

CAFAS Update No 30

1 March 2001

Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards

<http://www.cafas.org.uk>

Next Meeting:

Saturday 28 April 2001, 2.00-4.30pm

*Room 2075
Birkbeck College
Malet Street
London WC1*

Underground: Goadge Street, Euston Square, Euston

Corruption of scientific integrity? - the commercialisation of academic science

The Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards and the Council for Academic Autonomy are holding a conference on Wednesday 2 May 2001 at the British Academy, London.

Details in the forms of a double sided A4 leaflet and an A4 poster are attached to this issue of Update. Please circulate them as widely as possible.

If you would like them in electronic form (email with Microsoft Word 97/98 attachments) please email D.E.Packham@bath.ac.uk

Comment

The CAFAS/CAA conference is timely. It is becoming apparent to nearly everyone in education that the market impacts negatively on teaching and research but it nevertheless requires open, rigorous debate if solutions are to be found. The contributions in this issue illustrate that commercialisation is irreconcilable with academic freedom. One reason for the corrupting influence of the market on academic freedom, standards and democracy is that it imposes the goal of augmenting wealth over education's role to meet social need.

But, as our contributors - and many elsewhere - are demonstrating, we do not have to accept it.

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AS always, we are dependent upon your financial support. Unfortunately, a number of members have fallen into arrears.

Your address label shows the date we last received any money from you. A red asterisk tells you that your subscription urgently requires renewal; two red asterisks indicate your subscription has seriously lapsed and needs your urgent attention.

If you have any query/ies, please get in touch! [Subscriptions are £10.00 per annum for waged, £5.00 for unwaged individuals; £25.00 for TU affiliation]

Bob Potter

Autonomy row hits LSE as sponsor axes research

**Phil Baty, *THES*
12 January 2001**

A ROW over the commercialisation of university research and academic freedom has erupted at the London School of Economics following the decision of a major research sponsor to prematurely pull the plug on a £250,000 contract.

Travel industry lobby group the World Travel and Tourism Council withdrew funding from the LSE in April last year, mid-way through a three-year contract with the school. The WTTC claimed that the LSE's work was of poor quality.

Researcher Thanos Mergoupis and his research assistant lost their jobs as a result of the decision. Mr Mergoupis claims that the pulling of the money was not just breach of contract, but breach of his and the LSE's academic freedom.

Mr Mergoupis has a number of grievances against the LSE for failing to enforce its contract with the WTTC and stand up for the research done in its name.

He claims the LSE's failure to act decisively denied him the protection he is entitled to under the 1988 Education Act. The law allows academics to put forward unpopular and controversial opinions without putting their jobs in jeopardy.

The WTTC commissioned research from the LSE's Centre for the Philosophy of Natural and Social Science to examine the economic and social impact of tourism. A contract was signed to release the £250,000 over three years and work began in 1998.

In September 1999, WTTC vice-president Rick Miller told the LSE's team that one of its research papers was "completely inadequate in its review of... the WTTC's research".

But the WTTC said that suggestions that it withdrew the funds because the LSE was not coming up with the findings it was looking for are "absolutely spurious".

WTTC vice-president for strategy and development, Graham Watson, told *The THES* that it was not the findings that the WTTC objected to - it had already made some methodological changes on the advice of the LSE's papers - "it was more the nature of the output and some of the methodology that wasn't quite hitting the spot".

The WTTC withdrew funding in April 2000.

Last May, formal legal advice to the university confirmed that the LSE had had good grounds to seek damages to compensate for the premature loss of funding. However, the LSE's failure to dispute the WTTC's decision at the time, it was confirmed, meant that any potential action was almost inevitably doomed.

The Campaign for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards is supporting Mr Mergoupis. It said in a letter to LSE director Anthony Giddens that the independence of research is protected in the constitution of every British university by the principle of academic freedom.

An LSE spokesperson said: "Mr Mergoupis has taken up this matter under the school's internal grievance procedure and it is currently being investigated.

"It would be unfair to comment until this process has been concluded."

(Published in the Times Higher Education Supplement 12 January 2001)

The *THES* article does not mention that:

1. The research undertaken at LSE under the programme funded by WTTC, was reviewed regularly by a number of LSE academics, and its quality was never questioned. In fact, even after the withdrawal of the WTTC funding, the LSE insisted on the high quality of Mergoupis' research.

2. The LSE's response to the Mergoupis grievance on academic freedom, was that there was no breach of academic freedom. The reason given for the WTTC's withdrawal of their funding was that they had changed

their funding priorities. The LSE, committed to providing evidence that there was a change in WTTC's funding priorities (in order to demonstrate that academic freedom had not been breached), have up to now been unable to do so. (They appear to be still searching for this evidence even after the explicit statement by WTTC in the THES article linking the withdrawal of funds with the nature of the output and the methodology of the research.)

3. The grounds for Thanos Mergoupis' dismissal were that his contract stated that he could be dismissed if the funding was withdrawn for any reason. If "any reason" covers opposition to the research, and if the Mergoupis' dismissal is proven valid on these grounds, then it means that the academic freedom of all the fixed-term research staff in LSE and in British universities, with such a clause in their contract, is not protected.

Why we should return exam scripts

Assessment is part of life and the most common form of assessment is the exam. Exams are a very stressful experience and after the exam has been sat the agonising wait for the result starts. As far as the students are concerned, that is the end of the matter. Very rarely is an exam paper given back to students once it has been marked. There are many reasons why it should.

The main reason is feedback. A student cannot be expected to change or improve unless he/she knows where they have gone wrong in the past. Receiving a grade or going through a report is not adequate for this purpose. It is fundamental to the learning process that a student is able to take the assessed work home, read though it with feedback comments and/or the marking scheme and learn from their mistakes. This point is so important I will repeat it in italics. *A student cannot be expected to change or improve unless he/she knows where they have gone wrong in the past. Receiving a grade or going through a report is not adequate for this purpose. It is fundamental to the learning process that a student is able to take the assessed work home, read though it with feedback comments and/or the marking scheme and learn from their mistakes.*

Most universities may have a system of anonymous marking, but they give a false sense of security that there truly is anonymity in marking (3.) Giving papers back to students is the ultimate protection against allegations of bias. A survey carried out on medical students at a medical school in the United Kingdom showed that 23% of students believe that they could be deliberately failed despite anonymous marking.³

Returning papers after marking would abolish the need for an anonymous marking process, which can be very expensive to administer, and instead papers could be marked by name. Any bias would be detected when student receive their papers back, and there would be no more need to monitor failure rates by ethnic origin, which is very expensive.⁵ Sheffield University has recently faced allegations of racial bias in the marking of exam scripts. Had the papers been returned then no allegations could be made.

Naming exam papers also makes it easier to allocate marks. Not all students write their anonymous candidate numbers on papers. Many cannot remember what it is or simply forget to mark it down. Phone numbers, dates of birth, and even credit card numbers have been mistakenly written down in the past, instead of the candidate's specific number. You will not believe what students write on their papers.

Returning exam papers also makes it easier to sort out mistakes. The universities mark hundreds of papers around exam time, and mistakes can be made due to the sheer pressure of time. I was told of case where a student in America had received his papers back, with a letter telling him that he had failed. He looked at the papers and saw that he got 15/20, 17/20, 15/20, 14/20, and 16/20. The secretary had added up just the first two papers, and the student was given a mark of 32%. The mistake was rectified immediately, whereas under our system he would have had to resit his exams or go through the very long winded appeals system. In light of the Scottish Exam board fiasco this must be an important argument. One lecturer told me that with ethnic minorities it can be terribly

difficult to allocate names to scripts and they commonly make mistakes. This would eliminate this problem.

It also ensures a more humane method of giving the students their results. Traditionally in medicine the pass and fail lists are put up on a notice board by name. This is a barbaric practice. It humiliates the student who has failed and can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. It can also precipitate suicide in a vulnerable individual. (3,5) The student may be humiliated due to one of the factors above through no fault of his/her own.

The main reason for not giving papers back is that the supply of good questions is always limited. Using modern technology, however, questions can easily be stored in a computer, which will then randomly select any combination from a given number. An academic who was the chief examiner for an A level board confirmed that his past papers were freely available. Questions were frequently repeated, especially those that discriminated well but, in spite of this, students still got them wrong.

Another way around the problem posed by a limited pool of questions is to ask students to design questions for exams. This would lead to an ever-increasing pool of questions, prepared by medical students for their peers.

Sushant Varma

1. Rolfe I, McPherson J. Formative assessment. How am I doing? *Lancet* 1996;345:837-9
2. Lofgren M, Lundahl L. Self-marking in written examination: a way of feedback and learning. *Med Educ* 1996;30:322-5
3. Varma S. Medical student stress. (1999) Unpublished. Available free of charge from S.Varma@shef.ac.uk.
4. Commission for Racial Equality. Why keep ethnic records? <http://www.cre.gov.uk> (date visited 7 March 1999).
5. Samaritans. Exploring the taboo. <http://www.samaritans.org.uk> (date visited 5 March 99).

FROM WARWICK UNIVERSITY LTD. TO BRITISH UNIVERSITIES PLC

Thirty years ago this spring, British higher education was convulsed by a wave of occupations and protests centred at the University of Warwick, where a student occupation had uncovered the existence of confidential files maintained by the University - specifically the Vice-Chancellor's office - on the political activities of a number of staff and students. The Warwick files affair generated a Penguin Education Special, *Warwick University Ltd.*, edited by the historian E P Thompson, then Reader in Social History at Warwick, written and published at breakneck speed as the events unfolded. In this book, staff and students at Warwick not only described the extraordinary way in which the files had been accumulated and deployed, but also related the affair to the rise of a 'business university', in whose development the regional business elite was seen to have played a central role.

In the spring of 2000 the 30th anniversary of the Warwick affair and of the book passed by without, as far as I know, a single mention, either in the professional HE press or the wider media. And yet the analysis of *Warwick University Ltd.* seems remarkably prescient. If anything, British HE since 1970 has gone very much further in the direction of serving private interests than we ever imagined. In his 'afterword' E P Thompson asked:

Is it inevitable that the university will be reduced to the function of providing, with increasingly authoritarian efficiency, prepacked intellectual commodities which meet the requirements of management? Or can we by our efforts transform it into a centre of free discussion and action, tolerating and even encouraging 'subversive' thought and activity, for a dynamic renewal of the whole society within which it operates?

Today it would seem incredible that Thompson's second question could even be asked. For the university has indeed been 'reduced': by financial stringencies, authoritarian management, political interventions, creeping privatisation, and overall the almost complete 'commodification' of both teaching and research. The ending of the quinquennial grant system in 1976, by Secretary of Education Shirley Williams, destroyed the framework of long-term strategic planning and institutional development that the universities then enjoyed. The relentless erosion of the 'unit of resource' in the decades since have encouraged the increasing commercialization of the university's relations with society at large. The ending of the binary divide, far from leading to a unified network of 'tertiary comprehensives', created a viciously-competitive hierarchy canonised in the unending multiplication of league tables. Graduate unemployment and the assault on organised labour and progressive movements of all kinds pressured students into switching towards more vocational studies in the hope of securing a place in the Thatcherite world of vapid consumerism. The student movement increasingly abandoned radical causes in favour of bureaucratic student-unionism centred on the development of the political careers of the activists, despite the occasional eruption of protests over nuclear weapons or the poll tax.

The strategic direction of university development became ever more driven by the need to chase the moving financial targets set by authoritarian governments which regularly used HE as a whipping-boy in their populist campaigns. At the institutional level, the so-called 'new managerialism', which purports to introduce into the sleepy world of public service the supposedly self-evident efficiencies of the private sector, has created a looking-glass world in which more time seems to be spent designing, specifying and fulfilling meaningless 'aims and objectives', than actually teaching and researching. At the individual level, increasing workloads and the peculiar combination of vacuity and ruthlessness in the management process have led to overwork, stress, conformity, corruption and bullying. Overall, we have witnessed in these past thirty years the literal demoralization of higher education. Only the continuing satisfactions of contact with students still eager to learn, and colleagues still somehow managing to pursue knowledge for its own sake or the social good, make our working life still tolerable, even while we have the unique distinction, as an occupational group, of seeing our living standards frozen for decades (with the exception of course of those who rise to the top on the backs of the rest of us).

Superficially our discontents have focused in recent years on the immediate consequences of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA). In the eyes of the general public, however, our case for opposing these appears very weak. It looks to them as if we just want to left alone to do what we like with public money, pursuing silly research at the expense of teaching quality and enjoying our traditional three-month summer break in our Tuscan holiday cottages. Fatuous and unfair though this image may be, it is carefully nurtured by our own top management, and above all by a generation of politicians and media celebs who feel no compunction about kicking in the teeth those to whom they owe their higher education and thus in no small part their own wealth and status. Like all effective ideological campaigns, of course, the assault on academic indolence and irresponsibility has a substantial grain of truth to it. Traditions of secrecy and so-called self-government allowed and still allow many individual injustices to be committed with impunity. We should never fear the introduction of democracy, transparency and accountability into higher education. The 'visitor' system in particular should be scrapped forthwith; far more information should be made available publicly about the finances and the academic strategies of universities; and we should indeed be held responsible, both to the general public as taxpayers, and to students as our most important clients, for the quality and quantity of our efforts. Why then, the public ask, are we complaining about the RAE and TQA?

To find the answer to that question, we have to probe beneath the superficialities and analyse the substance of the bureaucratic managerialism of which these are only the most visible part. And here we find the strange paradox at the heart of not just HE, but all the battered and dispirited remnants of the once proud tradition of public service in Britain. What the Thatcherites intended was to replicate the disciplines of private capitalism: what they achieved was to replicate the waste and irrationality of the Soviet mode of production, even as it crumbled before the restoration of capitalism across the Soviet bloc. Of course, it can be argued that the realities of capitalist discipline itself - manipulation, monopoly, exploitation and fat-cattery - are a very long way from the myth of the proud and productive entrepreneur serving the public interest by responding to consumer demand, but that story is relevant only to those parts of the public sector that have actually been privatised.

For the rest of us, the institutions we work in resemble more and more closely the Soviet form of enterprise: we are in that weird and wonderful world described with such humour and understanding by the late Alec Nove in *The Soviet Economic System*. Our activities take place within a rigid hierarchy that runs up through the head of department to the school, the faculty, the university as a whole, and thence to HEFCE, the functional equivalent of Gosplan. Administration, while superficially collegiate in places, is based on the principle of one-man management. Objectives are set by a planning process which locks the levels of the

hierarchy to each other in vertical bargaining. As soon as targets are met, they are raised, and so the lower levels strive mightily to avoid meeting the targets too easily; they also seek to conceal their resources, so that when targets are routinely raised, they can be met (just) without excessive effort. Heads of department, under inexorable pressure from above, are obliged at the cost of their personal goodwill and integrity to transmit the target-driven management system downwards upon their subordinates, dividing and bullying them into conformity. Above all, it is the targets *as specified from above* that are met, not the targets that common sense or an intelligent outsider might consider legitimate: thus, for example, our task is not to generate a high quality of learning and teaching, but to satisfy the current demands of the quality inspection system, which at present means producing a Potemkin village, paint scarcely dry on the walls, for the week of the QAA inspection.

And we can multiply *ad infinitum* the stupidities that result. The RAE demands publications, which are deemed to be the only measurable indicator of research quality, so the journals multiply, pointless because unread; speculative research that might possibly not generate publications is not supported; and young colleagues quickly learn to conform to the prejudices of their elders who, as editors and grant-givers, hold the keys to the kingdom. Because RAE success yields a larger proportionate return on effort than genuine improvements in teaching quality, promotion continues to depend almost exclusively on the former: those whose talents and disposition are more towards teaching than research are denied advancement, or worse still given 'academic-related' posts of lower status and rewards. Lower-level teaching that has little or no connexion with research is increasingly done by a growing army of flexible contract workers, who thereby sustain for some years their dwindling hopes of eventual inclusion in the system. In other respects too the Soviet mode of production seems to be faithfully reproduced. The principle of self-supply, under which departments prevent if at all possible their students taking courses or research supervisors from other departments; the production cycle in which output peaks in the final months before the end of the plan period (the RAE deadline); the relentless pressure exerted by departments upon 'the centre' to invest in new capacities (posts).

And yet, the analogy with the Soviet mode of production must not be taken too far. It captures the *organizational* features of British HE, but tells us little about its content and its social consequences. Just as the Soviet planning system needed to be set within the wider sociopolitical context of the one-party state and the class system peculiar to state socialism, so in order to complete our analysis of British HE, we have to set the Soviet-style organization within the political and economic context of contemporary British capitalism. For this purpose, it turns out that the critique offered in *Warwick University Ltd.* still applies in essence, although the means by which private interests dominate the HE agenda have changed.

The direct subordination to corporate capitalism of course exists on a far wider scale: in particular, the brand-name chairs and the research contracts meeting the specific needs of business. But these are no longer reinforced, as they were at Warwick in the 1960s, by direct dominance of the strategic decision structures of the university. On the contrary, experience has shown that captains of industry have no need to intervene personally in university affairs, since the great and the good who sit on the key committees of councils and senates have by now thoroughly internalised the requirements of business. Reliance on donations and endowments incline the overall direction of much of our activities in certain obvious directions. It is taken for granted that we must produce students who are above all 'employable', which means simply that it costs their future employers as little as possible to train them on the job, because they have mostly followed vocational study programmes (and those who have not are endowed with 'transferable skills'). The Research Councils, cowed into submission in the early Thatcher years, ceaselessly press us to do 'relevant' research, and to ensure that our results are 'diffused across' (given for free to) the 'wider' (business) community.

The introduction of fees and the student loan system ensure too that the student body is also tied to the needs of the labour market. However much the government protests that loan repayment is based on ability to pay, what this amounts to is an additional marginal rate of income tax which pushes graduates to increase their earnings faster (or, of course, to drop out of the wage-labour system altogether, a solution that appeals only to a tiny few). While the students' financial stake in HE strengthens their legitimate expectation of getting a good education, it also encourages conformism as the easiest road to a 2:1 and that well-paid job. It is, of course, the sons and daughters of the wealthiest families who alone can still afford themselves the luxury of education for education's sake.

British universities thus operate within a bizarre combination of the Soviet and capitalist systems. The two elements feed upon each other in ways that break down the collegiality and sense of public purpose, which by now many of us feel have largely vanished. Nostalgia for an imagined past does not, however, help us very much in dealing with our present discontents. The old order, certainly in the 'old' universities, was undeniably elitist, and although it was less visibly bound to capitalist interests it was very closely integrated with an

Establishment that provided the political and administrative framework for the nation and its Empire. There may have been less faking and fixing, less croneyism and corruption, than can be unearthed at present, but the old boy network, the nod and the wink, the lunches at the Carlton, determined many vital aspects of the development of the sector, and traditional attitudes on matters of gender, race and class were all-pervasive. In such respects there have undoubtedly been changes for the better. It must also be admitted that, despite all the above, and despite the oft-cited evidence of overwork, stress and demoralization, most of us still garner a reasonable level of satisfaction from our work, notably from students as I have already argued, but also from the irreducible fact that our own interests and passions are such an intrinsic part of our work: workers in HE cannot easily be made as deskilled, flexible and disposable as their counterparts in so many occupations are today. What is more, beneath what Marx called its 'capitalist integument', the production of knowledge still has the potential to yield significant benefits for the world at large.

So from the corner into which we have boxed ourselves, as we slowly but steadily move towards a world of differentiated fees, performance-related pay, single-institution bargaining and the rest, we harbour a faint but persistent intuition that it could all be done differently and so much better. Where would we start? Surely from the basic principles of democracy, participation, transparency and accountability. Our university councils should be peopled with representatives of all sections of the community, our senates opened with far more determination to participation by students and non-academic staff, our 'heads of resource centre' required to be accountable not exclusively to bureaucratic hierarchies but also to their colleagues at large. The nature and purpose of financial and management systems need to be the subject of continual public debate, both inside and outside HE. The university should be seen above all as a public institution whose direction of development is guided not by the immediate needs of business and the labour market, but by wider social needs defined by public debate. The alternative is not, in short, to disengage from society, but to change the structure and content of that engagement.

Within the university we need to create a culture of collegiality and trust. We know that financial resources are bound to be limited, but we can manage them in ways that we can all understand and learn to live with. Above all we need to overcome the divisions that beset us, between subjects and faculties, between academics and non-academics, staff and students. At present, we lurch from one financial crisis to the next, manoeuvring by all possible means to ensure that the next axe to fall will strike elsewhere, and if we succeed in this, we are far too busy to concern ourselves with those who now find themselves 'restructured' or 'redeployed'. When the university launches yet another initiative, in response to carrots from HEFCE or wherever, we reluctantly climb on board, trying to minimize the cost and maximise the benefit to ourselves and our immediate colleagues. In short, we have no collective strategy, indeed no strategy at all: we react to events rather than seeking to shape them.

The response to this in some quarters will be to say: but we have a strategy, we have a collective decision process, we do engage proactively with the world outside, we have up-to-the-minute human resource management, we have charters and agreements and guarantees. To which I retort: why then is it that most of us in this 'community' see these things as 'yours', not 'ours'? Go back through the arguments I have made, and tell me where I have gone wrong. Discount, by all means, the at times overly bitter and sarcastic tone: it is not directed at you personally, but at 'the system' of which we are all a part. For myself, before I shuffle off grumpily into retirement, I still would like to feel that some of the lessons of *Warwick University Ltd.* have at last been learned, and that our present complaints are not similarly swept under the somewhat threadbare carpets that line the corridors of British Universities plc.

Hugo Radice

6.11.00

Note: the author was a member of the group that researched and wrote Warwick University Ltd., and has worked in British higher education ever since....

An edited version of the above article is in Red Pepper, March, 2001

What is the real problem? Cambridge and equal opportunities

'The findings reveal an institution which still has some way to go'.

The Cambridge Equality Agenda Audit (Cambridge University Reporter January 31, 2001) reflects a University which is, overall, 'a desirable place to work', but for reasons unconnected with its policy and practice in the treatment of its staff. It is, after all, beautiful and rich and the libraries are world-class.

The Report of the Schneider-Ross consultants who were brought in to look at Cambridge's equal opportunities performance unaccountably left out the students altogether. Questions about the treatment of students arise of course under a different kind of 'contract' from that which the University has with its employees, but when Cambridge knows it needs to be seen to be doing something about improving access for students from precisely the groups covered by discrimination legislation, this seems a startling waste of an opportunity. 'If we don't address equal opportunities the students won't come', said one respondent. Addressing equal opportunities only for staff seems an odd way to go about it. More comments made by staff surveyed during the 'audit' are quoted in the Report. 'Other Universities have had these things in place for years', said one. That is perhaps the key point to emerge. Cambridge lags behind almost all other universities in producing guidelines and codes of practice and procedures on almost every front. It still has no student complaints procedure, though we are at last on the way to that. One of the drawbacks to running an audit only about equal opportunities and only about discrimination in the limited areas covered by legislation until Article 14 of the Human Rights Act opened a much bigger can of worms, is that you get answers with a particular slant. It is undoubtedly true that the most satisfied staff at Cambridge are the numerous white males who have been promoted to Readerships and Professorships; 81% of disabled staff; 74% of ethnic minority staff and 66% of female staff have felt excluded. 'Culture change is necessary' concludes the audit report. But the culture change needed is not necessarily in equal opportunities thinking, or not there alone. The problem is far deeper and more pervasive. To call successfully for culture change requires first an understanding of the nature of the culture. Cambridge is not 'management-friendly'. The first thing Schneider Ross ought to have done was to find out how the place works. We have an administration rather like a civil service, not managers. We have, apparently, an 'Equality Steering Group', and it is suggested in the report that it continue in being and oversee progress. But its membership has been arrived at secretly and without consultation with the University and, in Cambridge terms, that means it does not exist and certainly has no authority. No-one will take any notice of it. And anyway, its members themselves have no training in the areas where they are supposed to be in charge. Let me come back to the lack of procedures. It goes with a lack of training, not only in the implementation of procedures but in the very ground-rules of fairness. I have heard someone instructing middle-managers in the handling of staff discipline issues encouraging them first to hear a member of staff's troubles and then to sit in judgement on his or her conduct in a formal hearing leading to an oral warning. That is shocking. And yet this audit report is very hot on training for 'management' as a means of altering the culture of amateurishness in which Cambridge is sunk. If we are to deliver such training we have to do it better than this; we have to monitor its 'delivery' and make managers accountable for their own performance.

There is an expectation that if we run appraisal better that will lead to better career prospects. But Cambridge undertook when it introduced appraisal that it would not become assessment. If it is now proposed that it should, those doing the assessing will need the appropriate training. It is admitted that 'the promotion processes are perceived as being a current barrier to career progression by 46% of those surveyed'. But the promotion processes go on year after year unreformed and run by untrained committees with no monitoring of what is happening. 'You can't make head or tail of what it takes to get an advancement', was one comment. 'It is clear that some managers are more of a mind to ask "...how can I help you to leave?" rather than "how can I help you to stay",' was another. Cambridge typically rewards those who keep their heads down, those who 'fit in', those who are not in minorities and who are naturally disposed to go along with Cambridge's culture of amateur muddling along, where the many sharp wits in the University are more likely to be used to delay change than to speed it.

That is what this Audit Report will be up against. The members of the academic community in power in the Departments and Faculties whose 'leadership' role features in the report will not necessarily be getting any training, it seems. There is a recommendation that 'new managers' be taught something in their (at present rather vestigial) 'induction training'; that existing 'managers' be 'offered' equality training (when it should be made a condition of their continuing to exercise any 'leadership' role at all); that this should happen within 'a programme of support and development' (from which slightly patronising terms Heads of department will run a mile); that there should be 'mentoring' (by whom? Quis custodiet...).

Not merely training, but top quality and obligatory training, needs to become a 'requirement' (to quote the Vice-Chancellor's speech on 2 October 2000) for everyone in Cambridge with powers to make decisions of any sort affecting others' lives and careers has to begin to receive training. That training needs to look not just to equality of opportunity but to all the multitude of areas of unfairness in the University at present. Our watchword should be 'fairness' not merely 'equality of opportunity'. And we have to do it now and not in the ten or twenty years' time it can, in reality, be expected to take.

Gill Evans

A Deafening Silence

Regular readers of the *Update* will remember my web site

<http://freespace.virgin.net/john.hewitt1/> {note that there is no www in this name}.

"A Habit of Lies - How Scientists Cheat!" The site is about cell biology. What it says, as loud as I know how to say it, is that the field has got this subject wrong and it has it wrong because of lying among some very senior scientists.

After a year, the number of hits on the site is approaching 4000, at an accelerating rate, and few people who have contacted me have offered any dispute about the rationality of its arguments.

Now, if I am right when I say this field has got it wrong, and I'm well qualified to know, the implication is that an awful lot of public money has been spent chasing nonsense ideas. In the circumstances you might think workers in the field would be willing to commit just of few hours replying to obvious questions. But they don't, all I hear from them is this deafening silence. There is no reply from the central figures.

It seems Cambridge University and its staff are so busy "pursuing academic excellence," that they have no time to reply to critics. Or perhaps they are just too "excellent" to notice that anyone disagrees with them.

John Hewitt

CAFAS Case-worker guidelines

We set out to befriend and support.

If a colleague, friend, parent or other family member approaches CAFAS we explain that the individual concerned must approach us directly.

We act only at the wish of the individual concerned and with his or her full knowledge.

We protect confidentiality.

We can offer advice about the way forward and general guidance about moves to avoid.

We can be of use in explaining about the procedures institutions ought to follow and helping to make sure they keep to them.

We can often obtain free legal advice informally, but we cannot offer free professional representation.

We can accompany individuals to meetings or hearings and offer CAFAS representation.

We can liaise by writing letters to the institution on behalf of the individual in difficulties.

We can ask CAFAS members to write general letters of support.

We can often arrange for media coverage.

NOTICES

Agenda 28 April

1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. CAA & CAFAS Conference, 2 May: *The commercialisation of academic science.*
4. Case reports
5. AOB

There will be an officers' meeting in Room 2075 at 1pm

Informal lunch and chat from 12 noon in the nearby cafeteria, first floor, Students Union building, Malet Street. All welcome.

CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Secretary.

CAFAS ON THE WEB

<http://www.cafas.org.uk>

Michael Chanan has developed our website. It is worth a visit.

BAD E.T. EXPERIENCES?

Could members who have suffered bad experiences with Employment Tribunal Chairs and/or with costs awarded against them please send details to Dr Gillian Evans, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, West Rd, Cambridge CB3 9EF who is collecting information on these as evidence for an inquiry into Employment Tribunals.

CAFAS Publications

We need to send a copy of all CAFAS booklets to five libraries. Unfortunately, we have sold out of Report 1: Michael Cohen & Colwyn Williamson, *Academic Standards Under Pressure: The Case of Swansea*, CAFAS and Report 2: Michael Cohen & Colwyn Williamson, *The Other Plagiarism Case: Mrs Jones and the University of Wales: CAFAS*. We would be very grateful if any members who have spare copies or who are prepared to release their own copy could contact Dr Bob Potter, 98 Addison Road, Hove, BN3 1TR. Tel: 01273 203 545.

Members who have monies from selling publications or recruiting members, please send to the Membership Secretary & Treasurer, Bob Potter.

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Students' Complaints:

Please contact the Secretary.

CAFAS was founded in March 1994. It depends on subscriptions and an active membership. It meets in January, April, July and October.

CAFAS Report No. 8***RESOLVING COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES IN UNIVERSITIES; THE WAY FORWARD***

G.R.Evans
Public Policy Secretary

1. Complaints in the academic environment
2. Prevention: the 'first stage local ombudsman'
3. Reform of formal procedure and the Model Statute
4. Independent external review: the ombudsman option

Copies may be obtained from 98, Addison Rd., Hove, Sussex, BN3 1TR
price £3. (See report order form)

Update deadline:**10 April 2001**

Please send letters on any issue, news items and articles to:

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e-mail: thorpe@lgu.ac.uk; Tel/Fax: 0181 986 3004

Disks & email are best. Disks will be returned.

Items in *CAFAS Update* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.