

defensive you will become, the less respect you will obtain from your students, and the less respect you will have for yourself.

I like to say that a good guide for a man's thinking in the moments when he has deep ethical problems is to ask himself, "In the years of my retirement, when I look back at myself, will I be ashamed of what I did, or will I say, 'That was the kind of man I wanted to be?'" It would be awful to have to think back to many occasions when a little courage would have made the difference. The price for a few days of "face saving" is too high when the values of a whole lifetime are at stake.

### III THE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE FACULTY POLICY

Finally, if one is to be a success as a faculty member, he will benefit from the ability to persuade a Faculty to go along with him by trying out some of his ideas about the curriculum. I shall quote some fairly long passages from a book I have enjoyed for many years." The advice is addressed to young faculty members, to tell them the realities of academic politics. Early in the book the author addresses himself to the new members of the Faculty, whom he terms "the young men in a hurry", who are appointed as teachers "because it is known that they once were able to learn".

"I shall take it that you are in the first flush of ambition. . . . You think (do you not?) that you have only to state a reasonable case, and people must listen to reason and act upon it at once. . . . There is little hope of dissuading you; but has it occurred to you that nothing is ever done until every one is convinced that it ought to be done . . . ? And are you not aware that conviction has never yet been produced by an appeal to reason, which only makes people uncomfortable? If you want to move them, you must address your arguments to prejudice and to the political motive, which I will presently describe. I should hesitate to write down so elementary a principle, if I were not sure you need to be told it. And you will not believe me, because you think your cases are so much more reasonable than mine can have been, and you are ashamed to study men's weaknesses and prejudices. . . .

"I like you the better for your illusions;

but it cannot be denied that they prevent you from being effective, and if you do not become effective before you cease to want anything to be done—why, what will be the good of you?"

After many pages describing the political parties to be found in a University Faculty, and matters of this kind, the author turns to the ways of convincing others to make changes. Listen carefully.

"There is only one argument for doing something; the rest are arguments for doing nothing.

"The argument for doing something is that it is the right thing to do. But then, of course, comes the difficulty of making sure that it is right. . . .

". . . Even a little knowledge of ethical theory will suffice to convince you that all important questions are so complicated, and the results of any course of action are so difficult to foresee, that certainty, or even probability, is seldom, if ever, attainable. It follows at once that the only justifiable attitude of mind is suspense of judgement; and this attitude, besides being peculiarly congenial to the academic temperament, has the advantage of being comparatively easy to attain. There remains the duty of persuading others to be equally judicious, and to refrain from plunging into reckless courses which might lead them Heaven knows whither. At this point the arguments for doing nothing come in; for it is a mere theorist's paradox that doing nothing has just as many consequences as doing something. It is obvious that inaction can have no consequences at all."

[The first principle which may be used for inaction is that "*the proposal requires further study*". This is best expressed by someone who has not bothered to learn what has been done, who will never bother to do so no matter how many times the problem is re-studied. Its greatest merit is that, like perpetual motion, it never loses its force. Closely allied with this is the principle that "*it is too soon to draw conclusions*". The argument of this principle is that one will get better conclusions on the problem later if he abandons the search for them now.]

"Since the stone-axe fell into disuse at the close of the neolithic age, two other arguments of universal application have

been added to the rhetorical armoury by the ingenuity of mankind. . . . They are called the *Wedge* and the *Dangerous Precedent*. Though they are very familiar, the principles, or rules of inaction, involved in them are seldom stated in full. They are as follows. The *Principle of the Wedge* is that you should not act justly now for fear of raising expectations that you may act still more justly in the future—expectations which you are afraid you will not have the courage to satisfy. A little reflection will make it evident that the *Wedge* argument implies the admission that the persons who use it cannot prove the action is not just. If they could, that would be the sole and sufficient reason for not doing it, and this argument would be superfluous.

"The *Principle of the Dangerous Precedent* is that you should not now do an admittedly right action for fear you, or your equally timid successors, should not have the courage to do right in some future case. . . . It follows that nothing should ever be done for the first time.

". . . If this consideration is not decisive, it may be reinforced by the *Fair Trial Argument*—"Give the present system a *Fair Trial*". This is especially useful in withstanding changes in the schedule of an examination. In this connection the exact meaning of the phrase is, "I don't intend to alter my lectures if I can help it; and, if you pass this proposal, you will have to alter yours". This paraphrase explains what might otherwise be obscure: namely, the reason why a *Fair Trial* ought only to be given to systems which already exist. . . .

[Closely allied to this is the principle that "*there must be no exception*", which is that it is unfair to make a desirable change in one department if another department is deprived of its advantages. By attaching to the progress of an idea the combined inertia of all groups *rigor mortis* is induced. In countries where a Minister of Education controls many universities, the inertia is nationalised. Fossils are more likely to revive than change is likely to take place within the system.]

"Another argument is that '*the Time is not Ripe*'. The *Principle of Unripe Time* is that people should not do at the present moment what they think right at that moment, because the moment at which they

think it right has not yet arrived. . . . Time, by the way, is like the [persimmon], it has a trick of going rotten before it is ripe."

[Finally, there is the principle that "*there is a hidden motive*." If all else fails, your opponent asks the question: "I wonder what he is *really* driving at." If suspicion arises, all thought ends.]

The author proceeds into rules for conduct of meetings, which are equally perceptive, but time is short, and I shall not quote them. Here we see a remarkably talented satirist writing about academic politics, the problems of persuading others to make changes in an academic community. I think you can see that he is an angry and discouraged man, but you will feel the way he does, I fear, from time to time.

### An Optimistic Dream

I would not like to leave you at this point on a note of discouragement, for that is only part of the faculty member's experience. So I want to tell you about a dream I once had. In order that you may understand this dream, I shall have to give you the facts of history explaining the background.

There is an island in the South Atlantic called Southern Trinidad, far away from anywhere. Its great virtue is that it lies halfway between South America and Africa. In the early part of the war the United States Air Force was supplying bombers to various fronts in Europe. The planes did not have the range to make the trip directly; many of them were ferried by making the trip from Miami to Trinidad to Dakar, and so on. The crews—the pilots, navigators, and others in these aircraft—were newly trained men. They had never made a major, over-ocean flight. To them it was an adventure. They were briefed very carefully by the navigators in Miami. I once attended one of these briefings, at the end of which the instructor said, "You won't have any trouble recognising it. It is the only island you will see for a thousand miles."

When the planes arrived, however, they encountered a difficulty. The island had been occupied for a great many years by albatross and puffins, who thought that the island was still theirs, and that the runway

was just the place for assemblies and meetings. So the planes would have to come down and be battered by birds in order to make the landing. A good many crashes took place, to say nothing of the mortality among the birds. Finally, the solution was discovered. These birds do not like noise. So noisemakers of the New Year's Eve type, drums to beat and whistles to blow, were shipped in. A schedule was arranged so that there was always present at the field the air crew of a squadron of aircraft. When the signal came that a new squadron was arriving, the men went out to the runway. They made all the noise they knew how to make, and the planes came in safely. Then the new arrivals took the noisemakers, made noise, and the first group went off to Africa. In this way the operation became a success.

My dream had to do with these flights, but it changed the personalities involved. In the dream I and my colleague teachers were the navigating officers in Miami, the people flying the planes were the persons who were being trained by us for Faculty positions overseas, and the birds wore academic costumes. I hope the moral is obvious: I believe if you young men with new ideas go out to your academic islands and make enough noise, there will be an opportunity for others with similar ideas to arrive, and pretty soon you will find changes taking place. At any rate, this optimistic side of faculty politics is the dream of ICAME.

#### QUOTED MATERIAL

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2. Pearson Hunt, "The Case Method of Instruction", *Harvard Educational*

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3. Jacques Barzun, *Teacher in America* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1945) p. 36.
4. Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
5. A. N. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and other Essays* (2nd ed.; London: Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1950), p. 19.
6. Barzun, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
7. Eliot D. Hutchinson, "The Technique of Creative Thought", *The American Scholar*, I (1932), 296-306.
8. Hunt, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
9. Quoted by Alfred Sherwood Romer in *Man and the Vertebrates* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 92-93. The verses were written by Bert L. Taylor, a columnist on the staff of the *Chicago Tribune*.
10. Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Collected Legal Papers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), pp. 31-32.
11. From a poem by John Jay Chapman, which was read at the Annual Dinner of the Signet Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 12th March, 1927.
12. Edgar A. Guest, "It Couldn't Be Done" in *The Path to Home* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Company, 1919), p. 37.
13. F. M. Cornford, *Microcosmographia Academica—Being A Guide for the Young Academic Politician* (Cambridge, England: Bowes & Bowes Ltd.). I have added three paragraphs—those enclosed in brackets. After all, we have learned new arguments for inaction since Professor Cornford first wrote, in 1908. The page references are 3-5, 25-32 in the second edition (1922).