mitchell certainly made an entertaining case against the Halls of Residence to the crowd of students. He gave no evidence for his claims of marriage, or any source for his house rules, and may have been wildly exaggerating to make his point, but his arguments were well received by the students—no doubt biased toward enjoying drink in rooms, parties and late nights out. He advocated flattening as "allowing an individual to pursue the freedoms of development of character and break free from mob mentality and imposed morality."<sup>16</sup> When he finally finished, he sat down to wild applause.

*Critic* judged the final speaker of the evening, Dr Geiringer, the most effective. In speaking to an increasingly biased crowd, he emphasized that University of Otago hostels were far removed from the original college principle transplanted from Oxford and Cambridge, and despite other opinions, they did not play an integral part in University life.

I cannot endorse our monstrosities of hostels. There is no evidence that such hostels lower promiscuity. Neither in the field of alcoholic or of sexual endeavour are hostel students any less successful than others. If you want students to stay in hostels you must either improve the hostel or introduce a regulation that compels the student to stay.<sup>17</sup>

Geiringer's arguments over promiscuity and drunkenness, although condemning hostels, did not actually support flats either. However, because he was already a darling of the students as outspoken and non-conformist, the audience inferred sympathy with their situation and again cheered wildly when he finished.<sup>18</sup>

While the debate raged at the University of Otago, it was quite obviously a localised and "in-house" concern. The New Zealand University Students Association made no comment on the issue, concerning itself with more high profile debates such as the rights of black South Africans and the foreign policy manouvering of America. The *Otago Daily Times* that had in 1923 described Dunedin as a "University Town," where students enjoyed a "place in the affection of Dunedin citizens," was conspicuously silent on the tumult.<sup>19</sup> Coverage in the *Otago Daily Times* of St. Margaret's College during the fractious year of 1961 was limited to two articles: the first reported St. Margaret's College's place within the university as a well-established Hall of Residence, and the second covered Miss Barron's eventual retirement.<sup>20</sup> The only further mention of St. Margaret's College referred at length to a list of fashionable puddings the chef made for the lucky women that year: upside down pudding, divided jelly, banana cream flan, celestial

trifle, daisy pudding, raspberry ambrosia, marshmallow pudding and peach crisp, all with their recipes for ambitious readers at home. To do justice to these delights almost a full page of coverage, with photographs, was needed.<sup>21</sup>

Concern over the halls versus flats debate, when at last raised, came instead from a surprising corner: the University Council. The 1962 Annual Report of the University noted that in 1956 the University had a student population of 2,108. Of those students living away from home, 580 students lived in Halls of Residence and Colleges, with 293 in flats. Five years later in 1961, of a student population of 2,867, a total of 728 students lived in Halls of Residence and Colleges, and a staggering 610 students in flats. The increasing popularity of flats had not gone unnoticed and concern was expressed that “whilst rooms and flats may provide what the more senior student wants ... [they] will provide quite unsuitable accommodation for the young first or second year students.”<sup>22</sup>

First-year students, male or female, were believed to need the most support from the University “parent” and were therefore subject to stricter regulations than their senior counterparts in Halls of Residence. The variations of rights and privileges between first-year (“freshers”) and senior students were accepted by residents. The variations between the regulations between the men’s and women’s halls were not.

The concerns of St. Margaret’s College women as the target of unfair regulations appear well-founded when comparing the regulations at male Halls of Residence. Arana Hall (by far the strictest of the male Halls of Residence) demanded that their residents be awake, with beds made by 9:30 a.m., that collar and tie be worn to the formal dinners Monday to Friday and Sunday, but also allowed that “Lady visitors may be entertained in the downstairs common room any afternoon or evening between 1 pm and 11.15 pm.” Breach of these rules was treated seriously: “Any student found having a lady visitor in his room outside the specified times may be required to leave within 24 hours.”<sup>23</sup> Knox College men in contrast, were merely required to attend worship

regularly. Despite these conditions of cleanliness and Godliness, the male Halls of Residence did not impose any stipulations on morality through leave and curfew regulations such as those at St. Margaret's College.

A further comparison of the other all-women Halls of Residence at the University show that Dominican Hall and Studholme Hall had comparable (if slightly more lenient) leave regulations to St. Margaret's College. Dominican Hall allowed residents to stay out each night until 10 p.m.—far later than St. Margaret's College. However, first-year students were restricted to similar late leave conditions of just one late leave and one picture leave, with returning seniors allowed two late leaves. Again, no late leave could be taken on a Sunday.<sup>24</sup> Studholme Hall was even more flexible with its residents. Late leave did not even begin until 11 p.m. each night (including Sundays). One late leave was allowed Monday–Thursday, another on Friday until 11:30 p.m. and another on Saturday until 12:30 a.m. The somewhat liberal Studholme Hall had interesting priorities. Women residents were allowed to entertain male guests in their bedrooms with permission of staff, yet were absolutely forbidden to have bare feet or wear slippers in the dining rooms, and could wear their hair in curlers (covered by a scarf) and “slacks” instead of skirts during Saturday tea only. “Slacks” leave was extended to Sunday tea and breakfasts in the winter.<sup>25</sup>

These comparisons demonstrate women students at the University of Otago did indeed have a legitimate grievance that they were being treated unfairly in comparison to men. St. Margaret's College also seemed to have the strictest leave regulations for their residents. If we investigate even further, to Helen Connon Hall (a womens' Hall of Residence at Canterbury University), we can find even more dramatic comparisons. Run by the Warden and a committee of eight members, the residents had impressive influence in setting regulations for themselves. As such, “freshers” were allowed leave any night of the week until 11 p.m., second years until 1:30 a.m., while third years had absolutely



no limits whatsoever (having their own keys). Late leave until 3 a.m. was obtained by any resident upon informing the warden where she was going and with whom. Either type of leave could be taken any night—or every night for that matter—and in great swinging sixties style, visitors of either sex could be entertained in the women's own bedrooms until 11 p.m. any night.<sup>26</sup> It appeared women students at Canterbury University were able to participate in their university community with far greater freedom than their Otago counterparts.

As the June edition of *Critic* pointed out: “The university ideal is that of a community, searching for knowledge, with the emphasis on the word “community.”<sup>27</sup> St. Margaret's College women living under restrictive regulations felt unable to take part as much as they were entitled, and with their Warden unwilling to listen to their complaints, many of the women felt more like boarders than residents—a distinction of involvement, commitment, enthusiasm and respect.<sup>28</sup> Complaints against the leave and curfew regulations can, however, be boiled down beyond issues of personal freedoms and student-staff relations to one, underlying, unsurprising root cause of trouble: men.

Gripes from the residents about not being able to meet their male companions when and where they wanted had long echoed through the Hall's corridors. Diana France, a resident of St. Margaret's College from 1961–1963, pointed out in the 1963 Yearbook that the problems of saying a “fond farewell to one's acquaintances” seems to have been as much a problem of the past as it was then. In 1943 an audacious motion “that a shelter be built at the bottom of the drive for the protection and comfort of lingering home-comers” was only narrowly lost.<sup>29</sup> The innovative plans that women had over the years to protect their “extensive conversations and silences” were really quite extraordinary.<sup>30</sup> At another Annual meeting it was moved that a ‘prefab’ hut be placed at the gate on wet nights and be removed on fine nights, and that a concrete path be made to the hut to prevent the lawn from being dug up.

In highlighting these enduring issues in the Yearbook Miss France was trying to give a degree of seriousness to the resident's concerns. Miss France cared so strongly for St. Margaret's College that after finishing her studies she applied for the position of junior sub-warden. She had seen how many of the women hoped the resignation of "the Baron" at the end of 1961 would be the opportunity they had been waiting for and she felt their disappointment when Miss Shand (having been Assistant Warden for many years and conceivably groomed to take over) failed them.<sup>31</sup> Without the strong will and fortitude of Miss Barron, Miss Shand's grooming encouraged her to an even more impersonal style and she lasted a mere two, fractious years.<sup>32</sup> The residents once more had been unable to air their concerns with their Warden. This inability to talk with their warden was highlighted in a questionnaire on college life at St. Margaret's College that found that 98 of 100 residents unhappily stated they had few opportunities to meet the Warden informally.<sup>33</sup> By the time Miss France had become sub-warden in 1965, however, St. Margaret's College had a new, savvy Warden, Mrs. Ryburn (wife of the Chancellor), and the beginning of a new era in St. Margaret's College was dawning.

The College's House Committee Annual Report of 1963–1964 captured the dawning theme of change. In this Report, the importance of contact with administrators following two changes of Wardens in as many years was directly noted, when it was happily reported that:

Perhaps the most single change has occurred in the atmosphere of the college itself and in the interest and concern for the wellbeing of the students constantly shown by the warden, and her House Manager, sub warden and Chaplain.<sup>34</sup>

Gaynor Saunders noted in the Report that:

this year has brought the recognition of changing attitudes and conditions in both internal and external college affairs. Many of the established traditions of the

college have been questioned and revised, and are still being questioned for their value and relevance to the needs of present-day students.<sup>35</sup>

She went on to write “it was realised with some consternation that few records of past procedure of any relevance to the present situation existed.... Long overdue changes were made in leave regulations....”<sup>36</sup> Although no specific times are mentioned, these changes appear to have aligned leave hours with university functions and also to extend special privileges to senior students.<sup>37</sup> By 1964 the women at St. Margaret’s College and their new Warden were working together to improve the regulations that had caused such commotion. Recognition that rules and regulations, providing they are fair, are a necessity of community life, went a long way toward repairing relations between the students and staff at St. Margaret’s College.

This good relationship appears to continue at the hall today. St. Margaret’s College has made many changes to the way it operates (it became a mixed Hall of Residence in 1981) and the present rules and regulations reflect those changes while retaining concern for resident welfare. St. Margaret’s current rules, as expressed on the website and in the Member’s Handbook, no longer enforce strict leave regulations. Their focus instead is now on the explicitly stated consideration of others during “quiet hours,”<sup>38</sup> the responsible use of computers (obviously not much a concern in the 1960s—the university had exactly one computer in 1961), and a concern for safety (electric heaters, toasters, grills, firearms and water pistols are all banned).<sup>39</sup> Visitors are welcome from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday to Thursday and until midnight on Friday and Saturday. Should visitors remain on College grounds after visiting hours, there are very strict disciplinary regulations. Residents can be fined, suspended or expelled depending on how severely the College deems the rules have been infringed.

St. Margaret’s College remains strongly committed to ensuring residents feel safe and comfortable. Rules such as these prevent incidents that might endanger any member. With this

“parental” concern, St. Margaret’s College has continued to embody the University’s *in loco parentis* role for its students. This role, however, is vastly diminished compared to that faced by women students in the 1960s. The eventual change of the unfair restrictions on St. Margaret’s College women demonstrated the academic community’s acceptance of wider societal changes and the acceptance of the University “parent” that its little girls were growing up. True to the spirit of the 1960s, this simply allowed for another hot topic to burn across the university.

### Notes

1. Cited in *St. Margaret’s College Chronicle* (Dunedin, 1962), 25, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Hākena, AG–157.

2. Peter Norris, “St. Margaret’s College 2003 Members Handbook,” Dunedin, 2003, 1.

3. “Guess Where Girls,” *Critic*, 30 March 1961, 1.

4. This system was also in place for fire and other safety concerns, tracking how many people were expected to be in residence at any one time in case of emergencies.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago* (Dunedin: Otago University Students’ Association, 1990,) 46.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Miss Salisbury was happy enough with her accommodation to take on the responsibility of being editor of St. Margaret’s College Yearbook in 1961.

10. “Letters to the Editor,” *Critic*, 20 April 1961, 4.

11. “Letters to the Editor,” *Critic*, 9 June 1961, 4.

12. “Hostel Improvements,” *Critic*, 9 June 1961, 2.

13. “Hostels vs Flats Debate,” *Critic*, 14 September 1961, 5.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. However, the arguments made against hostels in the debate missed one important point. There remained a marked difference between a college and a hostel. As pointed out in the St. Margaret's College Members' Handbook each year, "a hostel provides bed and breakfast and then may or may not provide other meals." A college provides full meal service, as well as tutorial facilities and employs Welfare Staff for the care of the individual resident. Their outlook in providing a residence conducive to study (the primary reason for being at university, and one fully recognised by the women at St. Margaret's College) appears notably different. To sensationalise their argument, these debaters did themselves a disservice in not looking closely enough at the accommodation whose merits they were debating.

19. Elworthy, 42.

20. "Presentation to Warden on Retirement," and "College is Helpful in Crucial Period," *Otago Daily Times*, 4 September 1961, 11.

21. "Recipes from St. Margaret's College," *Otago Daily Times*, 14 March 1961, 13.

22. Ibid.

23. "OUSA Accommodation Conferences 1961–1967," (Dunedin, 1967), 30, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena MS641 Series 19–3.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. "Student Hostels," *Critic*, 4 October 1961, 9.

27. "Hostel Improvements," *Critic*, 2 June 1961, 2.

28. "Guess Where Girls," *Critic*, 30 March 1961, 1.

29. St. Margaret's College, *St. Margaret's College Chronicle* (Dunedin, 1963), 21, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG–157.

30. Ibid, 21.

31. St. Margaret's College, *St. Margaret's College Chronicle* (Dunedin 1961), 9, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG–157.

32. “Presentation to Warden on Retirement,” and “College is Helpful in Crucial Period,” *Otago Daily Times*, 4 September 1961, 11.

33. St. Margaret’s College, *St. Margaret’s College Chronicle* (Dunedin 1963), 12, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG–157.

34. St. Margaret’s College, *House Committee Annual Reports 1963–64* (Dunedin, 1932–1968/69), 12, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG–157.

35. St. Margaret’s College, *House Committee Annual Reports 1963–64* (Dunedin, 1932–1968/69), Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG–157–pl.

36. Ibid. Despite concentrated research, an exact record of these changes has not been uncovered.

37. St. Margaret’s College, *St. Margaret’s College Chronicle* (Dunedin 1965), 11, Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG–157.

38. Those quiet hours are: Sunday to Thursday: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. (with a break 9:00–9:30 p.m.) Friday and Saturday: Midnight to 7:00 a.m. These hours are extended during examination time.

39. *St. Margaret’s College*, <[www.smc.ac.nz](http://www.smc.ac.nz)>, 2 March 2005.





## No Mixing By Students

Debby Foster

On 4 July 1967, the front page of the Otago University Student newspaper *Critic* informed readers that mixed flatting by students attending Otago University was banned.<sup>1</sup> Mainstream Dunedin papers the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star* ran the story on their front pages the following day. By 6 July the University was the scene of unprecedented student protest, with around 1000 students taking part in an organised “sleep-in.” The protests occurred in response to the Vice-Chancellor’s demand that a male student vacate the flat he shared with three girls. There was no suggestion that any of the flatmates were involved in an intimate relationship. The parents of all four flatmates, together with the landlord, had given written permission for this flatting arrangement. Despite the consensual and innocent arrangement, the university defended its position on the grounds of morality, and the view that it possessed rights *in loco parentis* over students.

In 1966 the University Council had introduced new accommodation rules into the Discipline Regulations. These amendments were ostensibly to protect students from unscrupulous landlords charging high rents for substandard flats. The new rules went further to include a clause that gave the University’s Accommodation Officer the right to approve and inspect student accommodation. The Accommodation Officer had been appointed in July 1964 to assist students in finding accommodation.<sup>2</sup> The 1966 amendment to the regulations widened his role to include the inspection of student residences. The discipline regulations



stipulated:

an inspecting officer may at any time enter and inspect any premises other than the home of the student's parents or guardians in which a student resides, obtain such information as to the occupant's terms of occupation and conditions thereof.<sup>3</sup>

University Councillors were quick to rebut student suggestions that there was a paternal air to the regulations:

We are not saying that the accommodation officer should act as a sort of warden or housekeeper. It is a case of seeing that students are not victimised by high rents or substandard conditions.<sup>4</sup>

The OUSA approved of the accommodation provisions to an extent, but they wanted the Accommodation Officer to give 48 hours' notice of intention to inspect. There were also concerns regarding flats that students shared with working people, and flats occupied by married students. The University agreed that married students' flats would only be inspected by consent. In reality, time constraints meant the Accommodation Officer inspected very few flats; usually only ones about which students had complained.<sup>5</sup> The Accommodation Officer's role was much wider than just an inspecting officer. He assisted students to find places in flats, hostels and in private homes. First- and second-year students were encouraged to live in hostels or obtain private board:

We feel this is necessary as this is a difficult transition period for the student and also a time when he forms friendships which last through the years and with whom he can flat later on.<sup>6</sup>

The Accommodation Officer (Mr Hogg) thought that third-year students should flat, as they had the maturity to cope with the flatting environment. He considered junior students unable to cope with the demands of cooking and cleaning in a flat in addition to

their studies. The Dunedin Teachers' College Principal contended in 1960 "there has been a significant correlation between exam failures and occupation of flats."<sup>7</sup>

Although lodging junior students in hostels was seen as ideal, there were not enough hostel places for everyone who applied.<sup>8</sup> In 1964, there were almost three applications for each of the 700 hostel beds. Of the University's roll of 3000, 2000 students lived away from their parent's homes. From the late 1950s, accommodation concerns had been raised at National Student Association conferences. Throughout New Zealand, university rolls were climbing as the post-war baby boomers began leaving school at a time of economic buoyancy, which meant further education was affordable for a larger group of people. Otago's roll doubled between 1956 and 1967, from 2108 to 4304. In contrast, the number of beds in hostels remained fairly static at 700. Private board was another option, but could be difficult to obtain. For some students, flatting was the only answer, but finding the right flat was not always straightforward.

Flats were generally occupied by groups of the same sex. In June 1967, Vice-Chancellor Robin Williams became aware of a mixed flat in Union Street, and ordered the male student living there to vacate the flat or face disciplinary action. This student unwittingly found himself at the centre of a huge controversy, as his case became the catalyst for student protest. There are many variations and embellishments on the story, but the essential details of the story as reported in Dunedin's newspapers were that a male student had asked the Accommodation Officer for assistance in finding lodging, as he was unable to find a position in a men's flat. At the same time, three women were flatting in Union Street and needed a fourth flatmate. After obtaining written permission from the landlord and all four sets of parents, the male moved into the flat. He did not have a relationship with any of the girls; indeed he did not know them before he moved into their flat. The Accommodation Officer was informed that his help was no longer needed, and a successful mixed flat was in place.

Vice-Chancellor Williams opposed mixed flatting on moral grounds. In *Critic* he defended the university's right to order the student to leave the flat as "the existence of this type of living... brings the university into discredit."<sup>9</sup>

The student body was galvanized by the fact that this was an example of an innocent mixed flat and there were no moral grounds for the Vice-Chancellor's objection. The University Council felt that the University acted *in loco parentis* and that most parents would not want their children in a mixed flat. In this case, however, the parents had approved, so a dilemma occurred; did the University's claim to be acting *in loco parentis* overturn the rights of the actual parents? *Critic's* editorial on 4 July questioned the University's right to supplant the authority of an individual student's parents. This article implied that students still felt their parents had authority over them while they were at university. Teenagers all over the world were challenging this idea.

The University was attempting to enforce its parental role, and *Critic's* editor reminded students of their parents' authority, but many of the students were listening to popular American protest songs which challenged and undermined the traditional rights and roles of parents.

Come mothers and fathers throughout the land  
And don't criticise what you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command...  
For the times they are a'changing'<sup>10</sup>

The University administrators were not swayed by popular music, or by the demands of a small group of radical students. They were out of touch with the 1960s youth culture, and, like many in conservative New Zealand, had not yet realised the full impact American music, fashion and television would have on society.

The prosperous post-war world of the 1950s and 1960s had created a new phenomenon—the teenager. For the first time, young adults had reasonable wages, and the freedom to spend them.



Reproduced with permission from the Otago Daily Times.<sup>11</sup>

They had their own music, which was louder and more exciting than before. Fashions changed, men wore beads and long hair, and women shortened their skirts and flaunted their bikinis. In 1964 students at Berkeley University protested, and these scenes, along with anti-war and other university protests, were beamed into New Zealand homes via the new medium of television. Older New Zealanders felt bewildered by these dramatic changes and Sid Scales' cartoon succinctly captured this feeling.

Overseas events confirmed the fears of many New Zealanders. During the 1950s violent crime increased in New Zealand and teenagers were implicated in much of it. The Government formed a committee to report on "moral delinquency in children and young people." The results of this survey were sent to 300,000 New Zealand households in 1955.<sup>12</sup> The committee blamed the

rise in immorality amongst young people on high wages, working mothers and the American influence. This report offered stern warnings to parents on the dangers of teenagers left unsupervised, especially girls. Many of the conclusions reached in this report were based on hearsay, with no concrete evidence. The concerns about immorality amongst the nation's youth continued into the 1960s, and fed adult fears about the likelihood of sexual impropriety in mixed flats. When in 1966 some Student Health centres (though not Otago's) began openly advertising that unmarried women would be prescribed the contraceptive pill, the report's prediction of "an imminent moral deluge" looked certain.<sup>13</sup>

Government and institutions sought ways to combat this rising tide of rebellion. The University of Otago instituted tighter disciplinary rules in 1964. These meant that students could fail their end of year examinations if they misbehaved at any student functions or in their lodgings. "Students Must Behave" proclaimed the headline in the *Otago Daily Times*.<sup>14</sup> The Editor applauded the university's stance, reminding students "there is a limit beyond which high spirits become excessive, and a likely cause of nuisance in a community."<sup>15</sup> This type of discipline was considered reasonable, as university students did not pay fees and were supported by the taxpayer. Students were traditionally looked upon as New Zealand's future leaders. The public therefore felt entitled to believe that students should behave in accord with mainstream New Zealand society. A letter writer to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* thought that supporting student morality would "strengthen and develop the character of those who could well have the future of their country in their hands."<sup>16</sup>

Students had traditionally been treated as children, and the public expected the university to regulate students in the same way as high schools. "The average student is after all only one step beyond the school boy into his journey out into the world."<sup>17</sup> Women in particular, were considered in need of protection, and the university administration accepted the parental role. During the fifties women sat at the front of lecture theatres and were dismissed

before the men, so that they were not harassed by unwanted male company. The public's expectation was that universities would exercise an extension of the paternal role. White, male, middle-class Christianity was considered the norm, and all students were expected to conform to these ideals. "Teach Them," a contributor to letters to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times*, reminded readers that the older generation had given up freedoms during the war, only to find now the students "want too much freedom." He went on to suggest that students should find jobs instead of "wasting their time and ours with childish demonstrations."<sup>18</sup> This type of paternalistic response was probably quite common at a time when people often considered women were "filling in time" by studying until they married. In 1957 the University Board of Control attempted to stop first- and second-year female students from living in flats. This was "for their own good," but it did not happen, partly because there were not enough hostel beds for the 578 female students.<sup>19</sup>

Without enough hostel beds to go around, many students of both sexes lived in flats close to the university. Often they shared their flats with working people, many of whom had no qualms about mixed flatting. There were a number of mixed flats, but "students often lied about their residential address to avoid coming to the attention of university authorities."<sup>20</sup> Very few people openly lived together; those who did were viewed with awe or horror, depending on the individual's viewpoint.

Mixed sex flats were commonly held in the same regard as *de facto* lifestyles, in the eyes of the public there was little distinction between the two. While mixed flatting did not equate with promiscuity on the part of the tenants, the fact that men and women would be in close enough proximity to facilitate sexual activity was enough to win widespread condemnation for the idea.<sup>21</sup>

Many students did not support mixed flats, but they did support peoples' right to choose their own place to live. This became the

central issue. The students did not protest on the issue of morality; they protested that students as individual adults had the right to choose their own living arrangements as they would if they lived in the wider community. The Vice-Chancellor's mistake in this instance was to choose an individual in a mixed flat where it was clear to all there was no moral issue.

*Critic* and the newly elected OUSA Executive were conservative in their initial response. They believed that the issue was minor and that there were plenty of other injustices to fight.<sup>22</sup> Correspondents in the *Otago Daily Times* and *Evening Star* thought the students' morality was already questionable, and this issue proved the point. Members of the public praised Williams for his response to the problem. One parent wrote, in a letter to the editor, "the student is not yet fully adult" and suggested that the parents of "the immature girl or boy" who did not insist on their child obtaining "proper lodging" were to blame. Another thought the time had come that "our student population is told in no uncertain terms that they must abide strictly to the normal standards of living." The letter writer went on to add, "the supporters of mixed flatting are normally recognisable in any society as an unfortunate minority."<sup>23</sup> Some students, whilst not necessarily agreeing with the letter writers, did not believe that there was a problem, as they accepted the university's right to demand adherence to its rules. *Falus* editor David Moore disagreed with this view and wrote a story outlining the issue.<sup>24</sup> The OUSA executive was pressured to support the student at the centre of the dispute, support they initially offered with reluctance. Eventually the Executive requested a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor, asking him not to interfere in students' private affairs, but the Vice-Chancellor refused to back down. In early July the matter became a catalyst for the wider issue of student rights. Students demanded that they have the same freedom to choose their own living arrangements as other members of society. *Critic* came to reflect the growing student mood in objecting to the Vice-Chancellor's middle-class morality. OUSA Vice-President in 1967, Joe Manickavasagam remembers,

I think the student community was outraged that there was an attempt (or at least an appearance) by a university administration to impose “morality” held by some on the entire community. This was not even ... a question of a violation of university rules. The argument I heard from the administration was on morals. This was not convincing and did not go down well.<sup>25</sup>

For the first time at Otago, a large portion of the student body was united behind a cause. Pamphlets were distributed, and permission was granted to hold a “sleep-in” on the night of 6 July in the Union building. Although the OUSA did not give its official approval, it agreed to allow the building to be left open for the protesters. Some of the executive members came to see the event for themselves. Estimates in the *Otago Daily Times* and *Evening Star* suggested 1000 students attended some part of the sleep-in; this was almost one quarter of the enrolled students. The organisers of the sleep-in, OUSA executives, and people who lived in mixed flats gave speeches. OUSA President J. B. Robertson explained that the OUSA did not approve the sleep-in “because all avenues of negotiation had not yet been explored.”<sup>26</sup> However, he acknowledged that the OUSA would be foolish to ignore the views of so many students. Protesters listened to music and poetry readings, and reiterated the message emblazoned on a large banner in the hall “We Ask No More Than To Retain The Freedom Enjoyed By The General Public.” The *Evening Star* reported that the sleep-in was “one of the biggest demonstrations in the history of New Zealand universities.”<sup>27</sup> Joe Manickavasagam thinks, “the vigour and student support with which this [event] took place surprised both Chancellor Ryburn and Vice-Chancellor Williams.”<sup>28</sup> The student at the centre of the controversy did not attend. The *Evening Star* reported that he was highly embarrassed and was planning to leave the university.<sup>29</sup>

Once the OUSA executive realised the strength of student support, they began plans to support the students in the Union Street flat. They encouraged the male student to stay in the flat,



and obtained legal opinions to see whether the OUSA constitution would allow them to pay his legal costs. The reply they received from Otago University's solicitor and OUSA honorary solicitor Maurice Joel incensed the executive. Under their constitution they were not able to pay for such expenses, but Joel went on to explain (in effect) that students were not mature enough to understand the implications of their actions! The OUSA response to this was swift—Joel's services were "reluctantly" dispensed with. For the first time, the OUSA realised they needed their own legal representation. Unfortunately on this occasion, another legal opinion concurred, with the law firm's partner adding a personal note, "I would not act for the male student... because I would not feel it was a just matter of principle to warrant a fight."<sup>30</sup> With this opinion, the student left the Union Street flat, and Otago University Vice-Chancellor Williams said that no further action would be taken.

Although officially over, the issue did not immediately disappear. Burns Fellow James K. Baxter's response was to write a poem entitled "A Small Ode on Mixed Flatting: Elicited by the decision of the Otago University authorities to forbid this practice among students." Copies of this were printed and widely sold on campus for 15 cents. The poem centres on the moral issues, and completely misses (or ignores) the students' points. It was extremely popular, probably because of its lewd nature, but unfortunately it has helped to perpetrate the myth that the mixed flatting protest was a moral issue. Baxter was not, however, fooled into thinking the issue was a moral one. He wrote a reasoned letter to the *Otago Daily Times* supporting the student protest, arguing that students were able to work, and could be self-supporting, but they "choose to remain dependent for the purposes of obtaining a higher education." He went on to add, "under these conditions the case for extended control over their private flatting arrangements is a very thin one."<sup>31</sup>

Politically-minded students shared Baxter's point of view. Joe Manickavasagam asserted that students and faculty members were more political than they are today. Michael Crozier (OUSA President

in 1968) agreed, noting that he did not have any assignments or work to do apart from revision for final examinations, as there was no internal assessment.<sup>32</sup> Students therefore had more time for activism. Many students were very aware of the changing social attitudes occurring worldwide. Protests occurred in universities all over the world on a variety of topics including the Vietnam War, South Africa and women's rights. Otago was probably the quietest of the New Zealand universities, which perhaps explains why the sleep-in gained such coverage in the local press, and encouraged so many letters to the editors from members of the public not directly associated with the university.

End of year exams meant any issue involving student politicians was put on hold until the following year. Much of the initial momentum was lost, as many of the key players left the university, and other issues became topical. The mixed flatting issue disappeared from view, though the OUSA continued to try many avenues to have the Discipline Regulations rescinded. One of these avenues was arguing for, and obtaining, student representation on the Senate. The Discipline Regulations were amended slightly in 1971, but students in 1994 would have been surprised to learn that until then the University had not formally rescinded its rights to *in loco parentis* discipline.

They would have been surprised largely because although until 1994 the University could enforce its rights *in loco parentis*, it was reluctant to do so. An example of this reluctance occurred in 1971 when the father of a twenty-year-old female student asked the university to act *in loco parentis* to stop her living with a male student. The Discipline Board "agreed that the University had no obligation or right to take such an action."<sup>33</sup> The discipline regulations were never again used to intrude into students' private living arrangements.

Manickavasagam thinks the issue was wider than morals, or students' rights to privacy:

In my view, in 1967 no one realised or fully understood the real issue around the controversy over [the] mixed

flatting incident. It was tension over the understandable gaps between the ideas of one generation and another. This is normal but generational transition is in reality change and change produces tension among the parties involved.<sup>34</sup>

This tension was the underlying cause of the unprecedented protest action at Otago, and could be argued to be the cause of most university protests worldwide. The mixed flatting issue at Otago did not occur in a vacuum, unrelated to world events. All over the world, the times, as Dylan said, were a'changin', and conservative New Zealanders were slow to recognise this. Many did not want the country to change, believing, as most generations tend to, that the world of their youth was better than the current one. The difference between the generation of the 1960s and those before was that young people began push boundaries and demand freedoms never before granted to youth. The society we have today is evidence that in many ways, they were successful.

## Notes

1. "'Get out of mixed flats' demand," *Critic*, 4 July 1967, 1.
2. "Students Must Behave: Tighter Discipline," *Otago Daily Times*, 24 June 1964, 1.
3. *Evening Star*, 28 September 1966, 1.
4. Dr. Ryburn, *Evening Star*, 28 September 1966, 1.
5. University of Otago: Records of Registrar and the Accommodation Committee's Report. Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena AG-180-2/18.
6. "Mr Hogg's report to NZUSA Accommodation Seminar, Ilam, Christchurch 1967." Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena MS 641-19/3.
7. David Wilson, "Mixed Flatting and the Student Revolt Against Paternalism: Issues in Accommodation at the University of

Otago 1945–1975.” (M.A. Thesis, University of Otago, 1994), 59.

8. “Mr Hogg’s report to NZUSA Accommodation Seminar, Ilam, Christchurch 1967.” Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena MS 641–19/3.

9. “Vice-Chancellor States Policy” *Critic*, 4 July 1967, 1.

10. Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are a-Changing,” in *Lyrics 1962–1985* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1992), 91.

11. Sid Scales cartoon in *Otago Daily Times*, 10 July 1967, 4.

12. Redmer Yska, *All Shook Up: The Flash Bodgie and the Rise of the New Zealand Teenager in the Fifties* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1993), 81.

13. Yska, 83.

14. “Students Must Behave: Tighter Discipline,” *Otago Daily Times*, 24 June 1964, 1.

15. Editorial, *Otago Daily Times*, 25 June 1964, 4.

16. “Letters to the Editor,” *Otago Daily Times*, 6 July 1967, 4.

17. Editor of 1912 Review, quoted in Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago* (Dunedin: Otago University Students’ Association, 1990), 18.

18. “Teach Them,” in Letters to the Editor, *Otago Daily Times*, 15 July 1967, 4.

19. Wilson, 85.

20. Lisa Burns, interview by author, Dunedin, 4 March 2005.

21. Wilson, 41.

22. “Get out of mixed flats’ demand,” *Critic*, 4 July 1967, 2.

23. “Letters to the Editor,” *Otago Daily Times*, 8 July 1967, 3.

24. *Falus* no 7. Undated [1967].

25. Joe Manickavasagam, email correspondence with author, 15 April 2005.

26. “Students Stage Sleep-in Protest,” *Otago Daily Times*, 7 July 1967, 1, 3.

27. “Mixed flatting issue uproar: Student may leave,” *Evening Star*, 7 July 1967, 1.

28. Joe Manickavasagam, email correspondence with author, 15 April 2005.

29. “Mixed flatting issue uproar: Student may leave,” *Evening*

*Tower Turmoil*

*Star*, 7 July 1967. 1.

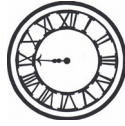
30. Letter from Warrington Taylor of Collier and Taylor in OUSA Student Welfare Folder. Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena, MS641-2/2/3 Series 17.

31. James K. Baxter, in “Letters to the Editor,” *Otago Daily Times*, 12 July 1967, 16.

32. Michael Crozier, interview by author, telephone, 15 March 2005.

33. Report of Discipline from J. M. Watt, Provost, August 1972, in “Joint Board on Student Affairs 1966-73,” Hocken Collections/Uare Taoka o Häkena MS 641-24/1.

34. Joe Manickavasagam, email correspondence with author, 15 April 2005.



## What's in a Name: The Burning of *Falus*

Robbie Fitzgerald

*If offence cometh out of truth, it is better that  
offence cometh than that truth be concealed.*

—St Jerome

The 1960s was a decade well known for various political controversies, especially the international uproar and protest over the Vietnam War and the American civil rights movement. With these large political movements came a radicalisation of speech and culture, and a greater challenge to censorship throughout the world. Within New Zealand politics, language and the use of expletives in the public domain were being closely monitored.<sup>1</sup> In 1967, the same year in which *Falus* was burned, the chief censor, Doug McIntosh, ruled that audiences for the film of James Joyce's *Ulysses* had to be segregated by sex because he objected to the use of the word “fuck,” and the “consciousness of sexual desire” present within the film that he believed had the power to corrupt public space.<sup>2</sup>

Student politics, a microcosm of New Zealand society, was also full of controversy in the 1960s. Otago University's student politics were no exception; the student politics of the 1960s were, to say the least, controversial. The mixed flatting debacle and the banning and burning of the broadsheet magazine *Falus*, put personal liberties and freedom of speech at the fore for Otago University students of the 1960s. These students took it upon themselves to begin the fight for their right to personal freedom, to distance themselves

from the oppressive hand of the University council, who until then had a strong influence on student issues. But it was not just the University council that intervened; the Otago University Students' Association (OUSA) was seen by some of the more radical students on campus to be far too "right-thinking" to properly deal with student issues. Even the student newspaper *Critic* was regarded by some as too conservative. Out of this disillusionment arose *Falus*.

*Falus, the Official Organ of Beardies and Weirdies and the Industrial Union of Workers*, began its irregular publication in 1965, and also appeared irregularly in 1967 and 1968. It was published haphazardly in a simple type format on double-sided A4 sheets, a "cyclostyled broadsheet."<sup>3</sup> I have been unable to discover the distribution of *Falus*, but since it was published on a small press on Union St, it is unlikely to have been large.<sup>4</sup>

From the publication of its first issue *Falus* was controversial. It was, literally, the magazine that (almost) set the Otago University Student Union building alight! In the last days of April, 1967, a member of the Otago University Student Executive, Lorraine Isaacs, was so disgusted with the "obscene" content of *Falus* that at a public OUSA Forum she proceeded to burn a copy of the broadsheet.<sup>5</sup> The Student Executive then banned the broadsheet from the Union building, and called for the distributors to front up and explain their actions to the executive.<sup>6</sup>

Why was the publication considered so offensive as to provoke its burning? The earlier *Falus* issues of 1965 seem to have provoked little outcry—they are not referred to in any other publication. This chapter examines the debate at the heart of this conflict: the role of the Otago University Students' Association in asserting the ideals of free speech, and the rights the association had, if any, in limiting that freedom.

*Falus* proclaimed in its first issue of 1967 that it was "Dedicated to the furtherance of truth, in the interests of the following noble causes: Hippies, Weirdies, Anarchists, Nihilists, Sophists, Pot-smokers, and the PRESBYTERIAN LAYMEN'S ASSN!"<sup>7</sup> The broadsheet was intended to provide a crass and ironic look at current political

and social issues, both local and international. It presented an alternative to the content of University weekly periodical *Critic*, which the publishers and editors of *Falus*, David Moore, Robert Erksine and Ross Medland, labelled “government propaganda.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time however, Erksine also wrote film reviews for *Critic*, so there was a degree of involvement and overlap between the publications.

*Falus* was critical of the Student Executive, of the University Council, of the Vietnam War, and of the Establishment in general. It asked of its readers:

Do you wish to help society relieve itself of inhibition?

*Falus* is your Organ.

Do you want to piss on the world?

*Falus* is your Organ.

Do you want the world to stop pissing on you?

*Falus* is your Organ.

Do you want to pour a stream of reform on the world?

*Falus* is your Organ.

Arise – go where your pen is – take yourself in hand.<sup>9</sup>

The bad puns and the vulgar sexual innuendo are clear even in this small extract. The broadsheet transformed the act of writing into a masculine masturbatory act. The above passage is filled with excretory allusion, a further, more functional pun on the “phallus” theme: the readers are asked if they want to “help society *relieve itself* of inhibition,” “*pour a stream* of reform on the world,” both euphemisms for urination, and if they want to “*piss* on the world,” or vice versa.<sup>10</sup> It is evident that from the very beginning that *Falus* aimed to (and did) offend. Other than this editorial “joke,” the expletive language of the first publication from 1967 was moderate (though the issue includes the odd “fuck,” a very controversial word at the time). The message, political or otherwise, however, was very radical.

*Falus* bastardised passages from the Bible: ““So man created God in his own image, in the image of man he created Him’



–Genesis1:1(unauthorised version).”<sup>11</sup> *Falus* attacked organised religion and embraced anti-religious philosophy: “And now with our intellect we have killed Him!” proclaims one poem about God.<sup>12</sup> *Falus* parodied the New Zealand government, accusing the leaders of being in the United States’ pocket. In the first issue of *Falus* a fictional poem (or song) appeared in which Prime Minister of the period, Keith Holyoake, and his parliament sang to American president Lyndon Johnson when he had visited Wellington in 1966. The poem was entitled “Uncle Sam our Help in Ages Past”:

We love you so much, Uncle Sam  
We’ve loved you in the past  
And in the future, sure I am  
That we’ll still lick your arse.<sup>13</sup>

The poem commented on the idiocy of the war against communism that the West was waging on the East, and on the fact that killing the peoples of Vietnam was not going to convert them into a democratic society:

And if the wops don’t like you  
And refuse to be free  
We’ll burn their houses, kill them too  
Make them love democracy.<sup>14</sup>

These anti-war sentiments were not isolated statements. Many other articles and poems within the first issue, and others, expressed an anti-war and anti-government stance. “The Pansies,” a lampoon of Wordsworth’s “Daffodils,” written pseudonymously by “Steaming John,” is one such example:

A band of wondrous beings divine  
Whose energies hold mighty sway  
Whose forthright courage and smiles benign  
Keeps us safe from day to day.

Whose stature shields us from all wrong  
And keeps us safe from Vietcong.<sup>15</sup>

The author is obviously referring to the government, and the poem is written tongue-in-cheek; it is a parodic political commentary. At the end of the poem, the author remarks “—At this I woke from my enchanted state / I think I’m going to emigrate!”<sup>16</sup> It seems the purpose of *Falus* was to invoke the very reaction that it managed to achieve: to offend the “right-thinking” people within the University community, those who supported the right-wing government of the era, and those who were opposed to the radical ideals of free love that *Falus* embraced: *Falus* invited any female first-year virgins on the University campus to give them a call and be rid of their affliction.<sup>17</sup>

Within the public debating arena of Forum, an opportunity for the OUSA Executive to bring issues before the student body, things became intensely emotional. Lorraine Isaacs, a member of the Student Executive, set a copy of the broadsheet on fire: “I set fire to the newspaper, held it aloft and thrust it disparagingly into the rubbish bin behind myself and walked out of the room. The rubbish caught fire ... everybody was rushing around trying to put it out ... and the whole impact of this marvellous scenic move of mine was a little bit lost.”<sup>18</sup> The distributors of *Falus*, David Moore, and L. Chapman, were summoned before the Student Executive and given a verbal warning.<sup>19</sup>

It was not the political content of *Falus*, nor was it the irreverent swearing that caused controversy; it seems to have been a single word. The broadsheet’s title, “Falus,” along with its vulgar connotations was the focus of objection from the Student Executive, and from the general student population. Within a closed committee meeting of the Student Executive, the Representative of Intellectual Affairs, Bruce Robertson, somewhat hesitantly initiated the issue of *Falus*’s obscenity, brought to the executive by Lady Vice-President Kerry White, who claimed that “A word used was obscene.”<sup>20</sup> Discussion noted that the matter was not one of academic freedom, but one



This cartoon, taken from *Critic* of Wednesday, July 18, 1968, displays effectively the general consensus of Otago University students that *Falus* was blasphemously sanctimonious.

of taste, and claimed that if the work offended a large number of students then it was offensive.<sup>21</sup> But the furore did not end there. The Executive called for the distributors to be brought "to justice."<sup>22</sup>

Of course this is not the whole truth: the act of banning and burning a single copy of the publication causes it to become an issue of free speech, and more expressly an issue of academic and literary freedom. A member of the Student Executive, Mr Kearney, also claimed that the broadsheet had little literary merit, but the Executive was split over whether the magazine was obscene or merely filthy.<sup>23</sup> R. J. Abbott, the Union manager, banned any publication bearing the name *Falus* from the University Union, and a powerful motion was put in place in order to distance the OUSA from the

publication: “The Education Sub-committee, fully conscious of the need to foster by our actions and attitudes an awareness by the public of the urgent need for increased expenditure on higher education, deplores the immaturity, irresponsibility and obscenity of those engaged in the compiling publication and distribution of *Falus*, because of the inestimable damage it will have on our public relations.”<sup>24</sup> OUSA was concerned about the reaction of the larger community to such an article. They were not willing to sacrifice their public relations for an anti-establishment broadsheet.<sup>25</sup> *Falus*, however, was obviously directed at a student audience, and there is no evidence to suggest that the hand-distributed publication was ever distributed outside the University campus—though it may have been read outside the campus.

No member of the committee was willing to obtain a legal opinion regarding a definition for the word “obscene,” so *Falus* was unlikely ever to have faced legal action. If it had, it is unlikely that the broadsheet would ever have been charged with obscenity and been formally banned as obscene by the government, or the appropriate department of that government. The authors, editors and distributors of *Falus* were never referred to the Council, and were subject only to discipline at the hands of the OUSA Student Executive.

It may have been a personal vendetta by the Student Executive against the writers of *Falus* that ignited the issue of obscenity. The first publication of 1967 parodied the Executive, labelling the bursaries the Executive received from the government “too generous.”<sup>26</sup> The writers claimed to have noticed that members of the OUSA Executive were far better dressed than other students, and that four members had “shiny cars,” eight had tape-recorders, and nine had “radiograms.”<sup>27</sup> They then suggested that their bursaries be reduced to bring the members of the Executive down to the average student’s level.<sup>28</sup> *Falus* then joked that they had not yet received a reply from the Executive about the recommendation, as Intellectual Affairs Representative Bruce Robertson and OUSA President Barry Finnigan “were still swearing as *Falus*

went to press!”<sup>29</sup> This was a parody of the Student Executive, not intending to cause any serious offence, just aiming to have a joke at the Student Executive’s expense, but it seems that the Executive may have taken the joke badly.

The *Falus* contributors ignored the ban on their publication, and continued to produce and distribute the broadsheet. As might be expected, the next issue of *Falus* reacted furiously to the ban and to the burning of its first issue. The editorial labelled the actions as “Chanting, self righteous, outraged hypocrisy.” The broadsheet made no attempt to lighten its controversial content, or to rectify the anger directed towards it:

So we upset their narrow little world: their brilliant little masquerade, but when after first sight we had our fill, it palled. [...] Double-standard sexual morality is still tacitly accepted: a world in which they try desperately to hide their animal nature behind a façade of prostituted religious celibacy or some other artificial creation.<sup>30</sup>

The editors of *Falus* took its burning very seriously.

There were, of course, those students around the Otago University campus who saw *Falus* as an expression of academic and literary freedom, as a bastion for free speech. In the same issue as the *Critic* article, “*Falus* 1967: Obscene or Just Dirty?,” another article discussed *Falus*’s obscenity. Written by Ian Kelly and Euan Grigor, it was entitled “Not So Bad.”<sup>31</sup> The article claimed that *Falus* was “socially justified,” that it expressed the feelings of discontent that many students had experienced.<sup>32</sup> But the article came with a disclaimer: the editors of *Critic* were afraid of, or did not want to be associated with condoning a broadsheet towards which the majority, or at least the most vocal majority, of students had expressed revulsion. The article expressly stated that the work was their own, “submitting their views [...] as private students,” they did not express the opinions of the *Critic* staff.<sup>33</sup> The article, however, made some important points: “To begin at the beginning. The title [of *Falus*] is symbolic—so what?

The invocation is crude, but no cruder than most innuendos in Capping Book, column seven of past Critics, and scripts of past Capping Concerts.”<sup>34</sup> This may have been the case, and surely past capping shows and books had aimed to be as offensive as possible, so why had the Student Executive chosen to pick upon *Falus*? It was these authors’ belief that poems such as “Uncle Sam Our Help in Ages Past,” resembled James K. Baxter’s “A Bucket of Blood for a Dollar.” They believed that any poem with a style similar to that of the present Burns Fellow must have literary merit.<sup>35</sup> Kelly and Grigor suggested that “With its biting sarcasm maintained at a consistently high level, could anyone deny its intelligence?”<sup>36</sup> Kelly and Grigor then offered a commentary on a poem by “Jumping Jack” that had appeared in the first issue of *Falus*:

    this quantum is a packet of energy  
    charging  
    like Quixote with his pole stuck out  
    right for a poke  
    scratching his scrotum.<sup>37</sup>

This poem displays, according to Grigor and Kelly, “mental desires, impressions and abstractions.”<sup>38</sup> “Let us have honesty!” the authors appeal; “To represent mental processes in language any less strong than this would be negating the truth. Without this strength of language, truth would not be served, the poem would be useless. As it stands, it honestly represents a significant portion of our lives.”<sup>39</sup> The contributors to *Falus* were not alone in their opinions about free speech.

In the 18 April issue of *Critic*, issued just before the events that developed into the burning of *Falus*, James K. Baxter published an article entitled “The Problem of Censorship,” derived from a talk Baxter gave to the New Zealand Federation of University Women.<sup>40</sup> The article outlined the benefits of self-censorship over state-imposed censorship and claimed that newspapers should not be censored heavily simply because “reporters are shallow-minded,

prone to sensationalism, and working to a deadline.”<sup>41</sup> At the same time, Baxter felt that university students, “who might be considered to have a greater intellectual discrimination” than those who were not university educated, should be able to self-censor rather than to “be so tenderly protected [against obscenity], and against their will.”<sup>42</sup> Baxter claimed that many books considered “obscene,” were “the deepest and best written one is likely to study.”<sup>43</sup> He also claimed that when a work was deemed offensive, it was usually “one’s own weak digestion that is causing the trouble,” rather than the work itself.<sup>44</sup> So the issue of censorship was alive and well before the furore that involved *Falus*.

Baxter also wrote an article in *Falus* later that year, after the publication was burned, in which he asserted the right to use words that were deemed obscene or “forbidden,” such as “fuck, cunt or prick—which are exact sexual words—and then, somewhat less ‘forbidden’—shit, piss, arse—which are counted as vulgarities, because they refer to the excretory functions rather than the sexual functions.”<sup>45</sup> The outward fear of these vulgarities, he believed, was rooted in the fear of the sexual subconscious, of which women were particularly afraid; what he labelled the “Puritan devil,” a new guise for an ancient fertility god.<sup>46</sup> Baxter claimed that the motivation of the person who burned *Falus* was not that she found it offensive, but was “a magical act to prevent her ever getting pregnant.”<sup>47</sup> This seems a little overinterpreted: it is most likely that Ms Isaacs did, at the time, find *Falus* obscene, and had every right to feel this way. In fact, in the next issue of *Falus*, Lorraine Isaacs wrote a letter to the editor (a rare occurrence within the pages of *Falus*), expressing her thanks for Mr. Baxter for “bringing to [her] attention what he believes to be the unconscious reason (i.e. fear of pregnancy) for [her] burning of the first issue of *Falus*.”<sup>48</sup> Ms. Isaacs was of course being sarcastic, she thought that perhaps the people who had criticised her and offered various reasons as to why she burned the first issue of *Falus* might be interested in her own theory: that she burned the first issue because she *did* in fact find it obscene and that it *did* have little literary merit.<sup>49</sup> The only

reason she had not burned subsequent articles was not that they were not obscene, but because she had seen “faint glimmerings of literary merit which [she felt] should be nurtured by the editor.”<sup>50</sup> She ended her correspondence with: “Maybe [I have not burned subsequent articles] because I no longer fear becoming pregnant. Only God and Mr. Baxter apparently know.”<sup>51</sup>

By today’s standards, *Falus* could never be considered overtly obscene: infantile and vulgar, perhaps, but not necessarily offensive, and most definitely not “obscene.” In the context of the 60s, however, an era vastly different with regard to what was offensive in language, the language used in *Falus* was incredibly strong, and it is not surprising that the publication caused a commotion. But the events also show a marked change in views about language: at the same time that audiences were being segregated by sex to attend film screenings, university students were pushing the boundaries of what language was acceptable. In the end the debate became a moment in passing, and as quickly as it had erupted, it fizzled out. *Falus* continued its production through to 1968. The rights of freedom of speech for which *Falus* fought, and the staunch political stances it took, especially with regard to the mixed flatting debacle of the same era, became an important part of the broadsheet’s identity, and thus *Falus* became an active voice for Otago University students, especially when the supposedly “official organ” of Otago University students, *Critic*, did not appear to be doing its job on important student issues. When the issue of mixed flatting flared up, it was *Falus*, rather than *Critic*, that was in touch with the values of the student populace. It was *Falus* that published James K. Baxter’s “A Small Ode on Mixed Flatting”:

O Dr Williams you were right  
To shove the lovers out of sight;  
Now they can wander half the night  
Through coffee house and street and park  
And fidget in the dripping dark.<sup>52</sup>



While *Critic* was attempting to justify the University Council's action, *Falus*, with the majority of Students and the OUSA Student Executive now behind them, were ready to utilise the radical nature of the broadsheet *Falus* for the purposes of the greater student body.<sup>53</sup> The language it used became inconsequential: the times were changing, and *Falus* aided the pushing of boundaries that were taboo.

### Notes

1. Barbara Brookes, "A Germaine Moment," forthcoming in *Disputed Pasts: Histories for a New Century*, ed. T. Ballantyne and B. Moloughney (Dunedin, Otago University Press, 2006), 1.

2. Brookes, 8.

3. Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago* (Dunedin: Otago University Students' Association, 1990), 103.

4. *Falus*, April 1967, 1:3.

5. Elworthy, 103.

6. "Falus 1967: Obscene or Just Dirty?," *Critic*, 2 May 1967, 3.

7. *Falus*, April 1967, 1:1.

8. Elworthy, 103.

9. *Falus*, 1967, 1:1.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid, 2.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Steaming John, "The Pansies," *Falus*, 1967, 1:2.

17. *Falus*, 1967, 1:3.

18. Elworthy, 104.

19. Ibid.

20. "Falus 1967: Obscene or Just Dirty?," *Critic*, 2 May 1967, 3.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. *Falus*, 1967, 1:3.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. *Falus*, 1967, 2:1.
31. Euan Grigor and Ian Kelly, "Not So Bad," *Critic*, 2 May 1967, 3.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. *Falus*, 1967, 1:1. Baxter returned for his second term as the Robert Burns Writing Fellow in 1967, and first held it the previous year (1966).
36. Grigor and Kelly, *Critic*, 3.
37. *Falus*, 1967, 1:1.
38. Grigor and Kelly, *Critic*, 3.
39. Ibid.
40. James K Baxter, "The Problem of Censorship," *Critic*, 18 April 1967, 6.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid, 6–7.
44. Ibid, 7.
45. James K Baxter, "The Puritan Devil," *Falus*, 1967, 4:2.
46. Ibid.
47. Brookes, 8.
48. Lorraine Isaacs, "A Letter to the Editor!?" *Falus*, 1967, 5:2.
49. Ibid. Mr. Lance Beath also expressed the idea that she had paranoid tendencies and ideas of grandeur.
50. Isaacs, *Falus*, 2.

51. Ibid.

52. James K Baxter, "A Small Ode on Mixed Flatting," *Falus*, August 1967, 3.

53. Charles Draper, "Editorial," *Critic*, 20 June 1967, 3.



## A Cover and Cliques

Ben Hutchison

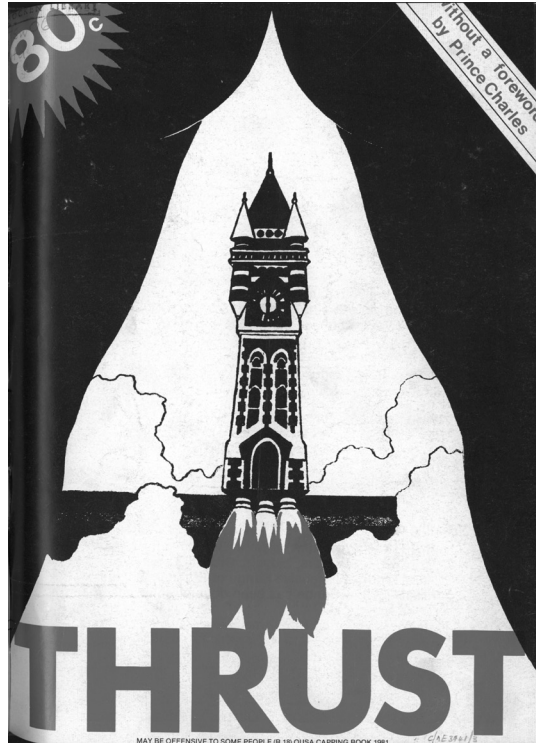
Capping has always been an auspicious occasion for a university student. Although the focal time for student partying is now Orientation, aspects of Capping as it was years ago still exist. There is still the procession, Capping Show, gigs, food eating contests and of course graduation, but one thing seems to have disappeared: the annual Capping magazine. Its function was to print the names of all the students who were going to graduate during the Capping period. Yet that seemed to be a by-product, as the magazine seemed more focused on crude humour, often at the expense of minorities. For some, however, the release of the Capping magazine was an eagerly anticipated event, and many took great delight in flicking through the pages of raw humour.

The magazine was well known Dunedin-wide and had a circulation of 30,000 copies.<sup>1</sup> Students received a generous commission from selling copies, and as a result the magazine reached all corners of New Zealand. As the magazine's release coincided with University holidays, students would take copies back to their hometowns to sell. Any profits were donated to charity. Yet the 1981 version of the Capping magazine entitled *Thrust* seemed to push the boundaries just a little too far and was possibly the source of the magazine's slow demise fifteen years later. What initially began as an issue of censorship snowballed into a debacle involving suspicion, secret agendas, self-promotion, a potential loss of \$46,000 from the Capping budget, a high court injunction, and seven members of OUSA facing the ordeal of a no-confidence

motion. It was a controversy in which the issue of censorship often acted as a guise for those pushing other agendas.

The initial point of contention was the magazine's cover, depicting a phallic clock tower between a woman's legs. Whilst some thought the content of the magazine was "tame," others claimed it was a "degrading and dehumanising portrayal of women."<sup>2</sup> Along with the increased female presence on campus came an active feminist clique who rallied against the cover. Their outrage was immediate, and graffiti reading "this is violent rape" was soon splashed across the *Thrust* advertising posters. Phyllis Comerford was associated with this left, feminist element and believed the magazine "had become an extremely sexist, offensive, unintelligent and poorly compiled load of rubbish."<sup>3</sup> Consequently many would-be contributors were deterred from submitting material and the magazine degenerated into a "pathetic embarrassment."<sup>4</sup> She launched a petition to ban the cover with the intention that it "would be presented to the OUSA with the aim of 'toning down' future Capping magazines."<sup>5</sup> A poster entitled "counter thrust" was produced, which *Thrust* editor Nigel Poole claimed was "just as bad as the capping magazine cover."<sup>6</sup> It is uncertain what exactly was depicted on the rival poster.

While the cover caused the most offence, some of the magazine's contents was also potentially offensive, including dirty limericks, "the porno writer's aptitude test"<sup>7</sup> and the mock-advertisement for *Deep Heat* depicting a female breast being branded with an iron.<sup>8</sup> The latter item and the cover drew particular criticism from the New Zealand Universities Student's Association (NZUSA) Women's Rights Officer, Denise Black. Black's main concern was the depiction of "nude and fairly nude females, which seems to reinforce the attitude that the women's role is that of sexual gratification."<sup>9</sup> She claimed the magazine lacked any originality in humour and described the OUSA members who produced the magazine as "insensitive, anti-feminist and inhumane."<sup>10</sup> Letters from students to *Critic* voiced shame and disgust at being associated with the Capping magazine, while the only public approval for



The cover that thrust too far and caused heated debate for years to come.

the magazine came from the Capping Committee, who were responsible for the publication, and for Capping events in general.

The Capping Committee received two formal letters of complaint about the magazine. The Finance Committee of the Dunedin City Council complained regarding the sale of the magazine outside local schools. The Capping Committee quickly promised that this practice would be discontinued in future years and that perpetrators would face “disciplinary action.”<sup>11</sup> NZUSA also condemned “the magazine as sexist and pornographic, thereby contravening NZUSA policy.”<sup>12</sup> The letter from NZUSA

was particularly scathing. It echoed Black's argument, voicing its disgust at the portrayal of women as "sexual commodities" and thought the mock-advertisement smacked of "the 'Nazi mentality' which found pleasure in female mutilation."<sup>13</sup> NZUSA sought assurances that such material would not appear in an OUSA publication again. The Capping Committee's response to NZUSA was one of bemusement at their "attempt to adopt the role of censor when one of its basic principles is freedom of speech!" They were also alarmed by NZUSA's "overreaction.... to a publication which is nothing more than a humorous Capping magazine in content and spirit."<sup>14</sup>

Mike Greenslade was a Capping Committee member for a number of years before becoming Capping Controller in 1982. Greenslade described the 1981 OUSA Executive Committee as "the first Capping unfriendly Exec."<sup>15</sup> He believed this disregard for tradition followed soon after the ever popular and zany Paul Gourlie left after two years as OUSA president.<sup>16</sup> The printing of the controversial cover of *Thrust* represented a symbolic backlash by the Capping Committee against the OUSA forcing a right of censorship on the material and therefore taking editorial control away from the editor. Because the cover was printed in full colour, it went elsewhere to be printed. This was a covert procedure, not only were the Exec unaware of the image to be depicted on the cover, but most of the Capping Committee did not know in advance either. The cover was then attached at the last minute to avoid the censors' scrutiny.<sup>17</sup> It was an act of defiance and an attempt to demonstrate how campus was deviating from tradition and becoming more socially conscious and politically correct. It was a "reaction to the political controls being exerted by [a] minority group over the larger more politically apathetic student body."<sup>18</sup> In typical Capping-style humour it was tasteless, and there was also a sense of mischief from those involved by using shock tactics to see what kind of response it would provoke. In straying from tradition themselves by printing the more provocative cover, the Capping Committee was suggesting that the feminist clique were placing

controls on freedom of speech. This control was easily exerted under the guise of "Student Association policy."<sup>19</sup>

The magazine *Thrust*, however, was not the only element of Capping to be scrutinized. The festivities in general received criticism from the Exec and some students also. At various events such as the Steins and Hops, well known for the prolific consumption of beer, Social Convener M. Grimmet reported from the event acts of "absolute animal behaviour," vandalism, fights and groups of students "who seemed interested only in becoming drunk."<sup>20</sup> Claims were being made from the progressive clique that this booze culture was alienating some groups of students from attending these events, and Grimmet stated there would be a review as to whether some of these events would continue.

Thus the main conflict on campus rested, with those supporting freedom of speech clashing with those against racism and sexism. Underlying this whole argument were the strongly opposed groups and cliques of women versus men, trendy left versus conservative right or, in emotive terms, "wowsers" versus "the drink piss clique."<sup>21</sup> Many of these groups overlapped, and generally shared the same political viewpoint on most student issues; however, there were "bigots on both sides" and on this matter the two core groups remained fundamentally divided.<sup>22</sup> The Capping Committee was dominated by this stereotypically male, law and commerce, beer-drinking culture. Greenslade was part of this clique and his desire to uphold some of these traditions was evident when "executive tried to pass a motion deploring the lack of women on the Capping Committee. Greenslade foiled this by walking out at which point the meeting lacked a quorum."<sup>23</sup>

The next year the debate over Capping again reared its ugly head. OUSA made clear that they supported an anti-racism campaign promoted by NZUSA, "in response to approaches from Dunedin people, the OUSA condemned the propagation of racism and sexism in its publications and urged the Capping Magazine editor in particular to comply with this."<sup>24</sup> Apparently the Exec issued its statement with some reluctance, as members did not want



to impose censorship on the magazine but “did not [want to] have material in it which contradicted the stand we take on the issues of racism and sexism.”<sup>25</sup> The article concluded that “capping is a time of ... laughing at ourselves.... It is not a time to make money at the expense of others in our community.”<sup>26</sup> However, the Student Representative Council (SRC) rejected OUSA’s stance, believing that OUSA did not have the prerogative to censor the magazine.

This is where the controversy becomes complicated and some background information is required. The SRC had been set up in 1981 to ensure that the OUSA accurately represented students as a whole. Due to student apathy towards student politics, claims were often made that certain cliques were taking over OUSA and using it for their own personal benefit. The SRC acted as a policy maker to ensure that the OUSA acted in the students’ best interests.<sup>27</sup>

The first SRC took place on 15 July 1981 and was quite controversial in itself. The meeting highlighted the changing face of the University during the 1980s, and the reluctance by some students to accept this change. One of SRC’s first tasks was to assign a Women’s Rights Officer (WRO) a new position within the Exec. Some traditionalists saw this position as “ridiculous and sexist,” and thought it was ironic that this progressive clique was demanding a WRO when it was against gender-specific roles in OUSA.<sup>28</sup> A vociferous group of men at the back of the hall nominated Nigel Poole, *Thrust* editor, for the position. “Nigel (quite correctly) assumed that his candidacy would lack appeal as far as the women were concerned and decided to direct his spiel to the chauvinist gallery at the back of the room. These gentlemen seemed ineffably amused at the idea of a male WRO and cheered Nigel on for all they were worth.”<sup>29</sup> Feminist student Jane Warwood, obviously more suited to the job, competed with Poole for the position. Addressing the crowd she remained “unmoved” by the noise coming from the back of the hall, and then endured taunting questions from the floor, such as: “Don’t you think it’s hypocritical for women to burn their bras and then ask for support?”<sup>30</sup> Reason prevailed and, with the hundred or so votes cast, Warwood was elected as the first WRO at Otago by a slim ten votes.

According to SRC constitution it was in students' best interest to have a free and independent press. Yet because OUSA was championing NZUSA's policy of renouncing racism and sexism, OUSA was also obliged to expurgate such material from its capping magazine. No matter which way OUSA responded to the magazine, the Exec knew it would face disagreement.

Supporters of censorship put a motion to the SRC in April 1982 aiming to grant the Exec the power to censor on grounds of defamation. Yet the SRC was not persuaded and limited the OUSA's power to censor on legal grounds. OUSA's 1982 Welfare Officer Phyllis Comerford, who had led the petition to ban the cover of *Thrust* the previous year, was not content with this decision and retaliated by putting a motion "That the SRC put on record its opposition to sexist and racist material in OUSA publications."<sup>31</sup> This motion was unsuccessful because the SRC was unwilling to take a stance on the issue. The Exec, therefore, could only censor an OUSA publication on legal, not social or moral grounds.

Personal views among the members of the Exec were also divided, and emerged through the pages of *Critic*. Barry Thinn, OUSA's 1982 Vice-President asked, "how can we not move to ensure that a magazine which bears the name of our association, takes note of our policy?"<sup>32</sup> In response to Thinn's article President Allan Harvey wrote, "control of material within an association publication is the privilege of an editor, and before an election of an editor appropriate questions with regards to his personal viewpoint of racist and sexist materials should illicit [*sic*] the kind of control Mr Thinn requires."<sup>33</sup> He signed his letter, "Allan Harvey, President, Supporter of a free and independent press."<sup>34</sup>

Mike Greenslade, as Capping Controller in 1982, was well aware of the criticism Capping festivities received from some circles the previous year, he opted to make the 1982 magazine less controversial and thus put more focus on the events and festivities. The Capping Committee appointed an eccentric character, Karl Gillies, as editor in 1982, a man who apparently had a background in black witchcraft and bore the distinctive

feature of a pentagon tattooed on his forehead.<sup>35</sup> Predictably, the 1982 version of the Capping Magazine entitled *Rigor Mortis* was a stark contrast to *Thrust*. The humour in *Rigor Mortis* was black, its subject matter consumed with blood and gore, and it was less political than *Thrust*. In keeping with this dark theme a disclaimer reads, “the archaeologist K. Gillies is missing presumed dead,” and his editorial has been “published posthumously.”<sup>36</sup> *Rigor Mortis* could almost pass as a comic book, it contained an emphasis on illustrations, only occasionally touching on adult themes, whereas *Thrust* was what could now be compared to as a 1980s version of a male interest magazine in terms of subject matter.

To avoid conflict, Greenslade took deliberate action to have no feminist or racial issues appearing in the magazine, and the lack of nudity is a noticeable difference from the previous year. At the time there seemed to be difficulty in distinguishing between what was a sexual joke and what was a sexist one.<sup>37</sup> A provision was made in the editorial to include a few of these “sexual jokes,” “this is sexual humour; a different and neutral category of disgusting filth, not to be confused or identified with sexism.”<sup>38</sup> The 1982 Capping magazine achieved its goal and created little controversy; a comment in *Critic* best sums up the response: “it was a refreshing change to read *Rigor Mortis*.... no more filthy innuendos and blatantly [*sic*] sexist smut.”<sup>39</sup> Some traditionalists though, claimed *Rigor Mortis* was “dreadful” in terms of quality of humour and “one of the worst” Capping magazines to be published.<sup>40</sup>

Towards the end of 1982, Phyllis Comerford stood for president of the OUSA on an anti-Capping magazine platform, and became the first woman to be elected OUSA President. At the start of her tenure the following year, she made it clear that there were to be some changes regarding Capping festivities: “there are people who won’t like some of the things which I intend to do.... Changes to the structure of Capping for example.”<sup>41</sup> She showed concern that Capping tended to alienate some students, “Capping should be a festival for all students. But at the moment it’s a very small privileged sector who enjoy it.... to the detriment of other students,

particularly women.... I want to extend it [Capping] to a lot more students.”<sup>42</sup> Comerford was a supporter of freedom of speech but believed with freedom comes responsibility. In the case of the Capping magazine material was being published to the detriment of female students and she claimed that it was creating a barrier between male and female students.<sup>43</sup>

Editors for the Capping magazine in 1983, Pat Kenelly and Steve Sharrat, were appointed on the basis of their commitment to OUSA not to publish any racist or sexist material in the magazine.<sup>44</sup> Some students were suspicious of, or even despised, the self-referenced “boys”<sup>45</sup> who made up the Capping Committee. Kenelly and Sharrat reverted to the traditional style of Capping magazine, because the 1982 *Rigor Mortis* version proved more difficult to sell and, since the majority of the magazine’s readers were not students, the different format and comic-style cover proved less identifiable. The lack of crude humour did nothing for its popularity either. Meanwhile Phyllis Comerford’s instrumental role in establishing a women’s room on campus only exacerbated the tension between these two groups.

OUSA always seemed keen to champion an NZUSA campaign. 1983 was no different. This time the cause was rape awareness. Comerford felt “OUSA would be guilty of gross hypocrisy and insensitivity if it were to publish the Capping magazine after devoting itself to an attack on the issues of sexism” as part of the rape awareness campaign.<sup>46</sup> There is a sense of irony in the fact that articles appearing as part of this campaign in *Critic* could be deemed as offensive as the material printed in Capping magazines. An article written from an extreme feminist viewpoint claimed that all men acted collectively to propagate the oppression and rape of women, “We must be clear – ALL men are potential rapists.”<sup>47</sup> The article drew immediate criticism of “male bashing” in the next issue.

However, with comments such as the Capping magazine “continues to be void of humour and full of offense [*sic*],”<sup>48</sup> Kenelly and Sharrat were going to have a tough battle producing magazine

to suit everyone's tastes. This did not seem to be their intention and by reverting to tradition Kenelly and Sharrat also reverted to the controversy that plagued *Thrust*. Their commitment to OUSA policy was brought into question when the magazine was sent to the printer, who claimed to be uneasy about setting some of the objectionable material and notified OUSA. Comerford took a sample of this material to the next Exec meeting, at which Kenelly was present. When questioned about a contentious poem, Kenelly responded that, although it was sent to the printer, there was no intention to publish it. OUSA decided it could no longer trust the magazine's editors, so a sub-committee of six Exec members was formed to analyse the magazine and ensure that it was free of racist and sexist material. At the sub-committee meeting "six graphics and approximately 20 jokes were determined to be racist or sexist."<sup>49</sup> The offensive material from the magazine was censored. Division between the Exec and the Capping Committee was reinforced when a Capping committee representative present at the meeting showed his dissatisfaction and declared, "Exec is just a pack of women and homos."<sup>50</sup>

Dean Tobin, a former OUSA vice-President, and politically motivated student, launched a petition and obtained enough signatures to force a special SRC meeting because OUSA's actions had contravened SRC policy regarding censorship by censoring on moral rather than legal grounds. The purpose of the meeting was to debate a motion of no confidence in the Exec. However, once a date for the meeting was set, and students began to realise the possible ramifications of the meeting, two groups of outsiders with other agendas began spreading anti-Exec propaganda. One group was led by unsuccessful candidates who had stood in the previous year's OUSA elections. They aimed to spread dissent against the Exec in the hope they would be overthrown, forcing another election. The other group were students who jumped on the bandwagon feeling "that it was a good thing to oppose Exec and that it was an even better thing to know nothing of the issues involved."<sup>51</sup>

The special SRC meeting took place on 22 April and battle lines were drawn for a fiery confrontation between left and right. Tobin was “quite confident” the motion would be passed. He believed there were a lot of people who were angered that the Capping magazine had changed from the success it once was, and many students were annoyed that the Exec had “deliberately ignored” them and censored the magazine despite their pleas to the contrary.<sup>52</sup> Tobin believed that “the SRC that was called would have thrown the entire Executive out” however this was not to be as the meeting soon learned that the Exec had that morning, obtained a High Court injunction which prevented any discussion on the motion of confidence.<sup>53</sup> The order was sought to prevent the OUSA from losing \$46,000 from the Capping budget and was granted on the grounds “that without an executive, no wages could be paid, capping could not proceed and OUSA would grind to a halt.”<sup>54</sup> The injunction was to expire on 30 May, after the Capping festivities, when OUSA’s major financial commitments had passed. OUSA received quite a backlash, with claims that the Exec was being undemocratic, and with the more cynical critics claiming that student leaders were more concerned with self-preservation than with justice. The injunction, apparently at a cost of \$1,000 came too late for anyone to oppose it, and because no opposition possessed the financial resources of the OUSA to fight the injunction, there was little they could do about it.

With discussion of the no-confidence motion foreclosed, the meeting then moved a motion of censure. Amongst Tobin’s charges were that “Exec had acted contrary to policy on censorship, and had censored the mag on grounds other than those of legality,” and that OUSA had acted with financial impropriety.<sup>55</sup> The Exec had also acted in breach of the constitution again by limiting the perks of those involved in Capping, when full control of Capping was meant to lie with the Capping Controller. Many emotive arguments were made, the common refrain being that the OUSA’s sole purpose was to carry out the wishes of the students and that any action contrary to this was an abuse of power.<sup>56</sup> Counter

arguments were that the Exec stood by the “anti-racism and anti-sexism policies on which they had been elected,” that the Exec *were* carrying out SRC policy and that students were not really informed on the issues. Comerford proclaimed the injunction was necessary “to stop ‘a pack of bloody fuckwits’ acting without knowing the consequences,”<sup>57</sup> a heated comment that Comerford soon regretted and one she quickly withdrew. She recalled, “I clearly lost my temper at the verbal abuse I was receiving.”<sup>58</sup> The motion was carried, the Exec censured.

Although the Exec was reprimanded, the 1983 Capping magazine *D.T.* was still censored. A note from the editors at the start of the magazine revealed their discontent: “Pity about the arseholes that inflict their minority viewpoint on the rest of us.”<sup>59</sup> It went on to explain that they were living in a time where there were people prepared to back any cause and that “you cannot attack minorities and expect to get away with it.”<sup>60</sup> It seemed the scrutiny and censoring of the Capping magazine would continue for years to come. Although censoring of the magazine had always occurred, prior to the 1981 magazine *Thrust* only the “odd expletive” was censored, whereas from *D.T.* onwards, entire jokes and articles were being deleted.<sup>61</sup>

The drawn-out controversy that began with an offensive Capping magazine cover was finally due to come to an end at the second SRC meeting. By then the issue had become much wider and there was much more at stake than a simple Capping magazine. During this saga many other issues had been tacked onto the debate, including the existence of the new women’s room, and the demise of OUSA. However the issue of chief concern was whether OUSA represented all students. Because the 30 May injunction deadline had passed, the motion of no confidence could be debated. In the days leading up to the meeting the two factions plastered their propaganda around campus. Anti-Exec posters urged students to vote for a return to democracy and emphasised Comerford’s derogatory remark. Exec posters took a more positive stand: “WHO IS IT THAT takes a stand on racism and sexism?

Saved \$46,000 of your fees and Capping? Follows the advice of the Association lawyer on constitutional matters?” They also resorted to parody to make their point with “D.T. fuck off home,” using Dean Tobin’s initials which are coincidentally the same as the title of the 1983 Capping magazine, and playing off a phrase from the movie *E.T.*<sup>62</sup> The controversy and publicity drew 800 students to the Union Hall to hear debate on the motion of confidence.

Meanwhile, the motion had been amended by Tobin to limit a ruling of confidence to only seven members of the Exec, those who voted for censoring. He “was never confident the rescheduled motion was going to be successful” primarily because of the amount of time that had lapsed between the two special SRC meetings, the impetus from students to find no-confidence in the Exec members had diminished.<sup>63</sup> The Capping period had passed, between the two meetings there had been holidays and students were beginning to focus on upcoming exams. The amount of smokers present at the second meeting was also an ominous sign for Tobin as he believed the left clique seemed to have a higher tendency to smoke cigarettes than the right.<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless Tobin proceeded with his arguments that the Exec should have consulted the SRC regarding the censorship issue, that they had neglected to represent the student body and only represented “small activist minority groups.”<sup>65</sup> Amongst pro-Exec arguments were that Comerford was “easily” the best OUSA President of the past three years; Chairman Liam Kennedy pointed out that the Exec had shown wisdom in applying for an injunction even though they knew doing so would be political suicide; Comerford argued that “technical” breaches of the constitution were relatively common and pointed out a “technical” breach Tobin had supported when he held a position on the Exec the previous year. Tobin was allowed to sum up prematurely but because a number of the Exec still wanted to speak, the crowd reacted negatively and proceeded to hiss Tobin and some made Nazi salutes. Speaking over a restless crowd, he ended his summation with a plea, “Do not be swayed for or against because



the President is female,”<sup>66</sup> angering the feminists in the crowd even more. When the motion was put to a vote, the students affirmed their confidence in the Exec by over 100 votes.

The second motion, to close the women’s room, was then debated while many students filed out. Prior to the meeting, apparently, Tobin made the mistake of inadvertently signing a petition in support of the women’s room: an act the feminists took great pleasure in using against him and one of which he has no memory.<sup>67</sup> He made it clear at the time that he supported the existence of a women’s room, but did not believe it was serving its intended purpose as a room for all women. Instead, he argued, it had become a room for a minority group of hard-line feminists. Because of this he thought it should be discontinued. Tobin believed the “average woman student would have felt more excluded from the women’s room” than excluded from Capping festivities.<sup>68</sup> Michael Laws, a right clique traditionalist and political activist, argued for its closure and accused the feminists in the crowd of “sexual apartheid.”<sup>69</sup> A “male student” stated that the women’s room was “innocuous” due to its open-door policy. Stamping authority on the argument for the women’s room was ex-Women’s Rights Officer, Lizzy Harrison, who argued that “women are not equal to men” and asked, “where are our female lecturers?” She also attempted to rebuff sentiment that only staunch feminists were using the room by claiming, “No woman has been turned away from the room. Women have been put off by men using the words ‘lesbian’ and ‘radical’ to create fear and mistrust.”<sup>70</sup> Liam Kennedy attempted to point out debate over the women’s room was extraneous as even if the motion was carried, the OUSA could not act on it as the room was owned by the University and it was “extremely unlikely that they would withdraw permission for women to use the room.”<sup>71</sup> In the end, the motion that the SRC “directs the Exec to close the women’s room” was soundly defeated, by slightly over 100 votes.<sup>72</sup>

With one final straightforward, housekeeping motion left to be debated it seemed the meeting would end modestly. This was not to be. One of the last to speak was Tobin, who spoke of “equal

opportunities through privileges,” a formulation that some saw as a personal attack on two of the feminists at the meeting. Tobin proceeded to name a feminist who faced court action for writing graffiti about Tobin. The chairman told Tobin he could not use her name as she escaped conviction, but Tobin debated the chair’s ruling, as her name had not been suppressed by the court.<sup>73</sup> The chairman ordered that Tobin’s comments were irrelevant and that he must speak only on the motion. When Tobin reverted to his prior argument he was ordered to leave the meeting to cries of “Out! Out!” Contrary to other reports, Tobin asserts he did not later share drinks with his opposition at a nearby bar.<sup>74</sup>

Capping magazines over the next few years often displayed their loathing towards the censorship enforced on them by OUSA through editorials. There was even a case where an apology appears at the start of the magazine for two particular jokes contained in its material. The last Capping magazine, aptly entitled *Exit*, was published in 1997. By then it had languished into a year book reflecting on the previous year, with no sign of any discriminatory or provocative material. Whether the events of the early 1980s were a starting point for the magazine’s slow demise is uncertain. Possibly with the intensified scrutiny it received it became less popular, as it struggled to express its point. Either way, it does not seem to be missed.

Although many of the Capping festivities have died, the University tradition of Capping still stirs the odd controversy. As recently as 2004 the Capping Show was criticised by queer student collective UniQ for sketches that they believed were anti-gay. The attitude now seems to be that Capping is an equal opportunities discriminator. Although Rob McCann, the show’s producer, was apologetic to those offended, he responded that, “The Capping show aims to be irreverent and take pot shots at all groups. . . . Many groups end up getting offended. . . .”<sup>75</sup>

The early 1980s ushered in a very different atmosphere for student relations on campus, during a very active period for student politics at Otago. Although student apathy towards student politics

was typically rife, for those involved the events could become quite dramatic, as would-be politicians would train and “flex their political muscles in the safety of the University.”<sup>76</sup> What began as an issue concerning censorship and freedom of speech spiralled into a very complex issue involving two fundamentally divided groups and whether or not their Exec could represent them, and the student body as a whole, effectively. There was an increasing number of female students attending University, amidst declining but still lingering chauvinist attitudes towards women. Many women rightly believed they were not receiving a fair deal and they felt the need for their own room, free from the glare of men. The fact that it was only in 1983 that the first female president of OUSA was elected, highlights the shifts of atmosphere on campus. The roles of both male and female were shifting and it seems both sexes were unsure of their slightly different roles and how to relate to one another. What had once been the domains of the male, the medicine and law faculties, politics and even student life in general, were now having to include a larger number of female students. By 1985 half of the student population at Otago was female.<sup>77</sup> It appears that when public attention was on the University, during Capping, the booze culture being presented was no longer considered a proper representation of the University student. What this representation was to be was a difficult question, one that even the students’ own association, OUSA, struggled to answer. But clearly a different tone for Capping had to be established to encompass the wider student community. Women made their views heard in this process and one result was the gradual demise of provocative material in the Capping magazine, and eventually the demise of the magazine itself.

## Notes

1. *Otago Daily Times*, 1 May 1981, 5. However, according to Mike Greenslade this figure seems somewhat modest and he estimates its circulation reached 50,000 to 60,000 copies in some years during his time at Otago University.

2. *Critic*, issue 13, 1981, 3.

3. Email correspondence, Phyllis Comerford, 7 May 2005.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Otago Daily Times*, 1 May 1981, 5.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Thrust*, 1981 Capping magazine, 6

8. *Ibid.*, 47.

9. *Critic*, Issue 13, 1981, 3.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Critic*, Issue 11, 1981, 13.

13. *Ibid.*, 2. The letter to OUSA was reproduced here.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.

16. Gourlie was voted in by a huge margin in 1980 although he was popular with the majority of campus he was strongly disliked by feminists.

17. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 30 March 2005.

18. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Critic*, Issue 15, 1981, 3.

21. These were terms used by other to describe their opposition. A “wowser” was someone acting like a killjoy, whereas someone from “the drink piss clique” was thought to be insensitive and a traditionalist in terms of the University.

22. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.

23. Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago* (Dunedin: Otago University Students’ Association, 1990), 194.

24. *Critic*, Issue 11, 1982, 11.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Interview Mike Greenslade 30 March 2005
28. Elworthy, 190; interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.
29. *Critic*, Issue 17, 1981, 3.
30. Ibid.
31. *Critic*, 21 June, 1983, 6.
32. *Critic*, Issue 11, 1982, 11. The Vice-President position in 1982 was jointly held with Dean Tobin.
33. *Critic*, Issue 12, 14 June 1982, 3.
34. Ibid.
35. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.
36. *Rigor Mortis*, 1982 Capping magazine, 5.
37. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.
38. *Rigor Mortis*, 1982 Capping magazine, 3.
39. *Critic*, 14 June 1982, 3.
40. Interview, Dean Tobin, 4 May 2005.
41. *Critic*, 22 February 1983, 6.
42. Ibid.
43. Email correspondence, Phyllis Comerford, 7 May 2005.
44. *Critic*, 3 May 1983, 2.
45. Ibid.
46. *Critic*, 19 April 1983, 2.
47. Ibid, 11.
48. *Critic*, 19 April 1982, 2.
49. *Critic*, 3 May 1983, 2
50. Ibid.
51. *Critic*, 3 May 1983, 5. This was a comment made by reporter Brian O'Brien, who had known affiliations with the left clique.
52. Interview, Dean Tobin, 4 May 2005.
53. Ibid; *Critic*, 3 May 1983, 5.
54. Elworthy, 195.
55. *Critic*, 3 May 1983, 5.
56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.
58. Email correspondence, Phyllis Comerford.
59. *D.T.*, 1983 Capping magazine, 1.
60. Ibid.
61. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.
62. *Critic*, 28 June 1983, 5.
63. Interview, Dean Tobin, 4 May 2005.
64. Ibid.
65. *Critic*, 28 June 1983, 5.
66. Ibid.
67. Interview, Dean Tobin, 4 May 2005.
68. Ibid.
69. *Critic*, 28 June 1983, 5.
70. Ibid, 6.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid, 5.
73. Interview, Dean Tobin, 4 May 2005.
74. Ibid.
75. *Critic*, Issue 12, 2004, 7.
76. Interview, Mike Greenslade, 12 April 2005.
77. Elworthy, 213.





## **Dangerous Dependency: Military Funding of Academic Research**

Martin Fisher

The controversy over the military funding of academic research at the University of Otago in 1972 was itself a part of a much larger controversy taking place most notably in Parliament and in the nation's universities but also at dinner tables all over New Zealand. This controversy concerned New Zealand's role in the world. Should it aggressively keep "enemies" from its borders through what was called "forward defence" and follow the lead of its larger allies, or should it adopt a more humanitarian stance? It was against this backdrop of social change and protests that Professor Jim Flynn, and later, students at Otago, called for the regulation of all military funding of academic research at the university. In a time of social upheaval surely the university was the last bastion of rationality, of a truly critical social institution which would not shy away from confronting the militarist doctrines of the Cold War superpowers. It was this fundamental tenet—that the university was a politically neutral and, above all, critical social institution—which lay at the heart of the controversy over military funding.

Professor Flynn arrived in New Zealand from the United States (US) in 1963 to lecture at the University of Canterbury and in 1967 was appointed foundation professor of Political Studies at the University of Otago. He spent his sabbatical in 1971 primarily in Washington DC but he also taught a history course at the University of Maryland. Included in his leave report was an essay entitled, "The Price of Power – Universities in America



and N.Z.,” which he urged all Senate and Council members to read. Professor Flynn’s thesis was simple, “any social institution which amasses great power is going to be held accountable for its exercise.” While the essay’s main focus was on the power of universities to bar the lower classes from social advance it also discussed the responsibility of the University in regulating its military funding of academic research so that its role as a politically neutral institution would not be corrupted.<sup>2</sup> Flynn believed that universities had directly alienated students by accepting funding from the military for weapons research, chemical and biological warfare, communications systems and even espionage. “Shooting wars that fall short of wars of national defence, and the escalation of military strength just can not be considered non-partisan issues,” Flynn declared. “Any university that becomes committed on these issues as an institution forfeits the one defence (however feeble) the university has against those who would make it a partisan battlefield, the tradition of the political neutrality of the university.”<sup>3</sup> Flynn asserted that universities could not shy away from their important social roles but had to confront their own deficiencies, one of which was certainly their ties to the military industrial complex through the military funding of academic research.

Professor Flynn’s stance on military funding was also influenced by his year spent in Washington DC as well as at the University of Maryland. In 1970, neighboring Kent State University had been the scene of a large student protest against the Vietnam War in which four students died, a result of violent state police action by the National Guard. During the first anniversary of this tragedy, students and protesters at the University of Maryland shut down the university for three days and then again for one day during a protest against the Reserve Officer Training Corps. While the protests certainly were disruptive, Professor Flynn made clear that far more problematic were the weekly bomb threats the History Department was receiving. These bomb threats had no political purpose; they always came fifteen minutes before a quiz, explicitly for the purpose of canceling that quiz. As Flynn explained, “this sort

of harassment makes it ridiculously easy for as few as ten students to cripple a whole university – there is no defence against it except retaining a minimal consensus on the part of students in favour of the university as an institution.”<sup>4</sup> These constant bomb threats were a clear indication that the university, at least at that time in America, had been seriously eroded as a functioning, neutral and critical social institution. Professor Flynn believed that the military funding of academic research in the US had contributed to this erosion.

Upon returning from Maryland in 1972 Professor Flynn advocated that universities, specifically the University of Otago, should tell governments “that they will not as institutions do military work.”<sup>5</sup> At the meeting of the University of Otago Senate on 6 April 1972, Professor Flynn put forward the following resolution for consideration:

Any proposal to accept funds or equipment offered by a military department of a foreign government should not be acted upon until it has been considered by Council after receiving the advice of Senate. Any decision on such an issue should be published. The onus for drawing attention to the fact that it is a military department which is offering such support should lie with the academic head of the academic department concerned. It shall also be the responsibility of the head of the academic department to draw attention to any special condition such as confidentiality involved in a contract from a military source.<sup>6</sup>

Flynn made an impressive presentation and supplied ample evidence of cases in America where military funding had corrupted the University’s social role. Many Senate members, including Desmond Sawyer and Raewyn Dalziel, vocally supported his motion. Professor Richard Dowden spoke up at Senate and offered a practical instance of his own research which only strengthened Jim’s point.<sup>7</sup> While Flynn’s motion was not part of a strictly anti-

US military stance it nonetheless reflected the attitude of many students at Otago who opposed American militarism. This was not a result of the students' opposition strictly to American militarism but a result of the high degree of American influence on New Zealand foreign policy as well as the visible presence of the American military within the country.

This opposition to American foreign policy was especially evident in 1972 when every edition of the *Critic* had published at least one piece criticizing the American presence in Vietnam. These critiques varied from a lengthy four page, in-depth analysis, "Indochina Report," to an article made up of news reports from various official agencies, "Nixon Screws Vietnam."<sup>8</sup> Nearly half of the editorials for 1972 concentrated on the war in Vietnam and specifically demanded that Nixon admit defeat and withdraw advisers as well as troops. *Critic* was representative of other student publications around the country. The New Zealand University Students Association (NZUSA) displayed vociferous opposition to the US position in Vietnam and made known its concern with the National Military Service Act of 1961. The mood at the NZUSA Council was described "as one of anger at Nixon's recent escalatory moves and this resulted in a call being put forward on the side of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in its drive toward total victory." While a few universities dissented from supporting wholeheartedly an NLF victory, a call for complete troop withdrawal was unanimous.<sup>9</sup> The universities' position was not extremely controversial at the time as the Marshall government had already removed all its troops and Nixon was quickly undertaking the Vietnamization of the war effort. The call for complete troop withdrawal nonetheless affirmed the atmosphere that had pervaded not only the *Critic* but universities around the country.

Opposition to the American presence was also felt in Wellington, at Victoria University. In late February 1972, Victoria announced that it would not accept military funds from a foreign government without the prior published approval of its Council. Indeed the case of Victoria University was far more serious than that at Otago,

for in Dunedin the primary concern was a moral one while in Wellington there were fears of a breach of sovereignty. One of the Council members at Victoria, Mr. W. J. Scott, commented at the time that US intelligence, through New Zealand intelligence, could be keeping a close watch on what was happening at the university. The Council emphasized that it was aware of previous instances where military organizations had attempted to influence the work and policies of universities and it “deplored such efforts.”<sup>10</sup>

Students at the University of Canterbury echoed the sentiments of those at Otago and Victoria by opposing the American Satellite Tracking system at Mt. John on University of Canterbury land near Tekapo. Negotiations for the base had begun in September 1966 and an agreement was signed on 8 July 1968 in which the University of Canterbury leased the land for the base to the US Air Force (USAF). The station was completed in early 1972 at which time the University of Canterbury student newspaper, *Canta*, exposed the base’s military function. The Arts Faculty at Canterbury requested that the University return the land now being used to the Government and the NZUSA passed a resolution objecting to Mt. John and the “extent to which the NZ public had been misinformed.” The Canterbury University Students Association expressed its total opposition to the use of University land for military purposes.<sup>11</sup>

*Critic* itself organized protests against the US Tracking System at Mt. John and published a series of informative articles relating to it as well as to the wider American military presence in New Zealand. As early as the first issue of 1972, *Critic* proclaimed that “New Zealand students have been protesting since the late sixties over the intrusion of the American military complex into New Zealand’s virgin territory. Omega and Woodbourne have been landmarks of this protest and Mt. John will be next.”<sup>12</sup> These protests led to a disagreement between the local media and the student media at the University of Otago. While the local media highlighted the increasing disorder which the anti-war protests were creating, *Critic* concentrated on advancing its progressive agenda over what it claimed was a biased media.

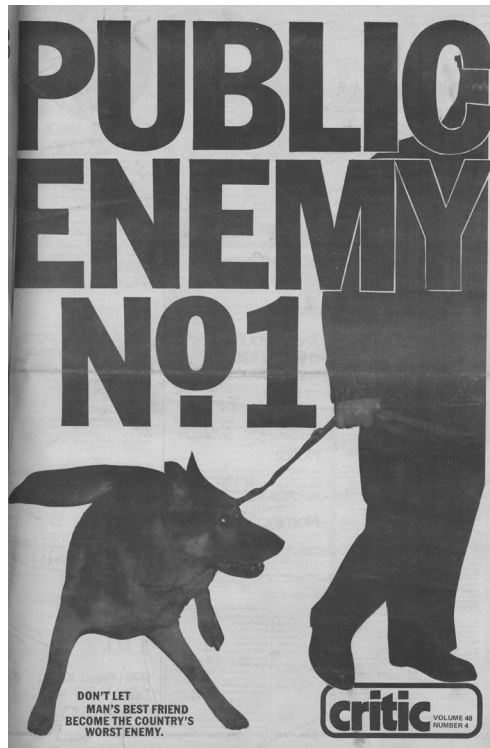
*Critic's* oppositional stance was most evident in contrast to the reactions of both the *Evening Star* and the *Otago Daily Times (ODT)* to the demonstrations against the Mt. John Tracking Station in March 1972. In what seemed like an apology for police brutality, the *Evening Star* claimed that police had used dogs only once and that only two protesters were bitten by the dogs. In a somewhat partial conclusion to the article, the head of the Timaru police district, Mr. Deans, was quoted as saying, "They acted like animals, so animals were used."<sup>13</sup> The headline of the same day's *ODT* read "Stronger Laws Urged By Police," evoking the destructive nature of the protests at Mt. John. Describing the protesters as a "rabble-rousing bunch 300 strong and bent on destruction," the *ODT* supported Inspector L. E. Bardwell's call to change laws so that protesters could be charged en masse. "As the laws stands [*sic*], we have to identify individuals and charge with specific actions." Indeed this law is responsible for the basic due process that any citizen of a liberal democracy would receive if faced with a charge by its Court. The *ODT* concluded by reporting that the demonstrations were "getting more violent all the time."<sup>14</sup>

*Critic* responded by claiming in that same week:

Many people were bitten by dogs, one in the groin. Several were kicked by policemen. Very few stones were thrown, and these were directed at the installation, not at policemen. No policemen were injured. The police and the news media combined in a distortion of facts. The crowd became a rock-throwing mob, Molotov cocktails were 'discovered', everyone had come to do 'hostile acts'.<sup>15</sup>

While the editorials of the *Critic* exaggerate somewhat when labeling the legal authorities as well as the local media as "fascist" and decrying the demonstration at Mt. John as a "massacre," their point is nonetheless valid. If only the police were unharmed and there were no reports of serious damage to the base, then one can understand why the writers at the *Critic* might accuse the police and the news media of combining to distort facts.

Alistair Mackay, writing in *Critic*, pointed out that though it was clear that Mt. John was not susceptible to a nuclear attack and that it was not of vital military significance, “as a foreign military base on New Zealand soil, it is an affront to the dignity of New Zealand as a sovereign nation. And as a United States tracking station, its very presence undeniably binds New Zealand into the US global warmaking machine.” As one visitor from the University



“Don’t Let Man’s Best Friend Become the Country’s Worst Enemy”—Cover of *Critic* criticizing police action against Otago protestors at Mt. John. (*Critic*, 21 March 1972)

of Otago explained to *Critic*, the US Tracking Station made him feel “like a foreigner in his own land.”<sup>16</sup> It was this sovereignty that Canterbury was forfeiting by constantly giving in to the demands of US Defense contractors. Indeed Canterbury University was the most favoured recipient of US military funds at the time, having received on average \$NZ 24,000 per year since 1962, and so the wider academic community naturally believed that Canterbury feared the loss of future contracts.<sup>17</sup> Mackay went on to state that “a major reason for the Mt. John demo was the fact that the Mt. John station was on University of Canterbury land and is operating with university approval, thereby posing a threat to the integrity of the University.” He related the demonstrations at Mt. John to the question of military aid at the University of Otago and implored the Senate to regulate not only foreign military funding but also New Zealand military aid.<sup>18</sup>

While protests in the Senate against Professor Flynn’s motion came from those Departments that had been receiving funding from the US military, most notably the Epidemiology Department, in the Council, a different kind of objection was also raised by Student Representative Mike Dunlop. He enquired as to why the recommendation had not included New Zealand military departments and referred to the case of American universities where military funding of academic research had caused problems. Dunlop was supported by the other OUSA representative on Council, Mr. P. R. Dickson, but was opposed by the Mayor, Mr. Barnes. Barnes claimed that there was “no need to be concerned about the New Zealand Government or the British Government or any other Commonwealth government” and saw no reason whatsoever for removing the word foreign.<sup>19</sup>

At Victoria University a similar disagreement had been raised when a Council member argued that no research at any time should be financed by the military of any country. He referred to the corrupting influence of the United States military in American universities both during and after World War II. He seemed to be a lone voice and in the end Victoria’s Council opted for the

regulation of strictly *foreign* military funding. Whether this had to do with Victoria's location in the capital is not known, but at Otago the New Zealand Military was not let off quite so easily. Dickson, despite the opposition of the Mayor, said he was suspicious about the resolution and claimed that "I will support the recommendation if the word 'foreign' is removed."<sup>20</sup>

This insistence on the inclusion of the New Zealand military in the resolution reflected a trend that had developed at Otago in the late 1960s. The strong critique which *Falus* made of the Holyoake government is an early example of the opposition that students at Otago displayed towards the New Zealand government and its policies. By 1972 this opposition had become overt and Hugh Maclean, editor of *Critic*, elucidated the protest movements' frustration with the New Zealand government, "If you [referring to Speaker of the House, A. E. Allen] want to get the protest movement off your back, remove the causes of protest. Combat racism by halting the Springbok tour. Help the cause of world peace by withdrawing support from the U.S. aggression in Indo-China... Strike at racial, sexual and class inequalities."<sup>21</sup> The New Zealand government's outdated thinking had clearly become a target of the anti-war movement both within and outside universities.

While Flynn's motion had supported the regulation of strictly *foreign* military funding, he did not oppose Dunlop's motion to include the New Zealand Military. Professor Flynn had initially attempted to clarify the matter by proposing to the Senate that the word "foreign" was intended to mean any government other than the New Zealand government because it was felt that there was no history of problems arising from grants from that source.<sup>22</sup> In the end the Council did in fact heed the advice of Mike Dunlop, and the final copy of the resolution deleted the word "foreign." The first sentence of the resolution that was to be released to the press now read: "Any proposal to accept funds or equipment offered by a military department of a government should not be acted upon until it has been considered by Council after receiving the advice of Senate."<sup>23</sup> The resolution affirmed the notion that there could



be no differentiation between local and foreign military funding in terms of the moral corruption that it could create.

Six months after the passage of the resolution in Senate, Professor Dowden presented a proposal to accept funds for research from the US Naval Research Laboratory. While Professor Dowden had supported Professor Flynn's call for a regulation of military funding for research because of his own prior experience, his request only six months later to accept funds from the US Navy showed the difficulty of appraising all militarily-based funding for research as inherently linked to global militarism, whether it be American or Soviet based. Indeed Dowden's research, in gathering information from satellites, had no practical applications with regard to the Omega project, Polaris submarines or any sort communication system of military significance.<sup>24</sup>

The research focused on the study of Very Low Frequency (VLF) radio propagation and emission in the earth's magnetosphere, and electrons precipitated in the earth's atmosphere by these radio signals. The VLF radio system could not be kept secret or private and could be monitored anywhere in the world. There was no restriction on publication of results derived from the research and the experiments, while funded by the US Navy, had already been initiated by the Physics Department and thus were under its strict control. As a result of these conditions, the Committee, which included Professor Flynn, approved the military funding for Dowden's research.<sup>25</sup>

While the high level of political involvement that existed in the 1970s did encourage and support just causes, at times the highly politicized atmosphere created problems where none existed. Dowden would later remark that, "Over two thousand years ago, Archimedes was funded by the military, because that was the only way to get it."<sup>26</sup> Indeed the majority of grants did come from foreign countries and specifically, their militaries. Thus the idea of obtaining military grants also had a very utilitarian purpose, perhaps even outweighing the moral indignation that might come with the corrupting influence of military funding. This was the

case for the research being undertaken by Professor Dowden. Even though a Committee established to consider Dowden's proposal to accept funds from the US Naval Research Laboratory had approved of the military grant, journalists from Dunedin as well as Auckland still inquired about the research Dowden was undertaking. Each journalist that would arrive would request to be taken to the base where the VLF radio waves were being studied and would be surprised by Dowden's compliance. As the journalists soon found out, there was no sinister American presence at the base, just pure research.

The resolution which was passed in 1972 relating to the regulation of military funding served its purpose in the case of Dowden's research, but its use gradually faded as funding from the military seemed to dry up. The formal procedure which was instituted as a result of Flynn's motion was no longer in use by the late 1980s. In 2004 an enquiry from the Physics Department for funding from the American military did not even reach Senate because of the unanimous anti-war sentiment that existed at the university as well as around the country as a result of the Second Iraq War. In this case the formal procedure was not needed.<sup>27</sup>

Today, the New Zealand military does not currently provide any funding for research at the University of Otago, but two foreign governments do provide military funding for research. While one remains confidential the other grant is provided by the Asian Office of Aerospace Research and Development (AOARD) to Professor Hans van Ditmarsch of the Computer Science Department. The AOARD is a subsidiary of the US Air Force Research Lab, an organization which is "responsible for all the research activities in the US Air Force in leading the discovery, development, and integration of affordable war fighting technologies for the aerospace force."<sup>28</sup> Professor Ditmarsch's research focuses on Cryptology, the science of encryption. While cryptology is used for more than just encryption codes for missile defense, his research would not have been funded unless it could be applied to Air Force needs. Nonetheless his research and his findings will not

remain confidential and as such it can be deemed pure research. By no means does the US Air Force have any influence over the University of Otago as a consequence of this grant. Despite the fact that the funding was not referred to Senate or Council before being accepted, Professor Ditmarsch's research, while funded by the US Air Force, is still under his control and can be considered pure research.

What the interest in military funding really showed was the political character that was thriving in 1972, primarily kept alive by NZ's participation in the war in Vietnam but also increasingly by protests against organizations such as Halt All Rugby Tours (HART) which criticized South Africa and the New Zealand's government's official position towards apartheid. Flynn had remarked in the "The Price of Power" that "there has been a sharp rise in the moral demands young people place upon political institutions and political leaders. The war in Vietnam has been credited with rendering youth more sensitive to the sins of American society."<sup>29</sup> The independent foreign policy of Helen Clark and the Labour government is largely a result of the progress made during the Vietnam War. The anti-war movement's use of a nationalist critique to challenge the most basic principles underpinning New Zealand's security was so successful that one of the two major political parties, Labour, embraced its premises, and opposed the American war in Iraq.<sup>30</sup> While this change in government foreign policy can be seen as a positive and progressive historical development it has also inadvertently led to a more apathetic state of student political consciousness.

The controversy over the military funding of academic research can then be seen as a product of its time. In the early 1970s New Zealand society was undergoing a fundamental social change and the University of Otago was an integral part of that change. The highly politicized atmosphere that existed in 1972 had fostered the conditions for concerns over the military funding of academic research. While Victoria University regulated only *foreign* military funding and the University of Canterbury openly leased land to

the US for an Air Force base, the University of Otago regulated all of the funding it received from the military. Those at *Critic*, the Student Executive and staff like Professor Flynn successfully defended the university's role as a politically neutral critic. That role today is in question. While the Cold War is over, the War on Terror, according to its architects, has only begun. Without procedures in place to regulate military funding the university could still become a partisan battlefield and perhaps worst of all, be tied into the "global warmarking machine" that so many feared in 1972. The only solution will be concerted action by both staff and students to protect our universities from the corrupting influence of militarism in all its forms.

## Notes

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## **Strip Mining: The Fight for a Faculty**

Karin Warnaar

In the basement of the University of Otago's Computer Science department stands a machine for testing minerals. Useless to the heritage building's current occupants, the machine was too big to move when the Department of Mineral Technology departed Otago for Auckland University at the end of 1986 and remains as a legacy of 115 years of mining education. The proud tradition of the Otago School of Mines, once regarded as one of the world's best, ended when New Zealand's central tertiary funding body, the University Grants Committee, decreed that mining education belonged in a school of engineering, and would henceforth be taught in Auckland.

The story of the demise of the School of Mines (in the form of the mineral technology department) involves some highly charged national rivalries—north versus south, central versus devolved decision-making. It is not one of the university's finer moments, not just because the battle was lost, but because it caused considerable bitterness within the institution and the community, much of it unfolding publicly. In short, this is the story of how Otago tried to save one department and why it could not be saved.

On Saturday, 20 October 1984, the *Otago Daily Times* broke the news that the University of Otago's Department of Mineral Technology was to be transferred to Auckland University's School of Engineering.<sup>1</sup> The University Grants Committee (UGC) had finally written to Otago's Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Robin Irvine, to advise him formally of the decision which had been prefigured

two years earlier by a recommendation in a UGC-commissioned Discussion Paper on Engineering.<sup>2</sup>

The newspaper reported that the UGC determined that the Otago course required upgrading, and that “training should be at an existing school of engineering, preferably Auckland.” Robin Irvine described the move “as a severe blow to the University and the province.” Little information was provided about how the move would affect staff and students. By twenty-first century standards, it seems like a remarkably inept piece of public relations, and equally inept journalism. The bald statement that training should be at a school of engineering neglected to adequately explain exactly why this was so, and the lack of elaboration would remain a source of frustration throughout the next year.

If the Vice-Chancellor’s response that “Obviously, we are very disappointed,” seemed rather an understatement, others around the university were more outspoken. Within days, the president-elect of the Otago University Students’ Association, Liam Kennedy, was promising protest letters to members of Parliament and relevant government officials.<sup>3</sup> Mineral technology students were also quick to write to the minister, complaining that they had not been consulted, that Auckland was overcrowded, and that only one of the twelve-member committee investigating the department was a mining specialist.<sup>4</sup> The department’s chairman, Associate Professor Michael Buckenham, also criticised the lack of consultation, but was equally critical of the university’s “lack of a long-term commitment ... to the discipline.”<sup>5</sup> When the University Council met a few days later, Mr. P. H. Fowler expressed the concerns of many southerners, describing the move as “another threat of centralisation.”<sup>6</sup> The acting mayor of Dunedin, Mr. G. Christie, echoed such sentiments, considering “any move to take away a department with such status on the national and international scene, must have an effect on the community as a whole.”<sup>7</sup>

A perceptive *Otago Daily Times* editorial at the time summarised several of the key complaints, observing that the department’s

“transfer to Auckland ... means that Auckland is strengthened further, and Otago is again the loser,” and that Otago should be alarmed by the “gap in technological teaching.” The editorial also, quite rightly, pointed out that despite its reputation, mining was “often a department of uncertain viability” and that the closure had “an historical inevitability.”<sup>8</sup> The UGC’s review of the department’s future took a couple of years, but as the newspaper’s comments acknowledged, the closure of the Otago School of Mining and Metallurgy had been coming for almost a century, throughout which time the discipline repelled northern takeovers at depressingly frequent intervals.

A brief history of the Otago School of Mines goes back as far as the founding of the University of Otago in 1869.<sup>9</sup> At the time, with only Otago and Canterbury College offering tertiary education, the field was clear for these institutions to develop specialist professional training. Otago’s founders had proposed a school of mines almost from the first, and geology was part of its inaugural natural science course. By the time the universities were in operation in the 1870s, a University of New Zealand had taken over the granting of degrees and was imposing a nation-wide collegial structure. Around the same time, central government caught up with the need for university-level mining training. Canterbury and Otago both put in bids for the funding which was to be made available, and Otago’s comparatively expensive but more comprehensive bid won. The university quickly appointed George Ulrich, a highly qualified mining engineer, to head the new Otago School of Mines when it began teaching in 1879.

Within twenty years, the situation had changed. The North Island had overtaken the South in population and economic importance, and the university colleges in the northern centres were both keen to add the kudos of a special (professional) school. It was obvious that the country could not sustain duplication, so much debate centred on sharing these special schools throughout the country. Otago felt the pressure because it had both medicine and mining, but was not interested in ceding such prizes. Its



medical school still needed much nurturing, but Ulrich's School of Mines had quickly developed an international reputation, and Otago determined to hang onto both.

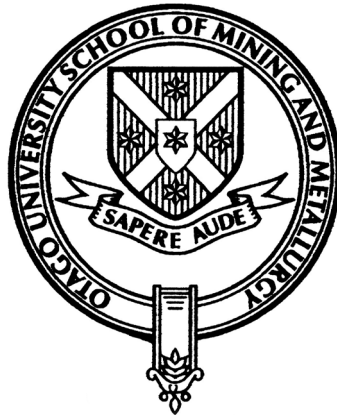
Central government repeatedly attempted to cut funding to Otago's mining programme at least once a decade, most famously in 1904, when, reputation notwithstanding, the course was particularly vulnerable. Ulrich was dead, student numbers were falling, the miners were taught in a leaky and rotting building known as the "Tin Shed" because that was essentially what it was. New Zealand's Premier, Richard Seddon, supported Auckland's bid to take over mining education but there was uproar in the south, with students and communities alike campaigning strongly. The school survived the takeover bid, to be upgraded and rehoused during the next phase of campus expansion in a purpose-designed bluestone building. Auckland went ahead with its own school of mines, which lasted only a few years. A remnant survived in New Zealand's second school of engineering.

The pattern of challenge and survival for the Otago School of Mines continued over the next sixty years. Mining rolls rose and fell, as wars and economic conditions affected the numbers of young men available, and interested in training for, careers in the international mineral industry. The industry and its opportunities changed, with technology, with the discovery of some resources and the exhaustion of others, and with the political changes in mineral-rich countries of the declining British Empire. Otago continually struggled to obtain enough funding to maintain the School's high international repute.

Throughout all this waxing and waning, Otago's miners (as mining school students and graduates were known) maintained the school's credit and added to the life of the university. New Zealand's first Rhodes Scholar, J. Allan Thomson, was a miner; subsequent graduates went onto positions of considerable responsibility within the world's mineral and metallurgical industries. They forged a strong class identity, but they were very much part of the Otago campus, competing with the dentists at rugby and drinking, and

chasing (and often marrying) the Home Science students. Their holiday work in the mines, alongside “hard men,” developed a “rough, hard-drinking image” but they also became ambassadors for New Zealand, “a kind of Foreign Legion” whose contributions “to the development of other countries (Malaysia especially) are something in which the University can take pride.”<sup>10</sup> They were equally proud of their connection to the university, and to each other, and their networks held up well as the decades passed.

The 1950s proved another turning point for the School of Mines. Its roll peaked in 1959 with 82 students, impressive for such a small school in a total student body of 2543.<sup>11</sup> But in the wider scheme of things, the days of the University of New Zealand were drawing to a close as numbers grew and the constituent colleges and universities became more independent. The Minister of Education appointed a Committee on New Zealand Universities, headed by a distinguished British academic, Sir David Hughes Parry, to consider how the country’s university system should develop. Among its many recommendations, Parry’s report emphasised the need for more scientists and technologists, and a very different national structure.<sup>12</sup>



The Otago School of Mines had its own strong identity, even to its own insignia.

By 1961, new legislation had created an autonomous University of Otago ostensibly independent, especially in curriculum matters. In practice, New Zealand's new university system was, as Morrell noted in Otago's centennial history, a kind of "federal structure, with a strong central power."<sup>13</sup> The particular power enjoyed by the revised University Grants Committee was distribution of the national budget, which was to be done by making grants in five-year blocks.

Otago and the UGC found themselves in conflict soon after the first block grants were announced, a dispute severe enough to warrant mention by both Morrell and the UGC's official historian—though the accounts are slightly at odds.<sup>14</sup> Previously, the special (professional) schools—notably Otago's medical and dental schools—had been able to argue directly with government for their funding. Now, once the block grants were announced, Otago had to make choices between its faculties. Few universities foresaw how much numbers would grow in the prosperous early 1960s: Otago's roll nearly doubled, but its allocation was fixed. Attempts to gain additional funds for the medical school were rejected by the UGC, who felt that the university simply had "not yet mastered the problems involved in deciding how to allocate one global sum between its special schools and the rest of the university."<sup>15</sup>

With finances as limited as they were, it was once more beyond the university's capacity to maintain all its departments and schools as it might have liked. It became clear that the mining school's needs could not be adequately met from the quinquennial grant, and the metallurgical side of the course was phased out. The Otago School of Mines and Metallurgy as such ceased to exist in 1966. From its ashes arose the Department of Mineral Technology, within the Faculty of Science.

No sooner had the new department been created than the challenges to its existence began afresh. In 1968, the University asked how could Otago best serve the needs of New Zealand's mineral industry, and concluded this could best be done by

continuing with its mineral technology department and course. Pending retirements weakened the department's senior staffing in 1976, and the question was again raised, with the same conclusion. When Associate Professor Buckenham took up the departmental chair in 1977, the situation had not improved: rolls were still erratic but mostly falling; it was hard to recruit appropriately qualified staff; the laboratories were cramped and the equipment ageing. On the positive side, the graduates were still rated well by the industry internationally, and had no trouble finding work, and the department had a small but steady stream of consulting contracts which reflected its relevance and the reputation of the academic staff. But it was an uphill battle and in 1980 Buckenham told the University Council that he thought mineral technology might fare better if it were moved north, pointing out that even in its current incarnation, it had survived three recent internal committees on its future.<sup>16</sup>

Nor did the national economic climate offer any great hope for greater stability for Otago's mineral technology department. The last years of the National government led by Sir Robert Muldoon were about to culminate in the currency crisis of 1984 that triggered an early election and brought about the fourth Labour Government. New Zealand's mining industry was in the doldrums—it is significant that only the Waikato coalfields were cited in the arguments for transfer—and metal prices overseas were in a slump, as Buckenham reported on his return from sabbatical overseas.<sup>17</sup>

Higher education in general suffered in the later 1970s and 1980s. Otago's newspaper clipping books feature page after page of headlines about cutbacks, budget deficits, jobs not being filled, declining student numbers. Even Otago's crown jewel, the medical school, was under threat. The UGC was mindful that its system, set up nearly two decades years before, was not meeting the needs of the future, and in 1979, as government departments do, it commissioned a review, to cover issues of finance, staffing, library resources, and of specific disciplines that were facing major

change, such as management, social work and, critically for Otago, engineering.

Within three years, the committee, chaired by the Canterbury Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bert Brownlie, had delivered its reports. Co-authored by Brownlie and two businessmen, John Fair and John Ingram, the engineering paper included detailed assessments of Massey University's faculty of technology's "strong student support and satisfactory staffing, equipment and computing resources" and Otago's contribution to New Zealand technological education. "Because of mechanisation," opined the authors, "and the difficulties of mining the deep seams of the Waikato, the engineering component of mineral technology will become of greater importance." The Otago department's links with geology were obviously beneficial, but "the department lacks any interaction with engineering departments and does not enjoy the resources and facilities these could provide." The paper concluded with four recommendations, number four being that "the Otago University department of mineral technology should be strengthened, particularly by being associated with an engineering faculty."<sup>18</sup>

The next step was yet another committee. Comprising members of the engineering faculties of Auckland and Canterbury, academics from Otago and Massey, and representatives of the State Coal Mines, the Ministry of Energy, and engineering bodies, one of its first actions was ominously to resolve "that their initial efforts should be in considering the future of the Department of Mineral Technology."<sup>19</sup> UGC chairman Johns promptly wrote to the three universities concerned requesting a proposal detailing its requirements to establish or upgrade and support mining education, covering buildings, equipment, staffing, and relationships with other departments.

The universities responded, the committee considered, and the process dragged on throughout 1983, having "an unsettling effect on staff and students, both in Mineral Technology and other departments which enjoy an interdisciplinary relationship with

Mineral Technology.”<sup>20</sup> At Otago, those departments included Geology, Geography, Chemistry, Physics, and Surveying, a department created in the late 1950s to cater for greater specialisation than that which could be offered by the School of Mines. Geology was particularly concerned, as it drew many of its first-year students from those aspiring to go on to a degree in mineral technology.

None of Otago’s responses and proposals and arguments were to be enough for the committee, which decided in late 1983 that the factor of overriding importance was the placement of mining within a school of engineering, a decision which would take another year to announce. UGC chairman Alan Johns took the recommendation to the Minister of Education, Merv Wellington, in April 1984, but the political sensitivities of moving a department from the South Island to the North were such that a meeting was scheduled with other interested ministers. Before this meeting could take place, the National Government fell, so it had to wait until the new Labour administration was in place.<sup>21</sup>

Back in Otago, the university was aware that the decision was imminent and was doing its utmost to continue to influence the decision, assuming the decision could be influenced by any of the Otago supporters. Robin Irvine reported to Council his understanding that discussions were at ministerial level, and repeated Otago’s strong belief that the department should stay. The *Otago Daily Times* detailed his thorough refutation of the underlying arguments that mining belonged with engineering: that the lack of the support of an engineering school was not hampering the development of able and versatile graduates; that not all mining graduates needed to be engineering specialists; that relocation would adversely affect other departments and cause hardship for the staff affected.<sup>22</sup> The politicking continued after the change of government, and the university had new parliamentary defenders in discussions with the UGC, but despite being “pressed ... almost to the point of rudeness,” by Otago’s Labour Party advocates, Alan Johns was firm.<sup>23</sup> The UGC had made its decision, and Otago’s

loss would be Auckland's gain.

Finally the announcement itself was made, its timing in the middle of exams adding to the list of grievances for Otago's supporters. The week of media rumination which followed made way for plans of attack. On the university's part, these were how to facilitate the necessary evil that was giving up a part of its heritage, without losing anything more than was absolutely necessary. On the OUSA's part, the plans formed were on how to turn back the tide.

New OUSA president Liam Kennedy's legal background and oratory skills (he held a university blue for debating) were perfect for such a campaign, and he clearly took it very seriously. He briefed the executive, met with the mineral technology students, wrote letters to local bodies to appeal to regional pride, and kept the general student population informed through his Presidential column in *Critic*. By May 1985, the hard work began to pay off, and the politicians and Wellington bureaucrats were on the defensive.

The UGC and the Minister initially made no public response to the constant criticism of the decision from the various interested parties but suddenly, mid-year, they found their way to Dunedin. Minister of Education Russell Marshall visited campus, largely to tell the students it was too late to stop the transfer. Later that week, the new UGC chairman, David Hall, gave the May graduation address at Otago. His topic of institutional autonomy could only too easily be interpreted as an attempt to deflect the responsibility for an unpopular decision back onto the university. Liam Kennedy was decidedly unimpressed, and vented eloquently to the *Otago Daily Times*, who gave almost as much space to his criticism of the "offensive and inappropriate" content of the speech as to the speech itself.<sup>24</sup>

Kennedy was not alone in his continuing challenges to the decision. Associate Professor Buckenham reported back to the university administration that the relocation was "proving more disruptive and time-consuming than the University Grants Committee predicted."<sup>25</sup> The New Zealand Students' Association

formally condemned the UGC decision, and Auckland student representatives expressed their concern about the pressure a new department would put on the already overcrowded university.<sup>26</sup>

The decision was becoming ever more political. Otago's Labour MPs were keen for it to be understood they had done what little they could to retain the faculty at Otago.<sup>27</sup> The Canterbury National MP Ruth Richardson claimed that National had vetoed the UGC decision while in office: through the barrage, the UGC held firm in its insistence that there would be no review but, as Liam Kennedy pointed out in *Critic*, the issue seemed "a lot more important to people in Dunedin than it may to bureaucrats in Wellington."<sup>28</sup>

Pressure was also mounting within the University, and at the June meeting of Council, members discussed a fat stack of documents including a detailed report from the Vice-Chancellor reaffirming that Otago really did want to keep mineral technology, subject to suitable financing. The new information about the cost of the move and the steady disapproval had made it clear that the university needed to be seen to be fighting a central government decision to allow Auckland asset-stripping—as it was still seen in some quarters, however unfair that perception might have been. Council duly supported the Vice-Chancellor's call for a review, citing among its reasons the escalating costs associated with the move, and the lack of adequate information about the Otago course's deficiencies and so the university hierarchy publicly joined the OUSA, various MPs and several local and regional councils in opposing the move and vehemently rejecting the arguments in its favour. After an Official Information request for all documents relating to the decision-making process, the *Otago Daily Times* blithely reported that the decision to shift the course had not been unanimous, and that at least one member of the committee felt that a move would cause as many problems as it would solve.<sup>29</sup> Marshall, meanwhile, was still under constant pressure in parliament, defending the insistence on increasing the engineering component of the course, defending Auckland's ability to contain



the costs of the move, rejecting the National contention that the decision had been vetoed, or could be.<sup>30</sup>

Faced with the request to meet a deputation from the University of Otago, the minister instructed Hall to initiate a review, news which was “greeted with delight by interested groups in Dunedin”—and perhaps by a little smugness as well.<sup>31</sup> But the OUSA’s education officer, Michael Tull, spoke for many when he noted “the danger exists that the review is being held merely to rubber-stamp the U.G.C. decision and to enable the government to say that they have had a ‘proper’ review and hence Otago cannot complain.”<sup>32</sup> That this was a very real possibility might be seen from the short reporting time—just a month—given to the review committee to reassess what such a school required, why Otago did not meet the requirements, why the course needed to be part of a school of engineering, and why Auckland was the appropriate choice. There was also concern at the appointment of John Gould, an economic historian with close ties to the UGC (he later wrote its official history, which includes no reference to the mineral technology contretemps) and Colin McLeod, the retired Commissioner of Works. While respected in their fields, neither was a miner, and given that the crucial factor had always been how closely mining depended on engineering, this was not hopeful.

Over the next six weeks, Gould and McLeod thoroughly considered their terms of reference and addressed a few of the other issues as well. Their report justified and consolidated the two pages which almost a year before had informed Robin Irvine of the decision to transfer the department, but at least this time the reasoning was detailed and transparent, even if many of the conclusions were still open to interpretation. David Hall’s announcement of the review report in September 1985, made before the other interested parties had read the report, claimed complete vindication of the original decision. “The (review) committee was quite clear that we were correct,” he said after a special UGC meeting, but a few days later, Otago’s Council offered a slightly different point of view. The *Otago Daily Times* reported Robin Irvine referring to “inaccuracies

in the report” and Council chairman Jim Valentine noting that the review “disagreed with some of the other grants committee conclusions,” notably the importance of the Waikato coalfields and the relative costs of upgrading at Otago or Auckland. But nothing more could be done, and Council formally received the report.<sup>33</sup>

Liam Kennedy wrote a thoughtful final column on the subject for *Critic*, outlining the grounds for the High Court proceedings which remained the “one hope of stopping the transfer” but conceding the uncertainty of success. “Whatever the result,” Kennedy concluded grimly, “we believe that nobody strips Otago University of a faculty without a fight.”<sup>34</sup>

Mineral technology had been lucky to have Kennedy as its champion, but the legal proceedings never went much further than the filing of the seven-page writ and exchange of lawyers’ letters. Towards the end of 1986, when the transfer was almost complete, the UGC attempted to have the writ struck out. Mr. Justice Quillam declined the application, noting among other points that the UGC contended “that it remained open to the University to continue the course by using part of its total grant,” a claim about which the judge was skeptical, stating he could “only speculate how realistic that may be.”<sup>35</sup> The question of Otago’s autonomy, which had never really been raised, was thus briefly asked and answered. Practically, it was back to the lawyers’ letters, until the students and department were both long gone.

With Otago’s concession that nothing more could be done came the dreary process of dismantling the department, compiling inventories to be picked over for other Otago courses, working out what was worth what to whom. It was a frustrating business requiring Michael Buckenham to write to Otago’s registrar, who wrote to his counterpart in Auckland, who wrote to the Dean of Engineering. By the end, everyone was thoroughly glad that inter-university departmental transfers were not commonplace. Otago’s Librarian, Jock McEldowney, spoke for many when he included an almost unnecessarily detailed description of the process of transferring the relevant part of the collection in the Library’s

Annual Report, and concluded, somewhat acerbically:

Next time the planners in Wellington decide to transfer a department from one university to another, Mineral Technology can provide a useful case-study of the pitfalls of simplistic assumptions about cost – certainly as far as library collections are concerned, but probably, by analogy, in other ways as well.<sup>36</sup>

The department slipped away quietly. There were no official eulogies or events or press releases to celebrate what the Otago School of Mines had meant to the university and the community over its century. The Council's Finance Committee invited the departing staff to join them for drinks late in 1986, and the passing of the department was the concluding note of the University's annual report for the year:

Finally, the Department of Mineral Technology completed its transfer to Auckland at the end of the year – thus ending 115 years of mining studies at Otago and perhaps it is a sign of the times that the vacated building was taken over by the Department of Marketing.<sup>37</sup>

Mining was officially over at Otago, and time would prove or disprove the wisdom of the UGC's decision to transfer to Auckland.

Over and over again the University Grants Committee had insisted that mineral technology belonged within the discipline of engineering. Brownlie's report had suggested it; the majority of the sub-committee reviewing it had accepted it; the review committee had endorsed it. It was not an entirely unreasonable view, so it is perhaps surprising how disastrous the move turned out to be for mining education in New Zealand. In hindsight, almost all the reasons given for the transfer were disproved by time, except for those which were almost impossible to prove either way. The review committee had acknowledged that the move would be more expensive than predicted; the promised new facilities did not eventuate and staff recruitment was no easier within an engineering

faculty than it had been at Otago. Most significantly, the students who might have been interested in mining as a specialty within their engineering degrees also failed to eventuate, very possibly affected by image problems related to the growing strengths of the environmental lobby throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In any case, the broader engineering faculty proved even less able to cope with fluctuating numbers than the stand-alone department at Otago had been, and a mere ten years after the move north, specialist mining education was phased out altogether.

It could not all be blamed on the UGC or Auckland University. Writing for the *Otago Daily Times* about the end of the mining programme in 1995, Michael Buckenham acknowledged it was “perhaps impossible under current funding scenarios to sustain mining degree programmes of the kind offered in the past at Otago and at Auckland.”<sup>38</sup> Mining schools throughout the world were closing, even though the need remained for specialists with the skills to cover all aspects of the process from exploration through the extraction processes to rehabilitation.

Time equally disproved Otago’s fears for its other earth sciences. Almost before the ink on the review was dry, proposals were before the grants committee for new post-graduate courses in resource geology, which would be “particularly appropriate for students looking for careers in the mineral industry.”<sup>39</sup> Geology and surveying continued, and continue, to produce scientifically-grounded, practically-skilled and adaptable graduates who are snapped up by employers nationally and internationally, often well before completing their degrees. These ongoing courses allowed Otago to maintain its reputation as an earth sciences educator. An ever-growing range of applied science courses indicate that the university eventually heeded the advice of those who had called for greater understanding and support for more practical and technological disciplines among the university’s courses.

In some ways the lost battle for mineral technology enhanced the mystique of the Otago School of Mines. Had it remained at Otago, mining education there would likely have gone the way

of such courses around the world, atrophying through a lack of understanding. As it was, it went out with a bang of regret and recrimination rather than the whimper of becoming an anachronism. It left a substantial legacy, not least in the memories of a school which epitomised the most colourful aspects of the university's character, and a network of graduates who travelled widely and spread the word about Otago.

Otago's founders were gifted with the foresight to understand that higher education would be important in years to come. Over 115 years, the university prepared its miners for productive lives, but the school's lessons were broader than those learned by individuals. Sentiment would have the Otago School of Mines live on in reality as it does in university folklore, but in fact, as education and society change, hard decisions must sometimes be made, and while this is so, the University of Otago will, and indeed must, continue to inspire and promote controversy and debate.

### Notes

1. "University will lose department," *Otago Daily Times*, 20 October 1984, 1.

2. University Grants Committee Review Committee, *Discussion Paper 5: Engineering*, March 1982 [Wellington: The Committee], 1981–1982.

3. "Angry students protest," *Otago Daily Times*, 24 October 1984, 5.

4. "Plea to retain Otago course," *Otago Daily Times*, 6 November 1984, 1.

5. "University blamed," *Otago Daily Times*, 26 October 1984, 1.

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7. "Department shift 'blow'," *Otago Daily Times*, 31 October 1984, 1.

8. "University's loss," *Otago Daily Times*, 27 October 1984, 4.

9. For accounts of the early days of the Otago School of Mines, see G. E. Thompson, *A History of the University of Otago* (1869–

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10. Emeritus Professor John Mackie, quoted in “The Malaysian Connection,” *The Otago Graduate* (1999), 10–11; Morrell, 230.

11. Morrell, 255.

12. For further information on the Hughes Parry Committee, see John Gould, *The University Grants Committee 1961–1986: A History* (Wellington: University Grants Committee, 1988), 12–14.

13. Morrell, 224.

14. Gould, 236–237; Morrell, 227.

15. Gould, 237.

16. “University blamed,” *Otago Daily Times*, 26 October 1984, 1.

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25. “Mines faculty transfer costly,” *Otago Daily Times*, 3 June 1985, 1.

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27. "Transfer 'anomalies'," *Otago Daily Times*, 7 June 1985, 1.
28. "Department shift is final, says Hall," *Otago Daily Times*, 8 June 1985; "Presidential," *Critic*, 9 July 1985, 11.
29. "Not unanimous on faculty shift," *Otago Daily Times*, 15 July 1985, 5.
30. "Transfer for new skills," *Otago Daily Times*, 18 July 1985, 1; "New department will not cost more," *Otago Daily Times*, 19 July 1985, 5; New Zealand Parliament. *Parliamentary Debates*, 14 August 1985.
31. "Mining school wins review," *Otago Daily Times*, 1 August 1985, 1.
32. "What's happening with the Mineral Technology Department," *Critic*, 6 August 1985, 5.
33. "Department will move," *Otago Daily Times*, 17 September 1985, 1; "University gives up the fight," *Otago Daily Times*, 25 September 1985, 5.
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## **List of Contributors**

Some information about the individual English and History Students of Otago University who were united in the writing of this book.

### **Srinjoy Bose**

Being a political science student has allowed me to study a variety of conflicts. It is difficult to comprehend the magnitude of human atrocities that have resulted from these conflicts. As a pacifist, this topic has allowed me to explore how my pacifist predecessors were treated in a University in which I can espouse my convictions without being chastised.

### **Emily Churcher**

I am an English student and perhaps I am more accustomed to the written word than the spoken one because I often say the wrong thing at the wrong time. This links me to John Child. “Free-love” was the catch-cry of the flower children of the 1960s. John Child brought this phrase into the public arena as early as 1947 and hearing this, I was intrigued. Was he a hippy before his time? Was he a moral degenerate? Or was he simply refreshingly honest and brave? By today’s standards, expulsion seems an extreme punishment for John Child’s *faux pas*. I was interested in the Council’s justification for the expulsion and whether their decision was supported or contested by the wider Dunedin community.

### **Martin Fisher**

I was born in Budapest, Hungary, a country which at the time still suffered under the terrible yoke of Soviet oppression. My family and I escaped in 1986 to La Dispoli, Italy, where we remained, in hiding, for 9 months. Finally, in late 1987 we arrived in Toronto. In 2000 I fled Canada for New Zealand, only to arrive in time to



witness the emergence of Don Brash as well as the Destiny Church. Having been surrounded by politics my whole life I found it only natural to study it here at Otago. And it was also the only topic left.

### **Robert Eru Fitzgerald**

Being an English student at Otago University, I am fascinated with literature and its implications within the protective womb that is the academy's campus. I was attracted to the controversial nature of the *Falus* debacle perhaps through a fascination with the use of language, perhaps through penis envy; only God and I will ever know. Nah, jokes! I've found writing this article to be a wonderful, at times trying experience. The topic selection of the book being "Controversies at Otago University," I was lucky to find a subject that would incorporate my literary interests within a largely historic subject.

### **Debby Foster**

Earlier this year I read somewhere that there is a national trend for students to live in single-sex flats. No evidence was offered to support this claim, but nonetheless the idea surprised me. When I started university in 1986, mixed flatting was "cool" and certainly the norm amongst my friends. When I spoke to these friends about this, some remembered there had been an uproar at the university over mixed flatting. One well-known Dunedin identity shamefacedly admitted she had given a false address to the university in 1968, so they would not realise she was sharing a flat with men!

### **Mark Galvin**

I was born in Ireland and lived in Britain and Australia before moving to New Zealand in the mid-90s. During my years at Otago I have attained a BSc in Genetics, and I am currently completing a BA (Hons) in English. My research interests include Irish literature, Modernism, Gothic, and Science Fiction. I chose to examine the founding of the University as I was interested in why and how the

institution was established. As a result of this investigation I have a greater appreciation for the role of the University in the local community and in the New Zealand national identity.

### **Ben Hutchison**

Having an interest in acting and being part of the Capping Show this year, I guess it was an appropriate choice to write on the subject of Capping, however uncomplementary the terms “writing” and “Capping” may be. The huge demands that the Capping Show makes on one’s time are only exacerbated by the heavy encouragements from the cast that one must drink every night after the show. Writing this chapter and being in Capping Show left me in a strange state with the anxiety of deadlines and the buzz of performance combining with a lack of sleep to create a cocktail that had me feeling a little crazy. I can testify that the tradition of alcohol consumption associated with Capping did not totally die in the 1980s. Some traditions never change. . . .

### **Matthew Littlewood**

I chose to investigate the curious case of Professor Pringle because I felt the premise was faintly surreal. In its own way, it was almost (but not quite) admirable that he abused his compassionate leave to stand for parliament in Britain. The reasons for his actions remain fairly elusive. In spite of extensive researching, in some ways, I’m no closer to the truth. Nonetheless, I was pleased to discover that William Henderson Pringle was an intelligent and sometimes inspirational advocate of Economics. If Pringle was an enigma, then at the very least, he was an entertaining one.

### **Catherine McLeod**

Migrating from Auckland to study at the University of Otago has given me many opportunities to learn and experience new things in life that I might never have otherwise been able to do. As a woman, it was infuriating to discover that previous women students were unable to have the same freedom as I do now, based on our

institution's outmoded ideas of gender roles and morals. I wanted to investigate St Margaret's curfew and leave restrictions to see how the women felt, how the community reacted, and eventually, whether any changes were made to ensure better equity between men and women students. This research has certainly made me grateful for the academic and personal freedoms that I, as a woman student, am able to enjoy today.

### **Dave Robertson**

I remember, as a first-year student, entering the sparkly new Science library, with its oddly hollow flagstones and lurid green vinyl stairwells. From the outside it is an impressively solid building and with a fellow physics student I crept in anticipating the world of knowledge and hidden secrets that would surely be revealed on the shelves. Lectures and tutorials had proved dry and uninspiring and we—imagining we could leapfrog all that dull foundation material—headed to where we knew the treasure to be stored. It was with some bewilderment that we discovered not the bright covers and Dewey decimals familiar from our hometown libraries, but vast, unrelentingly solid walls of opaque and unlovely books, uniform in their red, blue, or green bindery jackets with thin gold titling impressed into the spines. The classification system was a mystery. “Library of Congress?” At first we were just confused, but then discovered tucked away in remote alcoves and rarely-visited rooms dreadful silent shelves housing volume after volume of squat, black-bound dusty books, all identified by the baleful and meaningless word, “Bliss.” We fled... .

### **Kim Sullivan**

When I first took up the task of breathing new life into Duncan MacGregor and James Copland I hadn't realised how much the three of us had in common. There is something about discovering a fellow Scottish immigrant (or in this case, two) that immediately forges a connection between you. Delving into the lives of my subjects I found traits, attitudes and ideals that were somehow

characteristic of the place we all called home. Like MacGregor and Copland, I also left Scotland for New Zealand, albeit 140 years later and without the aid of steam. Fortunately, unlike them, I have made it through my first seven years without causing any controversies (or at least, without getting caught.) They have become eccentric old uncles to me through this process.

**Karin Warnaar**

Although I knew nothing about mineral technology on graduating in English in 1984, I've been enlightened since returning to Dunedin nearly twenty years on to work in Otago's Alumni and Development Office. The many miners who keep staunchly in touch with the university remain advocates for the personal and public benefits of specialist mining training, and still run a good line of black humour about the transfer to Auckland. Their experience is too richly-veined to be forgotten, and this *memento mori* for mining at Otago is one part of making sure it's not.



**U**niversities provide a forum for open debate. They are a breeding ground for intellectual and artistic breakthroughs, as well as social and political revolutions. Yet they are closely knit communities, and as such it is inevitable that occasionally issues of concern will bitterly divide opinions.

This collection of articles by the Time Keepers explores some of the forgotten, as well as the more infamous, controversies and characters in the University of Otago's history.

**"The Time Keepers" are University of Otago English and History Honours Students.**



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