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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to suggest some ways in which present pressures on institutions and their facilities to be more productive can be more creatively met. The main theme of the paper is that many faculty are ready and able to change their styles of work and are prepared to engage in professional activities of substantially different character from those in which they are presently occupied. The central structural change that will be outlined in this paper is concerned with the institutionalization of the public service mission in higher education. The paper is in five parts. The first outlines the problem in some greater detail. The second deals with needs of faculty and the third with reluctance of faculty to change roles. The fourth suggests some modes of easing the transition to new roles. The fifth section is concerned with staffing the new public service unit. The paper concludes with some thoughts about imperatives for higher education institutions. (Author/PG)

NEW LIFE FOR FACULTY AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS*

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The purpose of this paper is to suggest some ways in which present pressures on institutions and their faculties to be more productive can be more creatively met. There is much talk lately of eliminating tenure, of firing faculty outright, of increasing faculty workloads, and of prescribing faculty activities in greater detail to make them more efficient (Semas, 1973). Within our institutions of higher education, typical responses to these pressures are defensive and fear-ridden. Collective bargaining and other devices have arisen to insure that the status quo is not disturbed. The stage is being set for a battle among faculty, administrators and fund sources in which there can be few winners. For if to knuckle under to externally imposed standards is educationally and institutionally disastrous, perpetuation of present conditions in the academic profession is hardly any better.

The main theme of the paper is that many faculty are ready and able to change their styles of work and are prepared to engage in professional activities of substantially different character from those in which they are presently occupied. Moving faculty out of their traditional habits and into new ones

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requires bold new organizational arrangements which directly and imaginatively meet their needs for self-renewal and growth. By creating new structures, institutional missions can be addressed more directly and efficiently. Older academic organizations can be streamlined and revitalized, new and younger faculty can be introduced, and the mobility of those who remain improved.

The central structural change which will be outlined in this paper is concerned with the institutionalization of the public service mission in higher education. As will be shown, a renewal of this important, but relatively neglected, aim of education will have the effect of helping to improve the reputation and usefulness of institutions of higher education, thereby increasing the likelihood of continued and higher levels of support. A public service unit within each institution, in addition, is a natural vocational vehicle for faculty, particularly those at middle age, as their evolving needs for being more socially useful become more salient. Moreover, such a unit forms a bridge between the academic world and the non-academic - a transitional stage for those who wish to move into occupations in industry, government or other professions for which their primary training may not have prepared them.

The paper is in five parts. The first outlines the problem in some greater detail. The second deals with needs of faculty and the third with reluctance of faculty to change roles. The fourth suggests some modes of easing the transition to new

roles. A fifth section is concerned with staffing the new public service unit. The paper concludes with some thoughts about imperatives for higher education institutions.

The Problem Restated

There are three levels in our society concerned with education which are in need of change -- American culture, American institutions of higher education, and the academic profession. Workable solutions to the problems of each must be related. There need to be new modes of interaction between academic personnel and community, removing barriers to information flow and idea exchange. There must be new conditions within institutions integrating faculty and institutional goals, as person and organization are united in synergistic efforts. And there should be revitalized modes of interaction between the institutions and the culture, reaffirming the role of higher education as a moral force and precurser of change in society.

The basic question is what fundamental changes within our institutions of higher education can affect culture, institution, and individual at the same time? One answer, as noted above, lies in the considerable strengthening of the public service mission of our colleges and universities. The creation of strong separate units of public service within each institution would provide unique opportunities for faculty to move into new roles. It would permit faculty to move gracefully out of traditional teaching and research roles and gradually, if desired,

out of the academic profession into new roles. It would provide institutions with formal organizational structures to accommodate the changing needs of its workers. It would permit the institution to take on a more direct and positive helping stance in addressing the practical needs of the society and in enriching its culture. By making the institutions more valuable to the social system surrounding them, higher education would become more visibly productive, increasing the probability of greater financial and moral support.

Needs of Faculty

There are several reasons why many faculty may be psychologically predisposed to make changes in their work roles (cf. Bess, 1973). A number of faculty, both young and old, partly through poor advice, have entered the academic profession for the wrong reasons. Some of these may have discovered the error in their vocational choice while quite young, others not until later; but both groups often feel condemned to continue in an occupation for which they are ill-suited and which they presently find distasteful. They may also be confined to a single institution in times of severly reduced mobility.

Other faculty who are at middle age are simply "tired." They have been teaching for 20 to 25 years and have grown bored with the repetition of activity in their teaching roles. (Even exceptional teachers experience this ennui.) Many may also have already made their most creative research contributions but

continue to do research because that role is virtually the only one they have been trained to perform. At mid-career, they have come to some understanding of the limits of their capacities in their work, and they are aware that their lack of certain critical skills may hinder their future achievements and career progress (Sofer, 1970, p.69). They begin to question their identities and self-concepts, wondering if their views of themselves are valid and whether and how they might change in the future. They are increasingly beset with feelings of loss of confidence and insecurity (Billings, 1949; Henry, 1961; Rogers, 1973).

Often adults at this age experience some regression to adolescent self-centeredness and hostile defensive postures (Fried, 1967). Yet it is possible to conceive of work and home conditions in which such anxieties might make adults more rather than less open to alternatives in their lives -- i.e., more receptive to new solutions to perceived problems. Clearly, those solutions must appear challenging but not threatening. Moreover, they must take cognizance of certain human developmental changes which are of a positive nature. For example, adults during these years are undergoing an increased salience of several very basic needs. As Erikson (1963) points out, with age comes a greater disposition to satisfy needs for generativity - for creating and guiding future generations. White (1952) has suggested that the life cycle includes trends toward the deepening of interests and the humanizing of values. In the analysis of Linden and Courtney (1953), in middle adulthood there comes a widening social interest - a "social creative"

period. Within the academic profession, according to Kelly and Hart (1971), with age there appears an increasing concern with "character building" in the faculty role, and a relative decline in interest in research. In sum, it can be said that many faculty may be "ready" to adopt new roles and would welcome the opportunity to remove themselves from the ritual and tradition of their past responsibilities.

Reluctance of Faculty to Change Roles

Yet there are great problems in inducing faculty to take on new formal roles which may be appropriate for their stages in adult personality development. These problems fall into three separate but related areas - psychological, sociological, and technological. In the first case, as noted above faculty are reluctant to move out of their current roles because of their present "comfortableness" with their academic life. The threat of something new and the lack of complete awareness of the nature of their own relative ineptitude in other fields contribute to the static inertia which sustains them in the status quo. Even for those more successful, the habit of honor and prestige through performance in traditional roles inclines them to perpetuate their usual life styles, even if it is no longer as satisfying to them. Also, faculty are constitutionally conservative, a disposition developed and confirmed through long hours of scholarship in which risk-taking is minimized through conscientious fact-gathering, verification and validation.

From the sociological point of view, there are other problems. Moving to another profession or occupation may involve a change of situs and of status. The rankings of the National Opinion Research Council (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Taylor, 1968; Hall, 1969), for example, indicate that there are only eight occupations which are rated higher in prestige than "professor" by the American public. Furthermore, moving out of an occupation is often considered an indication of failure by one's colleagues.

Finally, there are technological reasons why faculty may not want to leave the academic profession. While faculty may be knowledgeable about their subject matter, the use of that knowledge in other occupations may require some special pragmatic skills in interpersonal relations and management which they may not have (Wilensky, 1964). In addition, by the time most faculty have reached middle age, they have come to be increasingly narrow specialists, often in esoteric fields. Though their avocational interests may be quite broad, they are disinclined to enter occupations in which they may be expected to have a knowledge of a more general and pragmatic sort. Skills in most occupations, in addition, often require certain kinds of "tacit" knowledge (Polyani, 1958) which can only be gained through experience. Many faculty are subconsciously aware of this and thus feel technologically ill-equipped.

A New Organizational Career Option

If faculty are offered real alternatives to their present career tracks, it is more likely that they can and will be

interested in and willing to change roles. Their new organizational homes cannot, however, be poorly disguised elephant-like burial grounds, where psychologically moribund faculty go to die. Fortunately, there are an enormous number of opportunities for faculty both out of the academic world and within it (c.f., Pelz and Andrews, 1966; Radom, 1970; Alexander, Kemp & Rybczynski, 1967; Fanning, 1971; and Bell, 1973, pp 224-227). The problem is how to make these opportunities known to faculty and the movement into them sufficiently stable and smooth to override the great threat that significant change in life always presents.

The advantages of a transitional staging area such as that offered by separate and well-funded public service units suggest themselves strongly in answer to this dilemma. As noted earlier, such an organizational entity meets the needs of the institution by making it more valuable to the constituencies which support it. It permits the transfer from overstaffed departments of those faculty ready and interested to embark on a second and new career, thus freeing up the academic market place and inviting younger persons into the profession. And it provides a new and vital moral force, infusing the culture with positive norms of helping and with collaborative modes of interpersonal relations in work. It is easy to envision a public service unit with many of the same structural characteristics which marked the county agricultural agencies in the days following the Morrill Act. Public service "extension agents" could provide needed services to business, hospitals, municipal governments, welfare agencies,

and individuals. The newest information produced by research could be made readily available to those in need. The humanities are by no means to be left out of this model. One can picture free concerts, painting workshops, lectures on literature and the like emanating from colleges and universities.

Needless to say, the idea of public service is not new to higher education. Faculty for many years have been engaged in it. Bayer (1973) reports that 42% of faculty engaged in public service consulting without pay during the year 1972-73 (51% at universities). What is new is the formal institutionalization of public service -- the establishment and full staffing of an organizational unit within the college or university for the express purpose of achieving these ends.

Faculty seeking respite from traditional teaching or research roles would look to the public service unit as way stations to careers outside or as a career in itself. From the security of academia, they could explore opportunities outside. With a home base which is familiar and with a social status similar to which they have been accustomed, they would feel free to explore new and different parts of their talents and interests -- indeed, to experiment with ego satisfying parts of themselves rather than simply to perform ritualistically in roles requiring activities which may have become boring and repetitious.

Easing the Transition to New Roles

Despite the availability of outside opportunities and a new structure within higher education institutions into which faculty may move, it is clear that other inducements are also

necessary to encourage faculty to make career shifts. The literature on vertical and horizontal transfers in industrial organizations provides some guidance here (Wilensky, 1961), though much of it deals with the transfer or demotion of executives or with the treatment of so-called failures in the organization. While faculty desirous of making a change to new careers cannot be classified as failures, it is well to avoid procedures which would liable them publically to be so labeled (Riley, 1967).

Typically, non-academic organizations are concerned with minimizing the disruption to the flow of work and to the existing social structure. The orientation is toward using workers whose contributions have been less than optimum in ways which primarily serve the organization, with little care for individual satisfaction and continued personal growth. As W. J. Goode (1967) notes in "The Protection of the Inept," the question is what to do

> with that inevitable segment of a group that is relatively less productive or competent. How can the group utilize them, how gain from them that smaller, but measurable amount of marginal productivity the group believes their effort can contribute.
>
> More generally, given the existence of the relatively inept in nearly all groups, what are the patterns or process which on the one hand will protect them from the rigors or untrammeled competition (and thus gain their support and contribution) and on the other hand protect the group from the potentially destructive consequences of their ineptitude. Needless to say, there is no evidence that the social arrangements now observable are the most productive, possible, whether of material goods or human satisfaction.

Becker and Strauss (1956) suggest that there is a special rhetoric that deals with misfortune and permits the filling of jobs nobody else wants. These include "honorific promotion, banishment 'to the sticks', shunting to other departments, frank demotion, bribing out of the organization, and down-grading through departmental mergers." Clearly, each of these are maladaptive to personal development. They are likely to result in resentment, poor performance, and stultification of individual growth, not to speak of the unfortunate effects on others, especially students and colleagues.

Happily, there are alternatives. To overcome the natural faculty inhibitions to career movement, institutions must undertake carefully designed transition programs. There is now available in the social science literature some knowledge about how shifts from one position or status to another can be made more attractive. Anselm Strauss (1969) suggests that when the movement in organizations is regularized and highly institutionalized those shifting are prepared for the next step - are forewarned about what will be expected of them and can adjust themselves psychologically. This is especially true when "the institution stands ready with devices to make him forget, to plunge him into the new office, to point out and allow him to experience the gratifications accruing to it, as well as to force him to abandon the old" (p. 104).

Strauss (1968) also notes that status passages are characterized by several common features: they are scheduled,

governed by clear rules which bear on when the change should be made and by whom, contain a prescribed series of steps that a person must go through to complete the passage, and have regularized actions which must be carried out by the participants in order to insure that the passage has been completed. Thus, if a new public service unit is to be established and faculty are expected to move into it, these four characteristics must be clearly delineated. Ambiguities in the mode of change itself or in the nature of the requirements of the new job will impede the movement.

Strauss (1971) suggests that in many cases people who deliberately move downward to another status often look upon that move as a temporary one or as a trial run for a possible permanent status, or even as a positively permanent step. He notes "It may also be regarded as a temporary interim period necessary for eventual progress up the social ladder" (p. 71). Thus, young writers or artists who may be upwardly mobile are willing temporarily to accept different or lower status positions while they wait to have their work accepted. When the period in the new status is prolonged, the identities of the individual may be "extremely blurred, marked by hesitations and vascillations and anguished indecision" (p. 171). This is clearly a situation which can be eased through a number of organizational devices.

Strauss (1969) notes too that many status passages can be "reversible" - movers can return to their old status. Obviously,

such an option for faculty would make a shift into a public service unit more attractive by reducing the sense of having to make a permanent change, the potentially bad consequences of which might be frightening. Manifestly, such reversibility creates risks for departments and administrations. If the department must be willing to take the faculty member back at his option, it and the institution must be prepared to revert to the status quo ante and to look for other ways of solving problems of overstaffing. However, as Gusfield (1957) hints, with appropriate status passage ceremonies and rituals, such reverses will be less likely. This is particularly true if these rites encompass separation from the old unit, transitional states, and incorporation in the new (Van Gennep, 1960).

Besides the formal institutional devices for making the transition more attractive, others are clearly needed which will aid the faculty member during the initial period in his new position. Irving Goffman (1952) in his landmark article on "cooling the mark out" gives some insight in this area. He suggests that it is necessary in the case of individuals who have been "ripped off" for some person to reduce the resultant anger so that the injury which has been done to their image of themselves can be redressed.

> For the mark, cooling represents a process of an adjustment to an impossible situation - a situation arising from having defined himself in a way which the social facts come to contradict. The mark must therefore be supplied for a new set of apologies for himself, a new framework in which to see himself and judge himself. A process of redefining himself along defensible lines must be instigated and carried along; since the mark himself is frequently in too weakened a condition to do this, the cooler must initially do it for him."

While a faculty member moving to a public service role can hardly be said to have been a "mark" - i.e., to have been taken advantage of by the institution, some parallels are evident. There is a necessity for formal and informal "coolers," as Goffman calls them, who would be responsible for providing emotional support for faculty in self-perceived precarious personal straits. There are at least three kinds of coolers who can perform this task: faculty spouses, institutional career counselors for faculty (Helbling, 1970) and high status informal leaders. In anticipation of any faculty shift in status, it is suggested that each of these coolers be carefully trained in the problems of personal change and in the art of giving assistance. Moreover, since many status passages are done in groups, the cohort of new recruits to the public service unit should be offered repeated informal counseling as a group.

Staffing the Public Service Unit

What kinds of faculty are likely to be willing to take a chance on a new kind of public service unit within a college or university -- and what kinds are needed. Clearly, to avoid the stigma of its being labeled a "department of failures," it will be necessary to attract important and well known and respected figures. If some of the best teachers and/or researchers can be induced to join the public service unit initially, it will have a better chance of succeeding. A well-established mode of recruitment and selection similar to that operating in departments will insure an aura of selectivity and

respectability for the new unit. So also will formal leadership by a person with vice presidential status, power and responsibility.

Clothing the public service unit with a rich and varied fabric will disguise the multiple functions it serves (Sofer, 1970), since many kinds of faculty can become part of it -- i.e., those who are eminently successful and are looking for a different avenue of endeavor as well as those who have been relative failures and are seeking a new start. A useful starting place for faculty wishing to begin new careers is with their avocational interests (Goldner, 1965).

Obviously, budget for the unit must be adequate. But it should be remembered that since these would not be new faculty to be added to the college or university, it is not likely that the total institutional budget will be materially increased. This differentiation of function, moreover, will help legislatures and other sources of financial support make independent judgments about fund levels for operations with different purposes. In other words, if, heretofore, the teaching function was alleged to be overbudgeted (i.e., overstaffed), now it would be budgeted at the appropriate level and the institutional budget as a whole would be seen to be spread over several discrete functions (e.g., at least teaching and public service). Each could be defended separately.

In the long run, experiments with other forms of financing faculty in new career excursions can be integrated into supportive organizational arrangements, such as the public service units discussed here. This might include, for example, making

social security and/or retirement benefits available at any age (cf., Carnegie, 1973, ch. 4).

Conclusions

Daniel Bell (1973, p. 480) has warned that in a post-industrial society, the gap between social structure and culture will probably widen. He notes

> The lack of a rooted moral belief system is the cultural contradiction of the society, the deepest challenge to its survival. The post industrial society is a crescive, unplanned change in the character of society, the working out of the logic of socio-economic organization, and a change in the character of knowledge. At some point, the major social groups in society become conscious of the underlying social transformation and have to decide, politically, whether to accept the drift, accelerate it, impede it, or change its direction.

Colleges and universities represent the greatest potential for meeting the challenge of providing a rooted moral belief system. Through their renewed effort to revive a sagging society by public service, they can reinstill the belief in the possibilities of social change for a better world. Furthermore, in exemplary fashion, they can demonstrate a new organizational model to permit people continued growth and development in careers.

As Thomas Green (1970) has said

> I supose there is not a career path in any area of work that does not have people who would be better off doing almost anything else. They are usually the bitter ones, frustrated by reaching a dead end, possessing unused talents, blocked in advancement, and atrophied in their capacities. A graceful exit to another career would often be a welcome relief. Surely it would be a blessing to the vigorous, as yet undefeated, eager, and competent younger generation on the rise.

We must consider faculty at middle age not as inept, not as ready for demotion, not as "dead wood," not as ready to be put out to pasture. Rather we can look at them as deserving renewed opportunities to rejuvenate themselves, to become more effective in their own terms, and to make greater contributions to their institutions and society. The dilemma for the institutions is an organizational one - what configurations can best permit that rejuvenation to take place and how they can serve institutional and cultural goals as well. One possibility has been suggested here.

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