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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

C O U N C I L

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

APPENDIX TO 1971 REPORT

There have been further developments in respect of the two matters of principle mentioned in the foregoing report.

1. Semesters: The semester calendar to which as late as July the entire School of General Studies appeared to be committed, has lately come under strong criticism, primarily from students. The Faculty of Science is conscious of its role in having introduced the semester system, and through its Education Committee has prepared an evaluation which does not accept all the criticisms levied, but which opens the door to changes which may make the system a little stricter academically, and more workable administratively. A revised vacation timetable has been proposed which does not commit departments to abandon full-year courses. At the moment of writing it is hard to discern what the Faculty of Science, or ANU, or indeed the entire Australian University system will eventually decide to do.

Personally, I welcome this re-examination. We have evidence that when courses change name and content as fluidly as they have done over the past three years, both staff and students lose track of the intended objectives of entire degree programmes; we have experienced grave disappointments from timetabling clashes; and we have not fully silenced those critics who believe that particular units are best taught as year-long undertakings. At the same time we have seen much that must be regarded as good evolving from the system (in course choices, for example, or by way of rescuing students who have almost completed their degree from a whole extra year of work); and these features we would seek to retain in the eventual scheme.

2. Eventual shape of the Faculty: A Faculty planning committee has been engaged since November 1970 in the logistic exercise of predicting the composition of the Faculty when eventually it reaches full growth (1980?). This exercise must take into account -

- (i) cost per student (AUC policy)
- (ii) final size of the faculty (Council policy)
- (iii) the University's own internal staffing formula, as revised in 1970 (Board of SGS policy),

together with -

- (iv) the inflexibility of staffing, when most staff are full time and tenured
- (v) reasonable departmental complements, in relation to adequate coverage of disciplines
- (vi) minimal requirements for new buildings.

The conclusions are that the ultimate Faculty size, variously quoted as in the range 1400-1600 students, would prove uneconomically low. A minimum figure of 1710 is indicated, if no new departments are added. Present enrolments are about 1000 students. This 70% growth in students would be accompanied by only a 20% growth in teaching staff (mostly untenured) and could be achieved with a 15% increase in the floor space of existing buildings.

The prospect bespeaks a radical change in the Faculty's methods and in its estimates of its objectives. Adjustment will be the task of the next decade.

I.G. Ross

4 October 1972