

CAFAS Update No. 73

12 June 2012

Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards

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

Meeting:

Saturday 23 June 2012

2.00 pm

Room 254

Birkbeck College

Malet Street

London WC1

Underground: Goodge Street, Euston Square, Euston, Russell Square, Holborn

Touching a nerve

What's the biggest crime you can commit as a trade unionist?

Crossing a picket line?

Collaborating with management?

Standing idly by when members are being sacked?

I learned at the recent UCU national conference that there is a crime bigger than all these, namely criticising paid officials.

On June 9th I was outside the conference in Manchester distributing the latest CAFAS report [see below, eds.], which contains criticisms of two Wales regional officers who, the report says, failed to lift a finger to help a lecturer faced with the sack. Now, every union member who's been in trouble will tell you that it's almost impossible to get the top bureaucrats to stir themselves. Not so. I soon found myself surrounded by several of the most senior UCU officials, headed by General Secretary Sally Hunt herself, all demanding that I desist from handing out the report. I expect the 'union inertia' in its title had attracted their attention. There is, they said, a 'rule' against publishing criticisms of the union's paid staff. They refused to show me this rule; and, whatever rules the UCU has protecting its officials from criticism, I don't believe for a moment that there is one prohibiting an independent organisation from publishing and distributing the

view that the union sometimes fails to defend its members. Such a rule would be an absurd affront to free speech and incapable of enforcement. Sally Hunt and Company do, however, have the power to call the police, even on the members whose contributions pay their salaries; and security staff acting on their instructions told me that this is what would happen if I remained anywhere on the premises of the Manchester Convention Centre where the conference was being held.

Colwyn Williamson

James Luchte & Trinity Saint David:

A casework study in university ineptitude and union inertia

This report by Colwyn Williamson describes the circumstances in which a particular academic was threatened with the sack, but activists will also find

informative its analysis of the standard dismissal procedure in all the pre-1992 universities and the insights it provides into how the UCU sometimes fails to respond adequately when one of its members is in trouble.

**Copies of this may be obtained from the Treasurer & Membership Sec, Dr Eva Link:
rekgeml1982@yahoo.co.uk.**

This report is free. It can also be downloaded from www.cafas.org.uk where there is a full list of reports. Cafas is a voluntary organisation and donations are most welcome.

Do you recall ECC List 98?

Essex County Council List 98 is surfacing up once more! An email from another victim received on Tuesday 29 May 2012 states the following:-

‘Dear Mr Ali

I found your pdf relating to List 98 and just wanted to check to see if this email address is still active as I'd like to use some of your content. I was put on List 98 about 10 years ago, and as far as I know I'm still on it.

I was only told this after I had left ECC employment and have some of the concerns you have raised. My particular concern being that it (by the very nature of **its name**) **seems closely aligned to List 99 and would** suggest some serious offence relating to children may have been committed. As you have indicated here - there is no indication given as to what is contained therein or what prospective employers may be told. In my case I had left Essex County Council employment (as a teacher) on a compromise agreement after a confrontation with a manager. By virtue of the compromise agreement this was intended to allow both parties to move forward - but about 3 months later I was informed of this (which I was not aware of prior).

If you do receive this email I'd be pleased to hear from you and as whether list 98 still exists. I now run an internet marketing company and one of the projects I'm launching will include a section called 'Not Essex County Council' to allow visitors to post and discuss (via forums etc) their experience of ECC and I'd like to have this List 98 as one of the subjects.’

I phoned and I wrote back. Now I invite other victims to get in touch. Here are my contact details.

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Nottingham

There is no further report on the Nottingham case, since after Rod Thornton's resignation in March, the inquiry into events at Nottingham became dead. But CAFAS decided a couple of months ago to hold a broader inquiry along the lines recommended by the Inquiry Team headed by Sir Henry Brooke.

Sir Henry has told me that he does not want to chair this broader inquiry, so we are looking for a new chair. I will approach one or two people in the next couple of weeks and will report at the meeting on June 23.

Eric Barendt

CAFAS Update seeks to provide an open forum for opinion and discussion. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.

BOOK REVIEW ARTICLE

Corporate Universities in US and UK failing a generation: Time for Faculty to Re-Occupy

Benjamin Ginsberg's eminently readable account, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and why it matters* (2011, OUP, \$29.95) fulfills the promise of its title in an account of the transformation of many American Universities from academic institutions to corporations in the business of education. He describes this transformation from public service to business enterprise through the last 30 years and attributes many of the consequent changes to an ever expanding corps of self-styled administrator-managers whom Ginsberg calls "Deanlets". But the account also applies remarkably well to the transformation of British Universities that began in earnest with the Thatcherite obsession for accountability (cost) of everything (but no values of

anything). Drawn from his own experiences as a senior faculty member at Johns Hopkins and a great deal of information collected from a variety of Colleges and Universities throughout the US, Ginsberg's fine account, together with extensive documentation, sets out the circumstances and particularly the consequences in the institutions which the world needs now more than ever as it faces ever more complex problems that demand serious knowledge and critical thinking to solve.

The story is about the changing relationships of University administrations to academic faculty on the one hand and to the governors/boards of trustees [Councils, UK] on the other. Time was when senior administrators (deans/provosts [pro-VCs] were drawn from senior faculty as knowledgeable part-time and short-term academic administrators. Their role was to represent faculty interests and needs in the three-part governance structure of Universities (as in the UK). While Governing bodies looked after finance; academic faculty, together with their Presidents [VCs] as academic leaders and spokespeople for education, looked after academic work, programme development, directions in research, etc, according to their expertise. The administration then acted as go-betweens of the needs and opportunities on the one hand and the resources for their support on the other. The crucial change took place when governors turned from appointing academic leaders to appointing people who were CEOs in spirit if not in kind. These CEOs knew well to whom they owed their jobs and allegiance.

While the old-time academic leaders might have brought persuasive charm and erudition to bear upon their overseeing governing bodies, the membership of the governing bodies also changed substantially. This detail which eludes documentation in the US, is not taken up by Ginsberg, but it is particularly relevant to the *Fall of the Faculty* in the UK (and might offer some understanding of problems in the US). With the rising costs of higher education and the public championing of financial interests in the post-war era, Universities wanted, rightfully, their share of the cake, but in Britain the interest was confounded with Thatcherite principles of accounting. So Universities were directed (by a quango in essence) to look to replacing those governors who understood public service, as Universities were well understood to be, to those who understood financial success of various kinds. Many of these new boys, often taken on as successful graduates, then represented corporate interests and came in turn to make their mark on the University by appointing their own kind as CEOs. These new CEOs in turn appointed not academics to fill senior administrative posts, as formerly, but their own kind sporting MBAs. But what might MBAs know about what makes for a lively and productive academic environment?

These new CEOs understood the authority of their corporate governors, and administrators in their turn understood the authority of the CEO and so down the hierarchy to lesser administrators whose jobs turned to pleasing the governors and managing the faculty. So administrators were no longer representing academic interests to governors, but rather protecting the governors from considering mere academic needs while justifying themselves and their newly appointed CEO benefactors to the masters of the Universities' finances. In this they created new jobs and expanded their domains, taking on "managerial" titles, roles and practices as bosses in jargon-filled language about remaking the new socially-oriented enterprises. They were successful in sidestepping their ignorance of the real business of sustaining and improving academic programmes, if they could find ways of justifying their roles in the corporation.

The consequences of this transformation are embodied in two simple statistics. 1) Between 1975 and 2005, nationwide, while academic faculty increased by about 50%, the numbers of administrators and other professional staff increased by a total of 325%. 2) It has now become the case that 70% of University teaching in the US is undertaken by "adjunct" faculty - who struggle to survive on poorly paid part-or full-time one year contracts and who with little prospect of tenure are unable to enter productive careers in their own subjects. The elite institutions, both private and public, however, still championing the central role of faculty in their institutions, have largely avoided these pitfalls. There, it continues to be well understood that the commitment of academic freedom to faculty with fully-tenured contracts is the bedrock of a thriving, productive and creative academic community.

Most tragic of the trickle-down failures of governors is their easy supposition that the fundamental principles of success in a corporation are the same as those that drive a thriving University. Ginsberg avoids discussing whether governing bodies themselves are aware of the consequences of their newly found interests in taking a firm hand in long-term planning that always begins with finance, but it is clearly inferred that these have seriously affected the character and content of the education of a generation of students. But it is a point that needs to be said unambiguously. There are now large numbers emerging from Universities with pieces of paper that fall far short of declaring their bearers to be stepping out in the world with newfound confidence in critical thinking and creativity. Good University teaching requires loyal confident faculty with the commitment to professional work that comes with tenure. In fact, are we seeing these consequences already in the present generation of citizen-politicians – taking up fundamentalism in the absence of appreciation of the accumulated knowledge of the last

2,000 years, refusal to appreciate the disasters abuse of the planet will bring, and the incompatibility of greed and democracy?

Another tragedy brought by these transformations, too little noticed by academic faculty themselves, is the step-by-step administrative usurping of academic affairs. For the most part faculty are busy with their jobs, teaching and research, and have shunned involvement with their University's administrative affairs to appreciate for themselves the progress of procedural change, slipped in unnoticed. But, as even the most aloof of faculty have come to realize, these "managers" were not only taking over many domains of academic decision-making, they were even creating new academic programmes of questionable academic value. Bad and sometimes very expensive decisions (e.g. inappropriate computer systems) made in the absence of even the most derisory of consultation were becoming frequent occurrences. Ginsberg cites many examples, but one many academics in both the US and UK may recognize is the creation of "The Strategic Plan - A Vision of Excellence" written in jargon and devoid of argument, to be endlessly revised and then seldom realized as a working document. But they keep administrators busy with meetings to organize, as even formally recognized at one institution with the creation of the post of 'Coordinator of College Liaisons'!

Ginsberg is also careful to offer considerable gratitude for his own experiences with 'good' administrators, - as indeed I expect most of us are. But, of course, an inevitable consequence of administrative mistakes, unadvised poor judgment, and any number of other insults to academic efforts, is that these manager-administrator-deanlets become the butt of angry jokes and, doubtless, articulate, explicit rebuttal. At Johns Hopkins this 'insubordinate' behavior was met with an administrative plan to impose a 'code of civility' and civility training for faculty! The faculty responded vehemently, and at length, as Ginsberg relates, with extensive debate of the history of civility, of social control and meanings of civility, while the administrators stood firm. But, the administrators claimed, the desire to introduce the program was sufficient justification, - no principle required. This episode describes the cultural gulf that now too often separates faculty and faculty concerns from their would-be facilitators, the administrator-deanlet 'managers'.

This compellingly readable account, including far more than touched upon here, is at least as important to UK Universities as to many in the United States. Ginsberg wrote *The Fall of the Faculty* because it does matter - a lot, and in a variety of ways. It is in essence a call to Faculty to Wake Up and Occupy the roles that only they can fulfill, - making the wealth of knowledge and expertise that reside in Universities available as a public resource.

The job is not easy! But in the UK, there may be some practical opportunities that could help a lot. Here are several. The major "Guides to Universities" could include a new and heavily-weighted entry of "Student/Tenured Faculty Ratio" to accompany or to replace the usual SSR ratio which offers no distinction between Post-graduate students given titles (for the purpose) and permanent faculty. Another avenue is for faculty themselves to find ways of making contact with members of governing bodies who are supposed to know their institutions. Council members should, for instance, be ready to discuss the detail of their Annual Reports. Another is for faculty, with or without administrative endorsement, to survey the effectiveness of various practices in their University. Surely, reporters would be interested! And students should be fine allies since, after all, they not only pay the bills, but worry for good reason about their futures. - While the rest of us worry a lot about the fall of judgment, knowledge, integrity and social concern in the public institutions we all take for granted and depend upon: banks, the NHS, public utilities and wisely established public policy. Perhaps we are already seeing the more far-reaching consequences of the Fall of the Faculty in our public institutions?

Janet Collett

Quebec

Published In *le Monde* (Paris) May 30, 2012

Quebec Between Anger and Hope

We are university teachers and researchers who work in Quebec and France. We know our universities and our students well. We work side by side with our students and contribute to their learning every day on both sides of the Atlantic. Today we are torn between anger and hope about the Quebec situation. Our anger comes from the cynicism of a government that has allowed the situation to deteriorate and preferred repression to dialogue for much too long. Our hope comes from watching the protest movement grow and from what it has already irreversibly accomplished. Let us discuss our anger first. For more than three months Quebec's Prime Minister has led Quebec into one of the worst social crises in its history:

-First of all, by calling into question one of the foundational elements of modern Quebec society, universities that are accessible to everyone. We cherish this model. Today's Quebec universities are deeply bound to the construction of a welfare state

that is unique in North America and which has favored economic and social growth in Quebec and the edification of its people. Quebec's universities have thereby earned their great prestige, seen from Europe, for this extraordinary role. This role is Quebec's great opportunity and should be valued as such!

It is ironic—and shows considerable cynicism—that the Liberal government of Jean Charest asks today's students to pay for the financial difficulties of Quebec universities when this government has greatly contributed to these problems in the recent past. The choice of risky investment strategies, particularly in real estate and construction plans, made possible by non-collegial and more and more “managerial” decision-making processes, despite the many alarms that have been sounded them. Worse still, for the more than 100 days of student mobilizing the Charest government has not found it necessary to open a great debate about the achievements and future of Quebec's universities. All we have heard instead has been about raising tuition fees.

-Next, by threatening another pillar of this society, negotiation and social dialogue, in particular with trade union organizations. Since the beginning of this conflict the Prime Minister has not stopped scorning students and their leaders who have time and again demonstrated their sense of responsibility, composure, imagination, and spirit of dialogue over long weeks of strikes. Is it necessary to remember what losing a full semester of university work has cost thousands of students when everything around them repeats this message incessantly? At a moment when student debt in the United States has grown to over one billion US dollars, their Quebec neighbors and colleagues have announced their refusal to accept a tuition hike” and their worries about indebtedness. Their government has replied with paternalism and indifference, however. After weeks of student striking this government pompously proposed a small improvement of loans and scholarships and the introduction of a system of reimbursement that is proportional to earnings, all accompanied by lengthening the fee raising period to seven rather than five years (even if the raise will now be 82% and not 75%). Critical issues such as student debt, particularly for middle class students without access to government scholarships, and the commodification of education have remained absent from the discussion. Following what has happened in other countries (the UK, Chile), those promoting these regressive reforms feign shock at the injustice of free and open access for the well off to advance their cause. If the issue is to get better off students to pay more, why not tax their parents directly? It is the level of taxation and its distribution that create national solidarity, not raising the costs of services for those who use them. Quebec, despite Prime Minister Charest, is not yet a private corporation, and neither are its universities!

-Finally, by attacking freedom of assembly and the right to demonstrate, the Charest government has openly attacked one of the most significant markers of a democratic society, whether in

Quebec or elsewhere. As if the situation were not already sufficiently disastrous, the Prime Minister has added provocation to its incompetence by creating a state of emergency against his own citizens. “Bill 78,” or the “special law” as it is called, has already led some important foreign newspapers to compare Charest with the most reprehensible heads of government that no one wants to know and deal with. Charest, who claims to be very concerned with Quebec's image around the world, is thus doing an extraordinary job communicating his own damning messages. From being seen as an open and tolerant place, Quebec is fast becoming “the province where citizens demonstrate by banging on pots and pans” in order to be heard in ways that recall the worst moments of South American dictatorships.

These deep reasons for legitimate anger have nonetheless led to an explosion of initiatives, exchange, and citizen participation, a magisterial nose-thumbing to the government's artisans of the worst, that gives us many reasons to hope. Who could remain indifferent to such a moment of collective effervescence, to the clamoring of thousands of citizens that grows daily in defiance of Bill 78 each day? In the streets, in the evening, with their family and their neighbors, people are not only talking about tuition fees but also about the arbitrary nature of Bill 78, about the government's refusal to engage in dialogue, about police brutality committed in the name of “public security,” and incursion on public goods and collective resources by private interests. To be sure, the government could crush the movement by arresting more and more demonstrators (it has already arrested more than 2,300 since the beginning of the strike). States can always overpower their population, at least for a while. But what would be the likely consequences of this kind of victory? What glory can a government win by crushing the youth of its own country? What reform is worth the reputation as an enemy of your own people and having your name linked over generations to repression and betrayal?

Honor is a very precious good, and it may be the only thing that the Charest government can still save. It must repeal Bill 78 and declare a moratorium on the tuition hike in order to establish favorable conditions for a genuinely democratic debate about the future of higher education in Quebec; or else it should leave for others the job of assuming the responsibilities that it has been unable to do. For everything else, this government has already lost. So much has been built by this movement that will resist being clubbed and intimidated: dignity and hope in the midst of struggle, aspirations to a more just society, the defense of the common good, and the restoration of a moral public life. These are all things that our societies, Quebec as

well as France, truly need.

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Reports on the students' strike include:

1. The Threat of Quebec's Good Example

Peter Hallward

'The extraordinary student mobilization in Quebec has already sustained the [longest](#) and largest student strike in the history of North America, and it has already organized the single biggest act of civil [disobedience](#) in Canadian history. It is now rapidly growing into one of the most powerful and inventive anti-austerity campaigns anywhere in the world.'

The full article is in *The Bullet*, Socialist Project • E-Bulletin No. 647
June 6, 2012

<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/647.php>

2. How Students are Painting Montreal Red

By Manissa McCleave Maharawal and Zoltán Glück

<http://truth-out.org/news/item/9415-how-students-are-painting-montreal-red>

NOTICES

Meeting 2.00 pm
23 June 2012
Room 254 Birkbeck College

Agenda

1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. Nottingham Inquiry
4. Academic Freedom
6. Campaigns
7. Casework
8. AOB

Pre-meeting from 1.30pm. All welcome.

Committee

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CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form.

The full constitution can be obtained from the Secretary or www.cafas.org.uk.

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

Next deadline: 1 October 2012

Please send letters, news items and articles to:
Pat Brady patrick.brady28@googlemail.com &
Geraldine Thorpe thorpegm@googlemail.com

<p>Meetings 2012-13: Birkbeck College</p>

<p>23 June 2012 Room 254</p>

<p>27 October 2012 <i>Room tba</i></p>

<p>27 April 2013 “ “</p>

DO YOU BELIEVE

- That academic standards have been dumbed down throughout the higher and further education sector?
- That this decline has been accompanied by the escalating rhetoric of 'excellence' and 'world-class'?
- That the number of contact hours between teachers and students, which the Dearing Report described as a proper measure of the

quality of education, has been reduced across the board?

- That there are all sorts of pressures on examiners to pass candidates who would previously have failed?
- That it is far easier to obtain Firsts and Upper Seconds than it used to be?
- That practices which used to be treated as academically unacceptable, or even as cheating, are now widely regarded as normal and inevitable.
- That the effect of the RAE and other pressures on academics is to increase the quantity of research, not the quality, and to restrict innovative and critical thought?
- That there are pressures, often of a commercial nature, to avoid certain areas of research, or to falsify results or to distort their conclusions and significance?
- That, despite lip-service to the importance of teaching, universities and colleges take little account of this in career advancement?
- That academic values have been largely displaced by market values?
- That the stated 'mission' of universities to serve the community has been abandoned in favour of commercial priorities?
- That education in the UK no longer has the status of a right bringing social benefits, but is instead treated as a commodity to be bought and sold?
- That discrimination against women and ethnic minorities is still rife in the employment and promotion practices of tertiary education, despite the multicultural community it is supposed to serve?
- That the work of the union in fighting discrimination and victimisation can usefully be supplemented by specialised advice and support from an organisation which focuses on issues of academic freedom and standards?

If you believe that many or most of these propositions are true, you ought to be a CAFAS member and your UCU branch ought to affiliate.

Membership Secretary & Treasurer: Dr Eva Link, 17 Highcliffe, Clivesdon Court, London W13 8DP 02089982569; rekgemL1982@yahoo.co.uk

If you would like a speaker from CAFAS to address a branch meeting, contact Colwyn Williamson, colwynwilliamson@hotmail.com 07970 838 276

www.cafas.org.uk