

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING ACADEMIC VICE-PRESIDENTI. Introduction

My remarks on the state of SFU and its administrative structure are based on observations I have made during the past five months as Acting Academic Vice-President. I would like to preface these remarks by stating that on April 9, I sent a letter to Acting President Strand in which I expressed my desire to resign immediately from my position as Academic Vice-President. Nothing which may or may not happen here tonight will change my position and my remarks can therefore not be construed as an attempt to feather my own bed.

II. The Nature of University Administration

As I see it, there are three conceivable systems for administering a university: authoritarianism, participatory democracy and representative democracy.

- (a) Authoritarianism - The idea of an autocratic system of University administration is repulsive to me. This system is characterised by a number of Board appointed and selected administrative officers whose responsibility to their constituency is minimal or non-existent.
- SFU was close to this system in 1965 and it might be argued that the extreme centralization of decision making which the authoritarian system implies was desirable at that time. However, as a continuing system of administration I cannot condone autocracy at a University and for this reason I have been one of the strong supporters of the conversion of departmental headships to chairmanships. An autocratic system of University administration does not use the universities' resources to the fullest extent, stifles creativity and initiative except for a select few and produces undesirable substructures (dukedom) within the University.

- (b) Participatory Democracy - This is the system under which everybody has a direct hand in everything. This system is characterized above all by an incredible inefficiency. In the words of Mr. Fotheringham of the Vancouver Sun it is "democracy running wild". Participatory democracy is unacceptable to me both from the point of view of a University administrator and from the point of view of a faculty member. This system reduces the role of the administrator to that of a paper pusher and it involves the faculty member in too many activities which are not related to his primary interests in teaching and research. In the long term, this system will adversely affect the quality of scholarship and teaching at the institution. In my view, participatory democracy is the system which most closely describes the present situation at SFU. I shall illustrate this later.
- (c) Representative Democracy - Under this system the decision makers (President, Deans, Chairmen, Senators, Committee members) are chosen by their constituencies. Their selection is a mandate to get on with the job. If in the view of the majority the job is not well done, you replace the decision maker by someone else. In my view, this is the only viable system of University government and one which SFU must adopt immediately, if we are to stop spinning our wheels and if we are to be successful in finding capable senior administrators. I will elaborate on this later.

III. Policies and Procedures

- (a) Policies - As a result of the rapid growth of SFU and as a result of the nature of the original SFU administrative structure, we presently find ourselves in the position of having virtually no established policies. This situation would be cause for alarm

at any university, but represents an outright disaster at a trimester institution. The trimester system produces a great deal of turnover in the administrative bodies of the University.

Continuity can only be provided through established policies and these are lacking at SFU. How are we to work ourselves out of this dilemma? Clearly we need to establish the missing policies.

I do not think that we can do this by having everyone participate in the generation of first approximation policies. This process will take too long and in the interim more ad hoc decisions will have to be made and the gap will never close. I prefer this task to be tackled by the administrative decision makers and I know that they will not produce a perfect set of documents. I am, however, of the opinion that imperfect policies are better than no policies and it could be understood that the first approximation policies so generated would be subject to early review and modification.

- (b) Procedures - When I agreed to stand for election to the office of Acting Academic Vice-President I included the following paragraph in a statement circulated to all faculty:

"In the past, I have at times been frustrated by the manner in which the faculty has conducted its affairs. I am of the opinion that meaningful discussion and common sense have often taken second place to procedural wrangles. If elected, I would attempt to reverse this trend by calling upon the good sense of faculty rather than calling on the "rule book". This approach has served me well in the past and I would only abandon it with great reluctance".

I believe I have succeeded in avoiding procedural wrangles in a number of areas but Senate has notably not been one of these. In my view, Senate would function more effectively if Senators would refrain from demonstrating their intimate knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order. These rules, presumably formulated to encourage the orderly conduct of business, are now being used to disrupt business. I would favour a system of rulings from the Chair, with the understanding that these might be challenged - on the basis that they appear unreasonable to a majority, not on the basis that they contradict Mr. Robert.

IV Implication of Senate Action, April 8, 1969.

At its meeting of April 8, Senate had before it a discussion paper on Academic Planning initiated by the Acting President. In its wisdom, Senate decided that it could not discuss this issue before the matter had been referred to the faculties. The item in question was part of the report of the chairman - a standard agenda item. Frankly, I viewed this as the President's first real opportunity to provide some philosophical leadership on a matter of great importance to SFU. I urged the Acting President to speak on this subject and I felt certain that Senate would welcome the opportunity to come to grips with this issue. I suggest to you that something is wrong when the President, as chairman of Senate, cannot bring before that body a paper on academic planning as part of his regular report. Consider for a moment the implications of this kind of situation on the search for a permanent President and/or permanent Academic Vice-President. Do you really believe that under these circumstances, we can hope to attract good persons to these positions? The possibility of providing philosophical leadership is one of the few attractions of a presidency or vice-presidency; remove this possibility and you will not find and need not look for outstanding candidates.

V Summary

I have tried to make my views known in words of one syllable. I believe that it is high time we abandoned our present chaotic approach to governing ourselves. We must be critical in selecting those who will make decisions on our behalf and we must allow these people to get the job done - they are doing it for us.

R.R. Haering
April 14, 1969.