

# **FEDERALISM OR SEPARATISM?**

## **Professors Speak Their Minds**

"The University of New Zealand faces a major crisis," said the Academic Board of the University in its report on University reform, which was discussed by the Senate in Wellington recently. "A crisis forced on it partly by the failure of the conference of college councils as an administrative mechanism, and partly by the inherent weakness of the federal constitution."

**T**HE Board went on to say that there were two ways out: a strengthened Senate (or committee of the Senate) with power to take over the work of the conference of college councils, and try to make the federal system work. OR the establishment of four separate Universities with limited charters, and a co-ordinating body, such as a University grants commission, to balance the competing claims for Government support.

The Board recommended the second way.

The Senate, which met specially to discuss this whole question, set up a joint committee (3 Senate, 3 Academic Board members) to investigate this proposal, but threw out a suggestion that the time had come to set up separate Universities at once.

After discussions that went into a second day, the Senate postponed its consideration of the Academic Board's alternative proposal for a larger Senate with bigger academic representation, until the committee now set up to consider the autonomy proposal makes its report.

The question that is now before this committee is not a new one. A booklet brought out in 1911 by the New Zealand University Reform Association, and edited by Professor T. A. Hunter, T. H. Laby, and G. W. von Zedlitz, contained statements strongly supporting autonomy from two distinguished University men overseas.

The Rev. A. C. Headlam, Principal of King's College, London, and a member of the Senate of London University said (in the course of his answer to a questionnaire): "I think that as soon as possible you should try and secure that the four constituent Colleges should become independent Universities. . . . The whole idea of a University means the creation of a certain type of life and atmosphere, and that is quite impossible if you have four colleges separated from one another by some hundreds of miles. . . . A Federal University is never a success. Not long ago inquiries were made by the South African College on the subject and in all cases except Wales the answers were unfavourable to any sort of Federal scheme. As a matter of fact Wales is not a real exception for the University works in many ways exceedingly badly and is only kept up by the dishonest sentimentalism which characterises the Welsh nation."

Professor R. C. Maclaurin, an Auckland who was one of the foundation professors at Victoria University College and at the time of writing was President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said: "It was probably wise to adopt your present system in the

early days when the standards of the university were wholly undetermined. The conditions, however, have been wholly changed and your system is now antiquated. . . . I see little hope of a satisfactory solution of your problems unless a radical change is made in the constitution of your University. The colleges should be given 'degree granting power' (effectively if not nominally); and until this is done you are merely toying with a serious problem. You need not fear a lowering of standards; the college that tends in this direction will pay the penalty as it does in all other parts of the world."

*Since this whole question of University reform is one that personally concerns a very large number of young New Zealanders—more, at this time of huge enrolments, than ever before—"The Listener" has asked for some opinions from competent authorities in each of the four centres. First of all we print a short summary of the events that have led up to this "major crisis," given to us (with apologies for its abbreviated style) by*

**DR. J. C. BEAGLEHOLE** (Lecturer in History, Victoria University College. Author of "A History of the University of New Zealand"):

**T**HE University of New Zealand was born in the last years of provincialism, when hatreds were in some ways at their worst. The bad fairies hovered amorously round the infant's bed, and they have never ceased to hover. There were two founding acts—the New Zealand University Act 1870 and the New Zealand University Act 1874. Otago got in with the first, hoping its university would be the university for the country, as, at that time Otago was the richest province. The second, after a lot of dirty backstairs work, provided for an examining university on the London model—a university that was just a Senate and an office, arranging for exams and handing out degrees. All the teaching was to be done by "affiliated institutions," whose teachers were on no account to examine. Practically anything could be an affiliated institution, from the University of Otago to tenth-rate secondary schools. C.U.C. came in as an affiliated institution, then A.U.C., when founded, then V.U.C. There were always vigorous critics of this system, and it was heartily condemned as early as 1879, by the first Royal Commission on the University. Its recommendations were ignored.

Professors acted as crammers for exams, set by overseas examiners appointed by Senate. Staff had practically no say in control of either the Senate (one or two did, and lost their souls) or the individual colleges.

There was no co-ordination of teaching in the colleges, except that they all had to teach the same syllabus—I mean, no attempt to specialise in different things at different places. Everybody had to teach everything, but the great struggle started as to who should have the "Special Schools." Otago took medicine and mining, Canterbury engineering—then, later on, there was intrigue and ganging-up (South Island v. North Island for a long time) resulting in duplication, sometimes under cover of wangles (e.g., engineering in Auckland). Both Auckland and Canterbury had Schools of Forestry—and they both broke down. Massey was a compromise out of two schools of agriculture at Auckland and Wellington, and so on. There was never any planning ahead, or judging questions on their merits.

But it was the keeping of university teachers out of control of examining and academic administration, control of courses, etc., that caused the University Reform Movement in 1908. The Royal Commission they demanded wasn't set up till 1925—it reported that the University of New Zealand offered unrivalled facilities for gaining university degrees, but was less successful in providing a university education; rotten administrative organisation, part-time student system abused, libraries hopelessly inadequate, etc. It recommended setting up a federal university and saw four separate universities as far off in the future. The Act for this was passed in 1926, but made no provision for real power in the centre or proper full-time administrative officer—Vice Chancellor—with real authority. The thing broke down immediately as a federal university through the refusal of different colleges (except, I think, V.U.C.) to play fair—the old dirty work, stabbing in the dark, etc., kept on. The thing was kept going even as well as it did simply through the administrative genius of Hunter, who didn't believe in it anyway.

The University Conference set up a few years ago as an effort to get an all-over plan and plan ahead—broke down again through the inability to co-operate, the wish to put a fast one over, get to the Minister first and so on (e.g., Otago and the Medical School).



**DR. J. C. BEAGLEHOLE**  
*"The last ditchers fight till the world rolls over on them"*

The Federal University was never given a chance to work. The Examining University broke down under the weight of examinations, and internal examining had to be introduced, to get it done in time for the next year's work. Note: a bad thing is not reformed because it's a bad thing, but because it just don't work any more—the last ditchers fight till the world rolls over on them. An Examining University and a Federal University having both become impossible, what then remains but to try Four Separate Universities?

There never has been enough money to run a proper university—though there never has been as much money as the Government is handing out now. The Government by old standards has been astonishingly generous. But a terrific amount more is needed. But the future must depend partly on the centres, not just the Government. Will the old provincialism be seen in a competition of noble generosity between Auckland and Wellington, Otago and Christchurch? One can but make the suggestion to City Councils and others who are interested in humanity.

## **EDUCATION TODAY**

*THE correspondent who wrote recently desiring that "The Listener" should show more interest in education will possibly feel, on glancing through this issue, that we have been taking him rather seriously. It is, in fact, purely a coincidence, but nevertheless worthy of comment, that so many of our pages this week contain material directly or indirectly connected with educational matters and written by men of prominence in educational affairs. The article on these opening pages dealing with the highly important subject of University organisation is followed on page 12 by a study of the new permanent president of UNESCO, Leon Blum; on page 18*

*by a discussion on the educational influence of the cinema written by F. L. Combs; on page 20 by W. J. Scott's criticism of the effect of thrillers on literary taste; on page 30 by an estimate of the relationship of supplies of newsprint to democracy; and on page 33 by a portrait of a noted New Zealand educationist.*

*We make no apologies for this concentration of subject-matter. It was, as we say, not wholly intentional, but there can be no more important topic to-day than education; and the evidence which these pages offer of its direct relevance to so many aspects of our daily lives confirms this.*