

SPECIAL EDITION OF THE PEOPLES' PRESS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS. THIS IS THE REAL THING  
6th October 1971.

DEDICATED TO SAM ORR

LETS FINALLY DEAL WITH THIS WHOLE NASTY BUSINESS.

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, the University Council formally and publicly recognised the need to make a statement on the Manwell-Andrewartha dispute. They drew attention to the "facts". Facts that are by now common knowledge and have been published in ON DIT. The delay in acting on the matter was caused primarily through the complications arising out of the libel suit against Professor Andrewartha concerning the substance of his complaints. On 6th August the Council was trying to ascertain whether a procedure for investigating the complaint could be agreed upon having regard to the pending libel suit.

On 3rd September the results of the discussion with the solicitors were reported, and a letter from Professor Manwell's solicitors was received. The proposals in this letter were not satisfactory to the Council and Professor Manwell's solicitors were not willing that a copy of it should be supplied to Professor Andrewartha's solicitors. After extensive discussion of the matter at least three members of the Council requested the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry pursuant to Clause 11 of Chapter IV of the Statutes. Under that Clause it then became mandatory on the Council to set up a Commission of Enquiry.

Council met again on 6th September and appointed the following members of academic staff as the Commission of Enquiry:

Professor A.L.J. Beckwith, Professor J.H. Carber, Sister D.F. Jordan, Professor H.K. Lucke, Professor G.M. Maxwell, Dr. G.M.E. Mayo and Dr. G.M. Tallis.

Council was aware that criticism of both the Vice-Chancellor and the Council had been published, particularly concerning the delay in bringing the case to a conclusion. However, the Council noted that the Vice-Chancellor in attempting to hold consultations under Clause 10 of Chapter IV of the Statutes had been meticulous in attempting to protect the interests of both parties. This had led to protracted negotiations and had eventually prevented the Vice-Chancellor from obtaining the advice he sought. When it was clear that this advice could not be obtained he brought the matter to the Council.

The Council resolved that the Vice-Chancellor had acted with complete propriety throughout the course of events.

The Council's statement obviously avoided any comment on the substance of the dispute or the nature of the criticisms made by ON DIT against the Vice-Chancellor (see ON DIT broadsheet, July 9th 1971).

The statement is amazing only in what it doesn't say. But then you couldn't really expect any sort of public open debate about the whole matter. You could expect that the "interests of this University" are being protected, (read "the interestes" as defined by the Vice-Chancellor, the professorial elite, and the ideology of the military-industrial complex.) An analysis of the "facts" of the development of the matter as seen by the Council can wait. A few comments on the role and the function of the Commission seem warranted.

WHOSE COMMISSION IS IT? WHOSE INTERESTS ARE BEING PROTECTED?

1. The Commission of Enquiry may meet this Friday, 8th October at 2.15 p.m. in the University Council Rooms. Or so it seems. Members of the Commission were not at liberty to comment. The Registrar, Mr. Vic. Edgeloe would not say whether the Commission was to meet this Friday. He said that, even if it was, the meeting would definitely not be open.
2. This is no ordinary enquiry. I have not heard of it meeting before in the history of this University. The only historical precedent in Australia was set by the dismissal of Professor Sam Orr at the University of Tasmania.
  - The Commission will decide the future of both Professor Manwell and his wife. If the charges of "grossly or presistently neglecting his duties" are substantiated, the Manwells' academic careers are finished. If not, the pressure may still be great enough to force them out of this University, to make it so difficult for them it would be easier to accept appointments elsewhere. Will the Commission consider this?
3. It seems somewhat surprising that the whole dispute has progressed to the stage of a Commission of Enquiry. At least "three members of Council" requested the Commission, which suggests that others (a majority?) thought otherwise. It is well known that there has been very heated debates and differences of opinion within Council.

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matter as quiet as possible in the hope the parties' solicitors could find a compromise. There have been suggestions that a number of academics would like to see Manwell go, that his views do not correspond with the respectable scientific position. Not that there is any conspiracy against Manwell, just that many would believe it would be "in the best interests of the University" that he be silenced. Will the Commission take notice of this?

- 4. Will the Commission clearly spell out what constitutes the offence under the Statute? Will they attempt to define the areas of academic freedom?
- 5. Will the Commission clearly indicate what constitutes "flouting the scholarly precepts that one should teach within one's area of professional competence", "lacking judgement and perspective in teaching", and "flouting the scholarly precepts of scientific method"? (These are some of the charges made against Manwell). And if these scholarly precepts are defined, whose interests will benefit?
- 6. Will the Commission note that there has been a neglect of the part of the controversy concerning the fruit fly spraying (see letters printed in ON DIT). Is it just a coincidence that the role of the Department of Agriculture, the Waite Institute and various persons connected is seemingly being pushed into the background?
- 7. Will the Commission take notice of the effect of the dispute upon many students in the Zoology Department, especially the Honours students? Will students be called to give evidence of Professor Manwell's teaching standards? If not, why not?
- 8. Will the discussions, the deliberations, and the results of the Enquiry be openly and accurately published? Will the Commission give any explanation why the proceedings should be closed?

IF WE IGNORE THE PROBLEM, IT MAY GO AWAY.

The response to the questions posed by ON DIT throughout the year is indicative of the closed nature of academic life. No member of the academic staff has been willing to comment in public on any aspect of the dispute. No member has been willing to discuss the boundaries of academic and intellectual freedoms, to explain the basis of the scientific method and to express commitment on the social responsibilities of scientists.

Is it that academics are not to be critically questioned? Is it that "the interests of this University" have to be protected? Is it that many academics, despite arguments to the contrary by students over the last few years, are not willing to realise that what they are teaching is in no way relevant to solving the major problems that our society faces today, in no way able to relate to the experiences of students?

THE ENVIRONMENT IS NOT IN DANGER OF BEING SAVED!

Nearly everybody today recognises the immense problems of the environment and pollution. The University has finally recognised the need to create a Master of Environmental Studies. There is recognition of the need to widen the scope of the existing scientific disciplines, to create an inter-disciplinary subject, to give scientists the opportunity to apply broad ecological principles, and to accept the basic liberal position that argues scientists should show within their work social and political responsibility. Yet at this time an eminent scientist actively concerned with scientific ecological, social and political matters can be charged with teaching outside of his discipline, with including into human biology lectures "sociological, political and technological aspects of contraception and also on the psychological and sociological consequences of crowding" and of introducing to the honours students polemical topics which are "in the realms of sociology, politics, population explosions, pollution and scientific administration".

That such charges could be considered seriously, and that a Commission of Enquiry has to decide whether this constitutes a neglect of duties is itself a criticism of the nature of education, not only in the Zoology Department, but in the rest of the University. If there was any pretence at giving students a relevant education today, Professor Manwell's actions would not be under question.

Students and Staff should express their views on this matter. The Commission should be open. The meeting is this Friday, 2 p.m. in the Council Rooms.

Written by Chris White.