

PLATFORM

NEWS AND VIEWS

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PLATFORM
NEWS AND VIEWS

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It is fairly accurate to declare that the fundamental wish of the University's academic body is to ensure that this institution is looked upon as a centre of academic excellence within the liberal tradition. For this goal to be achieved the University must distance itself from the perceived image of an abject follower of imposed authoritarian ideologies or beliefs. Furthermore, it must take the lead in order to demonstrate that outspoken constructive criticism, as well as the exchange and acceptance of at times conflicting ideas, are essential attributes of a healthy society which is ever ready and willing to assert its right to a meaningful participation in decision taking at all levels.

However, before the University can fulfill such a role in society, its own daily administration must unequivocally reflect the practical application of these principles. Unfortunately too many of us feel that we are still far away from this desired state. We think that this is probably due to two main reasons. First is the total absence of information regarding decisions taken and, of even greater importance, the criteria on which they were reached. Second is the lack of an effective means by which the views of staff members can be sounded in

order to influence policy and decisions.

This publication will attempt to overcome these difficulties by providing a two-way flow of information between the University and its members; and also by providing all staff members, academic and non-academic, with the means of airing their views and debating their ideas.

We are not, of course, under the illusion that Platform will solve these problems. Of fundamental importance towards this end is a revision of the present structures, which are rigidly hierarchical and which effectively deny any real autonomy to the University or democratic participation to its staff.

The need to eliminate this state of affairs is urgent. This can, to a large measure, be achieved by means of positive legislation. The new Education Act would go a long way towards encouraging the University to achieve the desired objectives, provided it does away with the suffocating strictures so far enshrined. It is important that the new Education Act, which we have been assured is imminent, would lead to the creation of a dynamic University, which society will regard as the example where policy and decisions are based on real participation and a critical outlook accompanied by progressive attitudes. □

A number of Institutes and Centres have recently been established at the University, with the objective of providing scope for specialized studies in particular areas.

Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies

Aims to promote advanced studies in the inter-disciplinary field of the literary and cultural affinities between England and Italy over the centuries. The Institute will offer programmes of study ranging from the Mediaeval period to the twentieth century.

Director: Dr Peter Vassallo.

Institute of Energy Technology

Aims to assist in the development of national energy plans through studies in the use of new or renewable energy sources and methods of energy conservation; to design equipment adapted to local conditions; to disseminate appropriate methods and techniques. The Institute is launching an information programme and journal on renewable energy technology. Comments from members of staff would be welcome.

Director: Mr Edward Scerri.

Centre for Distance Learning

Aims to promote Distance Learning projects to help satisfy the growing demand for access to higher education, to utilize academic resources and technical expertise so that, together

with other Distance Learning centres and universities, it will research methods to foster adequate systematic study of various subjects and disciplines; to provide opportunities for the acquisition of marketable skills for people whose commitments prevent them from following conventional day or evening courses.

Director: Dr Daniel Massa.

Institute of Health Care

Aims to provide degree and diploma courses in Health Care Sciences (such as in Nursing, Medical Technology, Speech Therapy) and allied areas; to conduct research with a focus on health care.

Director: Dr A. Serracino Inglott.

Environmental Science

A Board of Studies has been set up to coordinate courses in this field. Chairman: Dr Patrick Schembri

Institute of Maritime Law

There have been several reports in the press regarding the setting up of an Institute of Maritime Law by the International Maritime Organisation. This will be housed in the building formerly known as the Short Courses Centre, and will include accommodation for some twenty-five foreign post-graduate students and lecturers. Two places on the courses will be reserved for Maltese students. It is intended to inaugurate the Institute in October 1988.

The Third Plenary Session of the Community of Mediterranean Universities is being held at the Assembly Hall on 10 and 11 June 1988. Over 90 Rectors or their delegates from almost every country in the Mediterranean region will attend. The C.M.U. endeavours to promote scientific and cultural cooperation among the Mediterranean universities and to establish permanent links amongst them.

This year the Mediterranean Prize instituted by the C.M.U. is being awarded to the Greek poet and Nobel Prize winner, O. Elytis.

The Council of the C.M.U. has invited papers from the following scholars: Dr Esin Atil: "The Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean from illustrated 16th Century Turkish histories" (10th June, 10.15 hrs)

Professor Manuel G. Doncel: "Mediterranean Roots of our Physical Sciences" (10th June, 16.00 hrs)

Rev.Prof. Peter Serracino Inglott: "The Mediterranean story-telling sailor - Odysseus and Sinbad" (11th June, 9.30 hrs)

Professors Giulio Relini and Angelo Tursi: "The State of Research in Marine Biology in Italy within the context of the Mediterranean" and "University Training in Ecology" (11th June, 16.00 hrs).



● from Dr J. Eynaud, Dept. of Romance Languages, Faculty of Arts.

On 30 June 1987 an agreement was signed between the University of Malta and the University of Trieste on Scientific, educational and cultural co-operation in the field of Italian Language and Literature Studies, and in the field of environmental studies related to the Mediterranean basin (pure and applied science). Through this agreement the exchange of academic staff between the two Universities is now feasible.

On 4 January 1988 an agreement between the Faculty of Education and the Dipartimento per la cooperazione allo

A musical soirée, under the direction of Mro Charles Camilleri, will be held on Friday, 10th June, at 20.30 hours.

All members of staff are invited to attend.

New Appointments

Several appointments of Academic staff, both full-time and part-time, have recently been approved to fill vacancies in the Faculties of Education, Arts, Science and Dental Surgery. The Selection Board for Non-Academic Staff is also meeting regularly to deal with the applications for various vacancies and promotions. Appointments recently approved by Council included Library Attendants, Assistant Librarians and twelve Clerks.

Editorial note: All members of the University Staff expect that the Selection Boards set up for carrying out internal upgradings will reach their conclusions soon.

sviluppo of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was actuated.

The main objective of the agreement was that the Dipartimento would provide the University of Malta with:

- 1) expertise in the field of the teaching of Italian as a foreign language;
- 2) technical expertise in the production of multi-media language apparata.

The programme is now operating.

● from Dr Paul Xuereb, Librarian.

The Library's recent purchase of an IBM PS2 and of a Hitachi 1503 CD-ROM drive marks the beginning of an initially modest automation programme.

An initial target is the provision of the essential Medline database in CD-ROM format at the Medical Library. A subscription to it has already been started and the database is already being used experimentally in the Family Medicine Project led by Visiting Professor, Douglas Johnson. Another initial target is the automation of all serials records: the Library is in the process of selecting appropriate software for this purpose.

On May 10 the British High Commissioner Mr. B. Hitch formally handed over #5,000 worth of books to the Library. This handsome gift included such reference works as the Encyclopaedia of Religion and the encyclopaedia of Materials Science and Engineering, and monographs on philosophy, English literature, linguistics and the social sciences. All the titles had previously been selected by the Library.

Recent acquisitions for the Special Collections included manuscripts by Francis Ebejer, a manuscript by A. Cremona relating to Il-fidwa tal-bdiewa and the original manuscript music written for the same play. These last and the original minutes of the Ghaqda tal-Malti (Universita`) for 1941-46 were given to the Library by Mr. Guze` Cassar Pullicino.

Recent additions to the Library's collection of early editions of works by 19th century English woman novelists include Jane

Porter's The pastor's fireside (1832), Maria Edgeworth's The modern Griselda, 3rd ed. (1813) and Charlotte M Yonge's The three brides, 9th ed. (1870).

An application has been made to the Commission of the E.E.C. for funds to finance the building of the Main Library's much needed extension. The projected extension would house the University computer and an area for student computer-practice in the basement; a large area for the management, control and consultation of serials and a room for on-line searching on the ground floor; roomy accommodation for the Melitensia and other Special Collections on the first floor; a law Reading-Room and adjacent seminar room on the second floor.

With the cooperation of the K.S.U. the Main Library has largely solved the problem of noisy behaviour by student readers and large-scale misplacement of books on the Main Library's second floor. At one time this floor had to be barred to student readers except for the selection of books from the shelves.

Mr. Henry Cachia, a new graduate in accountancy and a student-worker in the Library for the past five years, was due to be appointed Assistant Librarian at the end of May. He has now been placed in charge of the Medical Library while Mr. S. Grech, Library Assistant, has been allocated duties in the Main Library. Other new appointments include Mrs. Elizabeth Caruana, Assistant Librarian (appointment being taken up on July 1, 1988) and Miss Alexandra Cortis, Library Attendant.

● from Dr E.L. Zammit, of the Workers' Participation Development Centre.

The WPDC is currently engaged in the following activities in pursuit of its declared objectives:

a) A research project at Malta Drydocks. This aims at evaluating the state of self management at the enterprise by identifying the main problem areas and analysing the network of interrelationships between Elected Council Members, Managers, Works Committees and shop stewards.

b) An investigation into the rights and duties of Worker Directors on the boards of Parastatal Companies. The Centre is also preparing its suggestions for the formulation of a set of proposals for future policy regarding the development of worker directors on the Board of parastatal companies. A national seminar is being planned for this purpose earmarked for September 1988.

c) The Diploma Course in Labour Studies organised under the auspices of the Faculty of Management Studies is in its second year. The 4 study units covered during the current quadrimester are: Organisational Psychology, Sociology of Work, Industrial Relations and Labour and Trade Union History.

d) Discussions are being held with various local and international trade union organisations - including ICFTU and ETUC and the Confederation of Italian

Trade Unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL) - aimed at setting up a Mediterranean School for Trade Union Education.

e) A new issue of *Perspettivi* (1988):

This WPDC Newsletter serves as a reference guide to the main events and developments in the field of industrial relations and worker participation in Malta. It also includes press reports, statistics, articles and reviews of topical interest, concerning local and foreign issues. This is distributed free of charge to individuals, institutions and organisations interested in industrial relations and workers' participation. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy is invited to contact the Centre (ext. 298).

f) A short course on "Women and Men - Equal Partners in the Building of a New Society" is being held at the I.D.E.A. Building, Belt-is-Sebh. This is the third course organised by the Centre in its series on "Women and Development Studies". It focuses on diverse aspects of women's writings.

g) The Centre has been invited by the Rector to submit proposals aimed at making decision-making processes at University more participatory. Members of Staff - both academic and non-academic - who would like to contribute towards this aim are invited to contact the Centre (ext. 298). □

REV. PROFESSOR PETER SERRACINO INGLOTT, RECTOR

A year has passed since a change of direction at the University was announced. In spite of the re-establishment of the Faculties of Arts and Science, and the policy of increased access to the University, there has been no evidence of real infrastructural improvements (supporting staff, extension of buildings etc.). Many of us feel that a year has been wasted in this regard. What is your view?

Not quite wasted, but certainly not very productive of visible results. Building and recruitment are the two processes in the whole university enterprise which have proved to be not only the most tortoise-like because of an inbuilt cumbersomeness for normally prudential reasons, but also to have been even more decelerated by inherited circumstances.

The stage reached as far as new buildings are concerned, is that Professor Richard England has been appointed Consultant with the task of drawing up (1) a plan for the siting of all the needed buildings on the campus; and (2) detailed proposals for the extension of the Library, together with a lecture centre, to include the computer area, audio-visual resource facilities, etc.

Then, the rest of the building operations will be taken over by the Projects Office which, it is hoped, will have meanwhile been set up by the Faculty of Architecture (Incidentally, already one project was referred to it by the Government in connection with the Rehabilitation of Valletta, and it is being handled by MEDABUC, now in active revitalisation as the University - MDC consultancy agency).

Also Prof. Borg-Costanzi, Advisor to the Minister on Higher Education, has done and is doing a lot of work,

together with our colleagues, on the detailed specification of laboratory spaces especially for engineering, and on the looming problems of next October.

A very careful study of the atrocious results of the neglect of proper maintenance over the last years has been completed by Mr. Emidio Attard, and a priority programme established. The most urgent work - the repair of the endangered columns of the Humanities Block - has been carried out, under the direction of our expert on concrete, Mr. Montesin; and it has been decided that the university maintenance team will be exclusively kept on ordinary upkeep, while the other repair jobs, such as the leaking roof of the Assembly Hall and serious damage in University House, will be assigned to outside contractors.

A lot of other work is being done. Mr. Dennis DeLuca is up to his ears into the task of supervising the completion of the International Maritime Law Institute buildings (formerly known as the Short Courses Centre) for next October. Others, notably Dr. Edwin Minto, are studying the possible uses of the dilapidated farmhouse buildings on the University campus, adapting humid and ugly garages into studio work-space, and other time and energy consuming tasks.

The new Education Act, moreover, promises to establish provisions concerning the financial administration of the University which would remove the hamstringing that present practices impose on us and have driven one or two of our most distinguished researchers to resort to a high consumption of valium.

As regards supporting staff, the stage reached is that two or three new clerks, of the recently appointed twelve, have already taken up their

duties. Most of the others will do so on the 1st July, on completion of their studies. The appointment of the technicians has been complicated, among other things, because of the parallel action by the Unions to get the injustices the category has suffered remedied, but I am very hopeful this matter is now on the eve of a happy, although belated, conclusion.

For quite some time members of staff have been feeling the need for instant access to the inner deliberations of Senate and Council. Many members of staff think that the time has come for them to be allowed to attend, as observers, Senate and Council meetings. Do you, as Rector, support this view? If in the affirmative, what steps do you think ought to be immediately taken to make this a reality?

I am glad that you are putting your fingers, as I hoped you would when I suggested the production of this newsletter, on the sorest of our spots. The University has a notoriously very active grapevine, but that is not the internal communication medium best calculated to ensure scientific accuracy of information. It is equally well-known that my dearest, although alas so far unfulfilled, wish is that the University should not only promote the ideal of the fullest Workers' Participation across the whole of Maltese society as part of its institutional task, but that it should exemplify it.

However, personally, I have also always preferred the percolation method to the instant, not just in the making of coffee. I do not, for instance, regard televising parliamentary debates as a democratic triumph, but rather as a way of aggravating the temptation to turn what should be a workshop into a spectacle. Most Senate and Council business is boring routine, and its efficiency depends largely on the preparatory work done elsewhere. I think the composition of Council and Senate needs altering to ensure more representative participation, but I do not think performance would improve by adding a passive audience. The appearance of an audience is the historical way in which ritual is turned into theatre. On the

contrary, what I, as Rector, wish is to improve communication by eliminating as much of the "noise" and "disturbance" at the interfaces between levels, as possible.

Members of staff are concerned about the present tendency to dilute the content of degree courses and curtail areas of specialisation. This trend emerges from the shift away from "Honours" to "General" courses, and the spread of the unit system which, if not properly handled, may have the undesirable effect of producing graduates with knowledge which is too shallow by being too widespread. Moreover, many feel that this is happening without their being adequately consulted. What are your views on this?

There is, I hope, no shift from "Honours" to "General" courses. What I hope is happening rather is a general trend towards a pattern according to which students would first go through a general (3 year) course with a wide base (aimed above all to provide flexibility in the future) followed by an honours (i.e. specialist) course.

The unit system now being adopted almost throughout the university allows, of course, many possibilities for students to tailor-make their own courses, by combining related elements from different Faculties.

I do not think that the great, inbuilt danger of the new system is shallowness, rather the opposite. The new system means that say, Pharmacy students do their Physiology with the Medical students, and Computing Studies are taken by all students with those who have them as their main area of studies. If anything, the danger is that the courses will be pitched at a higher level than is strictly necessary for those outside whose main area of studies the courses lie.

Undoubtedly, some of the hacks hired to scribble in the newspapers against the University are harassed, in their unquiet conscience, by the memory of the very restricted chances they gave young people of finding a place at the University, and they are anxious to attribute to us the very sins they were guilty of. I expect they will pounce on this remark and say: you're confessing that you've hit upon a method to weed out the weaker brethren!

Let me, therefore, add some three otherwise quite unnecessary declarations:

1. Examiners are not wholly depraved beasts and they normally take into account all relevant factors in assessing the performance of students.

2. Our aim is to have the maximum student population compatible with upholding respectable standards. Indeed, we still have too few, and not too many, graduates even from the point of view of the national economy.

3. I have the fullest confidence in the intelligence and ability of our students to live up to European standards.

Finally, I have already granted that the Education Act under which we are still operating was not calculated to ensure the most general consultation on all measures. Nevertheless, I am not aware of any structural change that has taken place without prior discussion with all concerned. I repeat that, in my opinion, the real need is to break a few bottlenecks in the information flow system.



EXTRACTS FROM THE STUDENT'S ADDRESS
at the Graduation Ceremony held on 29th April 1988

F'dan il-jum tal-gradwazzjoni taghna mill-Universita` ahna kburi li sa fl-ahhar l-Universita` qed terga tirrikonoxxi li l-istudent huwa matur bizzegjed biex jesprimi l-idejat tieghu.

Ahna nkunu qeghdin nonqsu jekk ma nesprimux l-idejat taghna dwar kif nixtiequ naraw din l-Universita`, li fi ftit ta' zmien iehor ticcelebra l-erba` mitt sena mit-twaqqif taghha. Nixtiequ naraw l-Universita` awtonoma u hielsa li tizviluppa skond il-bzonnijiet edukattivi, socjali u ekonomici tal-pajjiz b'mod li d-dritt ta' access ghall-edukazzjoni terzjarja ta' kull min ghandu l-kwalifiki mehtiega jkun salvagwardjat. Irridu Universita` hielsa kemm minn irbit politiku kif ukoll minn centralizzazzjoni eccessiva fl-amministrazzjoni taghha. Dan ifisser li l-istudenti, l-ghalliema u l-haddiema ta' l-Universita` ikollhom sehem shih fit-tmexxija ta' l-Universita`. Irridu naraw Universita` ghas-servizz tal-komunita kollha, lesta biex taqdi mhux biss il-htiegijiet ta' dawk li huma

direttament involuti maghha izda ukoll l-interess pubbliku; Universita` li tifrex it-tagħlim fost il-poplu u tkun l-ghajn ta' idejat godda għall-izvillup shih tal-pajjiz. Fuq kollox, irridu naraw Universita` li ssawwar nies kritici u li jahsbu b'mohhom flok ma jhallu lil haddiehor jahseb għalihom.

Hawnhekk ta' min ninottaw l-isforzi li diga' saru u qed isiru biex l-Universita` tkun tista' taqdi ahjar l-interessi tas-socjeta Maltija. It-tnehhija ta' l-ostakli għad-dhul fl-Universita` u t-twaqqif mill-gdid tal-Fakultajiet ta' l-Arti u x-Xjenza huma l-ewwel passi fid-direzzjoni t-tajba. Madankollu, dan irid ikun komplimentat, fost l-ohrajn, b'aktar zidiet fil-flus allokati għall-Universita`, b'espansjoni fl-infrasstruttura ta' l-Universita`, bil-prezenza immedjata tal-istudenti ta' TEOLOGIA, bl-introduzzjoni mill-gdid ta' korsijiet 'postgraduate' u, fuq kollox, bi pjan nazzjonali dwar l-edukazzjoni terzjarja.



■ from Dr H.M. Lenicker

I welcome your publication which should prove to be a good medium for information and exchange of views and opinions.

There is a growing need for information about what is going on at the University of Malta. People need to be informed about what the University is, what it stands for, how it is constituted, how it functions, how appointments are made, how elections are carried out and what plans there are for expansion and modernisation. There is a need for information about activities in all fields of academic endeavour. Lack of information breeds a sense of isolation and alienation.

I should like to suggest through your newsletter that all those who participate in teaching students of the University be given official recognition as teachers. If there are financial constraints, then the question of honorary posts should be actively considered. If the University authorities persist in making use of individuals for the purposes of teaching, year after year, and at the same time continue to ignore these individuals academically, then these authorities might be described as having acted shabbily in the treatment of its human resources.

■ from Mr Albert Mercieca,

Library.

Nixtieq nesprimi l-apprezzament tieghi u ta' shabi ghar-rikonoxximent ta' l-awtorita` li fl-Universita` jezisti nuqqas serju ta' komunikazzjoni u l-isforz biex dan jigi rimedjat. Wiehed jittama li dan il-mezz ta' djalogu iservi biex l-ewwel, il-haddiema mhux akkademici jigu involuti aktar fuq materja li tmisshom mill-qrib; it-tieni, sabiex jinqataw hafna ghidut li ma jaghmlu gid il-hadd hlief `l min ghandu ix-xewqa li jaghmel il-hsara; u fl-ahhar biex l-awtorita` issir aktar konxja mil-problemi fi hdan dan il-grupp u tasal biex tfassal pjan biex ittejjeb il-kondizzjonijet tax-xoghol. Wiehed jawgura li dan l-impenn ikun ta' beneficciu ghal kull min juri rieda tajba.

■ from Ms Maria Cordina, Faculty of Laws

I think that your circular of 25th April 1988 to all University staff, academic and non-academic, was a step in the right direction. True enough we learn too late, and quite by accident too, about what is happening at the University.

A case in question is the Course on Computers organised through the Finance Department. We have still, up to this present day, received no reply to our application to join the course. Unfortunately, we learnt too late that the Computer Course had started and that those in possession of a computer in their Department were given preference. Fair enough. But what about the other applicants? Do they deserve, to say the least, an acknowledgement, a polite refusal or any kind of answer?

■ from Mr Paul P. Agius, Library.

It gives me pleasure to notice the recent breakthrough of awareness in favour of a sandwiched lot. I mean the layer that exists between the Academic and Student Bodies, commonly referred to as the Non-Academic Staff. By the way isn't there a more appropriate label for this category of employees?

The token of appreciation presented to Mr. Carmel Calleja on Graduation Day for holding the representation on Council of the University between 1982 and 1987 of this category, was a big step forward and indeed a commendable one. The present newsletter, I feel confirms that this second step is forward looking and in the spirit for a start of what I hope would be a permanent link at all levels in the communication process within our Organisation.

I am sure that other ideas would be welcome by the University Authorities for a more energetic involvement by way of Social Activities, Fora, Exhibitions, etc. Would I be expecting too much if I were to suggest a series of Dialogue Meetings or some kind of enlightenment in connection with the Draft Bill on Education?

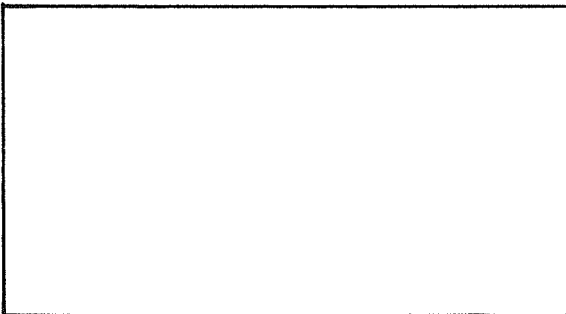
DO WE NEED A NUMERUS CLAUSUS?

■ from Mr J. Falzon, Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

One of the effects that the political changes in the country had on the University was that it is now the intention of the Government to require the University to admit all students with the bare minimum of entry qualifications in all faculties except Medicine and Dental Surgery. The Government claims that in this way equality of educational opportunity will be achieved for all.

It is interesting to consider why an exception was made for the medical faculties, since they have the best facilities among all faculties. A look at the accession list of our library is enough to convince anybody of the preferential treatment which these faculties get. So why enforce a numerus clausus in these faculties but not in others? Of course the real reason is that the British Medical Association will not consider granting recognition of our medical degree unless the student numbers are related in a meaningful way to the facilities available, as is the practice for all types of degrees in British Universities.

So by accepting this criteria the University authorities are saying that they believe that facilities in other faculties are of such high standards that these faculties can accept any number of students. But is this the real situation? I can just mention the situation in my faculty as



a case in point. Just to maintain the present standards (with which we are not really happy) we estimate that we cannot have an intake of more than about 20 students every other year, but we expect at least twice that figure next October. So why are the University authorities adopting different standards for different faculties? Is it the transplantation into the University of the phenomenon of neo-colonialism so prevalent in our society, where we submit willingly to the dictates of a foreigner (or foreign institution) but ignore completely what our own people say. I would like to know when, if ever, was the Faculty Board of Architecture and Civil Engineering asked whether the Faculty could take an unlimited number of students and what was the reaction of the Faculty Board.

But it is also interesting to question who are going to be the losers and the beneficiaries of this new policy. Obviously the first losers are going to be the students and staff of the University. Just go to the library and try to find a seat. It does not require much skill to pack any number of students into an institution and reduce it to the level of an educational slum. Lectures will consist of herding the maximum number of students in a room (please provide your own chair!) if you can find one (we are being told in our Faculty that next year we have to teach in the University garages!) and any attempt to modernise University teaching may as well be forgotten. Of course the University incurred considerable expense in recent years to get experts from abroad to advise University staff how to improve their teaching!

The professions are also going to suffer in consequence. It is a sad fact of life in the present archaic set-up of Maltese society that the established professions have failed to give an acceptable service to society and professionals in general suffer from a poor reputation. A look at our environment is enough to convince anybody that we can easily do without the architectural professions! The level of competence demanded of the average professional is too low, and the penalties for incompetence or negligence are too light. Induction into the profession is more often than not through family and political influence, with the result that a person with the bare minimum of qualifications and the right connections can in a short time be a leading member of the profession while a student with a first class degree goes into Government service where he is relegated to the status of a glorified clerk, and just envies the income and lifestyle of his luckier counterpart. In this way the present low standards of professional service are being maintained.

The beneficiaries of the new policy are now quite obvious - as usual they are the privileged members of our society who always manage to hang on to their privileges. It is my belief that this whole business of abolishing the numerus clausus is just a tactical retreat into a better strategic position - ensuring of course that nothing of value is left behind during the retreat. We might have achieved equality of educational opportunity (I do not believe that we have, but for other reasons irrelevant to this argument), but we have definitely not achieved equality of achievement.

So what should we do instead? The educational demands and expectations of our society bear no relationship to the economic realities of the country which seem to depend on having a favourable balance of payments which results in the Government affording to employ an excessive number of people who seem to be quickly conditioned to expect to give the absolute minimum input with the least expenditure of energy whether physical or mental.

I believe that the first thing we should have done was to revise the roles of the professions in our society. It is essential that the level of expertise obtained with so much effort during the University course be used to develop the skills of the practitioner so as to give a better service to the community. This activity can only be meaningful if related to adequate economic reforms which ensure that the standards demanded in all aspects of professional practice are strictly enforced. If clients continue to need an architect just for his signature, then all we need is to teach architects how to write - anything else is superfluous, and hence the crisis in the profession. To assume that the possession of a University degree is in itself a desirable value (whatever that is!), without any relationship to the socio-economic needs of the country, is, I believe, a

misleading assumption which can do more harm than good to society.

The University should review its entry qualifications. The present practice of collecting 6 'O' levels in as many attempts and repeat this remarkable achievement for the 'A' levels (2 C's and 1 D) cannot possibly continue. The University should set up a commission to review in a reasonable time its entry qualifications, ensuring that only students with the right aptitudes and educational levels are admitted, keeping in mind at the same time the needs of a modern secondary education which the University should help to create on the island.

Finally ways and means have to be found to ensure that the training of an adequate number of persons, whether at undergraduate, post-graduate or as part of a continuous professional development programme, in fields for which no facilities exist locally, is carried out abroad. The present system of granting scholarships is neither sufficient nor adequate. Prospective candidates should know well ahead of the possibilities so that they can plan their work and avoid unnecessary disappointments. Maybe our University can co-operate with foreign institutions so that students can do part of their work locally so as to save on costs.

□



You've read other people's views. If you have any, don't waste them in the corridors. Write to Platform.



Contributions for inclusion in the next issue of

P L A T F O R M

are to reach the Editors by

16th August 1988.

