

stimulating and relevant educational opportunities. It is incumbent on those who are committed to the excellence of our universities to rage against the dying of the light.

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## ARTICLES

# A study of counting

Ian Doust

University of New South Wales

How do you estimate how many new mathematicians (or physicists, or philosophers) we will need to produce to fully staff our universities in the coming years? The equations are quite simple. Decide how many students we expect to be teaching and divide by a suitable student/staff ratio and you come up with the number of teachers you expect to need. Then subtract off the number of staff we already have, add the number of staff who are expected to retire, and then make a few adjustments for the people who will come and go between the academic workforce and the outside world.

The problem of course is not in the equations, but in estimating the quantities involved. In 1989, Dr Ian Allen of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission prepared a discussion paper, *Staffing implications of growth in higher education* (Allen 1989), which addressed the question of whether Australia was going to be able to produce enough academics to cater for the large growth in the higher education system planned for the next few years. His conclusions are quite startling; a shortfall of over 5000 academic staff over all disciplines by 1991 and perhaps as many as 12,000 by 1994. This paper has been an important factor in policy decisions at both the university and government levels.

The staffing situation varies greatly from one discipline to another and Allen makes an attempt in his report to estimate future requirements for various subject areas. Much of the planned growth is in business studies and engineering, for example, so it is natural that these subjects will suffer staffing difficulties. And the higher salaries offered outside the university system have already resulted in severe staff shortages in several areas.

An unfortunate aspect of Allen's report is that it seriously underestimates the shortages that will occur in mathematics.

Allen based his figures on the number of studies taking that discipline as their major area of study — not on the teaching load generated in that area. For subjects like mathematics which perform substantial service teaching roles in the universities, this gives a very inaccurate measure of how the increase in student numbers will affect them.

Even if there were to be no increase in mathematics majors, the expected 5000 increase in engineering students over the 1989-91 triennium would produce an increased teaching load for mathematics of about 700 EFTSUs. In fact, an increase in student numbers in almost any field causes some increase in teaching load in mathematics.

Some idea of how much of the burden mathematics carries is given by the fact that at my university, 21 per cent of the 405 EFTSU increase in teaching load last year fell in mathematics. By comparing the areas of planned student number expansion with the mathematics components of those courses, it seems that we should expect that, of the 62,550 increase in student numbers planned over the present triennium, mathematics will have to deal with an increased load of 5000 EFTSUs. At Allen's quoted student/staff ratio of 16:1 that corresponds to an extra 320 academic mathematicians required — much larger than Allen's estimate of 93.

This does not even take into account the number of mathematicians expected to retire over the next few years. Allen estimates that over 300 academic staff will be required to replace lost staff in mathematics, computer science and information systems over the

present triennium. In some mathematics departments as many as one third of the tenured staff will retire over the next decade.

Can we cope? At present Australia produces between 45 and 70 people per year with research higher degrees in mathematics. Many of these are foreign students who will return home after the completion of their degrees. A large percentage of them would also be expected to obtain jobs in industry. And given that the United States is also going into a period where they have a shortage of Ph.D. trained mathematicians, many Australian graduate students studying there may not return.

This raises the prospect that Australia will face a shortfall of several hundred academic mathematicians over the next few years — a shortfall that would not be satisfied even if all the honours students in mathematics (between 102 and 164 over the past few years Petocz, 1988) went on to postgraduate study. Recent figures produced by Dr V.G. Hart of the University of Queensland found 76 vacancies for higher degree trained mathematicians advertised in just one newspaper, *The Australian*, between July 1989 and July 1990.

At present we are probably getting by on the surplus of PhD graduates produced during the 1980s. Many of these graduates are only now finding their first permanent jobs after a long succession of postdoctoral positions. This surplus will perhaps give us a buffer of a year or two before the situation becomes critical, but already it is becoming difficult to attract new staff to the more junior positions in universities, especially in Sydney and Melbourne. The recent increase in the value of postgraduate scholarships will hopefully help the situation, but the real problem is a shortage of well-qualified

students applying to study mathematics at the undergraduate level.

One variable I have not yet discussed is the student/staff ratio. If we let our class sizes grow we can of course cater for more students without any increase in staff numbers. This seems to be one of the preferred methods of coping with the problem. At the University of New South Wales, the student/staff ratio has risen from 13.7 in 1986 to over 17 this year. Whilst this is an admirable productivity increase, little consideration seems to have been given to the quality of the product which we produce.

Does it matter if mathematics departments are short-staffed? I think it does — and for the very reasons that Allen's figures are wrong. There are at least four important groups of students in our mathematics classes: (i) students taking mathematics as part of another course; (ii) future mathematics teachers; (iii) future professional mathematicians for industry, commerce and science; and (iv) future mathematics postgraduates.

# Destroying the gift: rationalising research in the humanities<sup>1</sup>

Freya Mathews

La Trobe University

The current restructuring of tertiary education in Australia is a cause for lament, but not for surprise. The modern university, in this country as elsewhere, has long been an enclave of non-market values in a world increasingly pressed into the market mould. It was as predictable that the university — cradle of ideas — should eventually face the bulldozers as that the rainforest — cradle of life — should do so.

Indeed there are deep ideological links between the present defence of the universities and the defence of the natural environment. The environmental movement seeks to preserve the natural world — our natural heritage — at least in part for its own sake, as an end in itself. The defender of the universities seeks to preserve our intellectual heritage for the same kind of reason. In this sense both these 'movements' are conservative — both are striving to protect a fundamental source or locus of value not analysable in instrumental terms. Their common enemy is the ideology of instrumentalism, the system which denies a space for existence to anything that does not directly serve the interests of the economy.

We hear a lot these days about the evils of such instrumentalism, or economic rationalism, both in relation to the universities and

Mathematics is the cornerstone of many other subject areas, from engineering to economics. We cannot produce world class engineers if their mathematics education is lacking. If our teachers are not well trained, the effects will spread throughout the whole education system. Larger classes do affect the quality of education we give our students. It is very difficult to explain even moderately complicated concepts to first year undergraduates when their tutorial classes have 30 students and their lectures many times that number. Some universities have chosen to give up teaching the hard concepts, others incur very high failure rates. Neither is a very acceptable option.

Mathematics is a matter of national importance in Australia. Not just in our schools but also in our universities. Unless we make a major effort to encourage those at school who are strong at mathematics to choose this as a career, then we face enormous difficulties providing Australian university students with the mathematical

education which they need if Australia is indeed to become the "clever country".

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in general. Without wishing to be platitudinous, I wish to take up this theme here, and offer some reflections on the logical limits of this type of thinking.

These reflections are purely philosophical, and do not address the immensely complex history of economic rationalism as an ideology. My aim is merely to provide a particular perspective from which the limitations of the market as a model for the organisation of research in certain areas of knowledge are revealed. The areas of knowledge with which I am concerned are those which are traditionally regarded as of cultural rather than purely commercial or technical value, principally those which fall within the humanities.

Although my main focus here will be on the question of whether or not such knowledge can be generated within a research regime designed according to market principles, the arguments relating to this question will throw light on the further question of the justification and value of such knowledge. I shall preface these arguments with some general observations concerning the old and the new research regimes. These facts will by now be familiar to most readers; it is with their implications that I am here concerned.

Until the present restructuring of the universities was set in motion, research in the humanities was not organised strictly on the production model, though considerations of 'productivity' were of course present. The universities provided a framework within which academics could pursue their research in their own time and, to a certain extent, at their own pace. Researchers were expected to exercise their own expert judgement in arriving at research topics, and were under no obligation to ensure that there was in any sense a pre-existing 'demand' for their particular investigations. Within the humanities, specific funding for research was relatively incidental; time, both for the actual writing and the intellectual gestation of works, was the primary desideratum. The universities were reasonably effective in satisfying this requirement. (For a recent discussion of the past and present systems of funding research in the humanities see Knight, 1989a, Aitken, 1989 and Knight, 1989b).

In the new regime inaugurated by Dawkins, all research in the universities is organised according to a single set of guidelines. No effective provision is made for the different requirements of research in the humanities and research in law or engineer-

ing, for instance. All research is mapped onto a production model which is Fordist in its spirit if not in its letter. It is envisaged that, given the appropriate conditions, 'units' of research may be produced to order — which is to say, effectively to a schedule. It is assumed that this will enable the rate of production to be increased. The conditions which are supposed to bring about this Taylorisation of research and consequent productivity increase are market conditions: competition for funding is the lever which will stimulate output. Funding, in this context, operates in much the same way as does profit in the traditional market: funding, like profit, becomes the carrot, the incentive, which motivates production. As the competition for funding becomes keener, the rate of production increases, and the standard of the product presumably rises.

Under the new regime then, academics are expected to conduct their research to schedule, offer a product for which there is an identifiable market, and compete for a buyer in that market (Knight, 1989a). The activity of research, and the ideas to which it gives rise, are no longer in this system treated as ends in themselves, but as means to basically mercenary ends. It is inevitable, within such a system, that those who fund the research will in due course seek to control or 'own' its potentially lucrative product; in other words the system will create an inevitable drift towards the privatisation of knowledge.

How was it that the traditional university, ideologically committed to the pursuit and generation of knowledge for its own sake, was permitted to hold out for so long against the market system, the wholesale encroachments of which on the rest of society are so evident? Why has the claim of the university to exemption from market principles until recently been upheld? There are complex historical reasons for this exemption, not least of which may be that granting it ensured that ultimately the universities served the market and its bourgeois beneficiaries well (Huppau, 1989).<sup>2</sup> But I would suggest that the ethos of the traditional university reflected the requirements of epistemology as much as those of politics. By this I mean that it may be something intrinsic to the nature of knowledge, particularly the kind of knowledge included in the humanities, that gave rise to the traditional ethos. Knowledge is fundamentally unlike the material objects which are produced for the marketplace, and the generation of knowledge would presumably, accordingly, be fundamentally unlike the manufacture of products. If there is a model for the generation of knowledge, then perhaps it is closer to the gift economy than the market system.

What is meant by a gift economy? (Mauss, 1970; also Hyde, 1983).<sup>3</sup> In archaic societies, such as those characteristic of pre-colonial Polynesia, Melanesia and Northern

America, elaborate systems of exchange existed amongst clans, tribes and peoples, but these exchanges did not take the form of barter or commerce. In these societies, the 'objects' of exchange — where these included not only material goods, but courtesies, entertainments, rituals, military assistance, dances and feasts — were construed as gifts. On any given occasion the giving was unilateral: one chief would make a formal presentation to another. The recipient thereby fell under an obligation to reciprocate at a later time. This obligation would lock the chiefs and their people into an ongoing relationship, for the reciprocity would itself count as a new presentation, where this would carry with it the same obligation to reciprocate. The exchange of gifts was not a one-off affair, but rather the cement for a permanent alliance.

Fundamental to the concept of the gift, and related to the obligation to reciprocate, was the understanding that the gift must keep moving: the object given, or a new instantiation of it if it was not of a durable nature in the first place, must be passed on. This imperative at the heart of the gift economy ensured that no one could accumulate the objects of exchange. The gift economy did not in itself, then, serve to increase the wealth of those who were party to it. The point of their exchanges was not materialistic, but rather social and spiritual. The social function of these exchanges lay in the fact that gifts helped to forge and to maintain inter-clan and inter-tribal relationships; indeed, the institution of gift-giving established great rounds of festive visiting throughout the year.

This bonding effect of the gift however sprang not only from the system of exchange, but from the way the gift itself was ideologically constructed. Unlike the goods exchanged in the marketplace, the objects which changed hands in gift societies were regarded as invested both with an indwelling spirit and with the identity of their original owner. In giving the gift, the donor was giving of himself or herself, and in receiving the gift, the recipient was receiving part of someone else's spiritual essence. One was prepared to give of oneself and receive from others in this manner because one recognised that one owed one's identity and very existence to others, that one was oneself a product of the gifts of others, gifts too legion to catalogue. The presentation was solemnised by the fact that the gift was almost a personage in its own right, possessing an essence and destiny of its own. The efficacy of gift-giving, its power to create and sustain relationships, depended on this view of the gift as an end in itself.

In gift economies then, gifts function as the cement of social relationships, but they can only function in this way if they have a sacred significance in their own right — a

sacred significance derived from that of the world at large. In market economies the function of the exchange of goods is in no way to establish social relationships; on the contrary, social relationships themselves become functionally subordinated to the market. Trust is replaced by contract, alliances give way to transient transactions, and social relationships in which individuals view one another as whole, well-rounded persons, or ends in themselves, are given up in favour of functional relationships in which individuals serve as means to one another's economic ends. This radical shift in the significance of the exchange of goods is tied to the different significance of the goods themselves in the two systems. In a system in which the goods command no respect, being perceived as inert, innocent of any intrinsic value, of purely instrumental significance, the exchange of goods is equally spiritually or ethically trivial, and cannot form the basis for spiritually or ethically momentous relationships.

Although the conceptual framework of the archaic gift societies presupposed a pervasive sense of the sacredness of the world, vestiges of gift thinking survive in modern western society. The principal sphere still implicitly organised according to gift principles is that of the family. In the family, or more generally in the private sphere, relationships are based on trust rather than contract, and are understood as ends in themselves. Wealth, property, services, courtesies, knowledge and other goods are given and passed on within the private sphere not with a view to remuneration or material ends, but rather with a view to maintaining the bonds within the family or intimate circle. Children within the family tend to receive far more than they give, but the gift that they receive is typically passed on to their children.

Another area which has traditionally conformed more to gift than to market principles is the intellectual life of the community. Insofar as the universities have provided the institutional base for intellectual life in our society, they have, in important respects, operated in accordance with gift principles. This is not to deny the professionalisation of intellectual life in the universities, but only to point out that within the contractual framework set up by that professionalisation, a certain openness was permitted, where this openness created a space for gift principles to operate. Part of the rationale for this openness within the contractual framework, I would suggest, was the recognition that the essential nature of knowledge renders it more akin to a gift than a product. There are a number of reasons why this might be thought to be the case. I shall set out six of them.

(i) Any culture incorporates a common pool of ideas to which all its members have free access. Indeed, these ideas are actively

transmitted from one generation to the next, and actively shared within the community. It is on this sharing and transmission of ideas that the perpetuation of the culture depends, and having freely received these ideas and had their lives enriched by them, individuals willingly pass them on. Certain more arcane ideas may be reserved for initiates only, and certain more technical ones for apprentices, but the stories by which the culture makes sense of its own history and its presence in the world constitute a gift which is necessarily passed on.

(ii) No idea stands in isolation, since meaning itself is contextual, fluid and web-like. To some extent every idea shapes and is shaped by others in the matrix to which it belongs. To treat ideas as discrete entities is to reify them, to ignore the fact that the meaning of a particular theory is inextricable from, and partly attributable to, that of its rivals, and its entire theoretical context. Generating ideas then is not analogous to manufacturing discrete products, but is rather a matter of creating an intellectual climate in which a dance of ever-changing patterns of meaning can occur. It follows that no one can rightfully claim exclusive authorship of an idea, let alone possession of it. Ideas, unlike material objects, are interpenetrating (Coady, 1989), and are primarily the creation of communities rather than of individuals. To the limited extent that the notion of authorship does make sense, its cultural and epistemological purpose is the expansion and enrichment of the common pool. Ideas hoarded, or kept to oneself, shrivel away to nothing; ideas passed on, or returned to their source, amplify the pool and are amplified by it.

(iii) It is incoherent to treat ideas as private property subject to the rules of the marketplace not only because ideas do not exist as discrete entities but also because of their abstract nature. An idea cannot be possessed by an individual any more than a Platonic Form can. Individuals can share an idea without having to divide it up between them: my contemplation of the Form of Beauty is not diminished by the fact that others contemplate it. For this reason it would be pointless to demand that others be debarred from contemplating it. Such a demand would be in principle impossible to enforce in any case.

(iv) It may be objected that while knowledge in general cannot function as private property and therefore cannot be subjected to market principles, there is reason for treating knowledge which has marked economic potential in this way, since such knowledge can confer commercial advantages on those who control it. However this implies that the only kind of research which will receive funding and hence will be undertaken within the new market-oriented system is that which may be expected to produce the kind of knowledge

which has such economic potential. This will tend to be technical knowledge.

Such an outcome would be disastrous on two counts. In the first place, while technical knowledge is undoubtedly vital to society, it cannot form the life blood of a culture, since the kind of knowledge which does so is that which provides the stories which enable a people to interpret their situation in the world.<sup>4</sup> In the second place, whatever kind of knowledge the system fosters, the tendency towards privatisation to which it gives rise is ultimately epistemologically self-defeating: its logical conclusion is the scenario in which no 'new' ideas are channelled back into the common pool, and the pool stagnates and dies. Knowledge is not static, but exists only for as long as it is being lived, or brought to life in people's experience. For this reason it is always in flux, always evolving. If those who draw 'new' ideas from the common pool refuse to feed them back, the knowledge which forms the core of their culture will cease evolving, and consequently cease to live: the very ground of 'new' ideas will disappear. In the meantime, the 'owners' of knowledge will find that what was once freely available and relatively abundant, viz, 'new' knowledge, becomes prohibitively expensive as the pool dries up.

(v) A fifth reason for seeing knowledge as more akin to a gift than a product is that the creativity required to draw forth 'new' ideas, or make 'explicate' the ideas which are already 'implicate'<sup>5</sup> in the common pool, is also a gift. True insight, creative vision, cannot be made to order. Conditions conducive to it may be put in place, but the process itself cannot be forced. One of the conditions most conducive to this process is a sense of the availability of time, an opportunity for unpressured contemplation (Huppau, 1989).<sup>6</sup> Universities have traditionally attempted to provide such a space for contemplation in a variety of ways, from the organisation of the teaching schedule to the creation of an aesthetic environment designed to shield the inmate from the distractions of practical life and allow his or her mind to sound its own depths. Such opportunities may have led in some cases to too great an unworldliness or to intellectual stagnation, but individual defections or failures could be tolerated when they were understood to be the price of the freedom which would guarantee the creativity of the community as a whole.

(vi) Finally, knowledge of the type pursued in the humanities functions like a gift rather than a product in our society to the extent that it is regarded as possessing intrinsic as opposed to merely instrumental value.<sup>7</sup> It is not too much to say, I think, that in our otherwise exceedingly secular culture, knowledge, unlike the material objects exchanged in the marketplace, has retained an almost sacred significance. This has

meant that those engaged in the pursuit of such knowledge have often worked as much from a sense of commitment as from self-interested motives. The architects of the restructuring of tertiary education have been voluble about the shirkers in the system, but have failed to acknowledge the fact that many academics work more for love than for other rewards. Considerable talent is necessary to gain employment in tertiary education these days, and most people so employed could command higher salaries in other occupations. In my own case, financial considerations had to be set aside, and sacrifices made, in order for me to continue a career in Philosophy. I have definitely worked for love, not money, and I have done so gladly because I have believed in Philosophy as an end in itself.

The restructuring is undercutting the gift foundation and special morale of the whole enterprise of knowledge-seeking, by pressuring academics to work for money rather than for love. If the government anticipates that this will result in 'cost-effectiveness', I believe that it is in for a surprise: as academics enter reluctantly into the contractarian frame of mind, and come to insist on their 'rights', a lot of services which have hitherto been provided gratis, to the public through the media, to the government itself, and to students, will soon carry a fee. In a gift economy people tend to give far more for far less than they do when they are 'working to rule'.

For a variety of reasons then, I would suggest that research, particularly in the humanities, would benefit from being organised more in accordance with gift than market principles, as has in fact been the case until recently. The underlying influence of gift principles within the universities has been reflected in the fact that social relationships therein have to some extent been based on trust rather than contract: people were in the past trusted to discharge their responsibilities without strict supervision, and flexible informal agreements premised on honour prevailed over a range of issues, such as sick leave and annual leave. This element of trust in the organisation of the universities enabled them to function to some extent as true communities. If my earlier account of the provenance of knowledge is correct, then this community status is in fact a precondition for effective research, since 'new' knowledge is always really a result of collective rather than individual effort. I mean by this not that research needs to be conducted by teams, but that it emerges out of the right kind of intellectual climate, where such a climate is generated around a community rather than an individual.

I do not want to suggest by way of these arguments that the traditional organisation of research in the universities left no room for improvement. What I am suggesting is that reorganisation along the current, market

lines is fundamentally misconceived, and is not the way to bring about the improvements which were under the old regime undoubtedly possible.

The attempt to restructure research in the humanities along production lines provides a particularly striking instance of the inappropriate application of the market model to social life. But while the contradictions involved in the attempt to apply market principles to knowledge are particularly stark, they merely prefigure contradictions at the heart of the market model itself. Society at large cannot be pressed into the market mould, but conforms in its essence to the principles of the gift economy. As Kropotkin pointed out last century, society is premised on trust, good will and mutual aid, rather than instrumentalism and contract. We all receive far more from society than we can possibly give, but in return we generally offer far more than we are contractually obliged to give. Our society has remained viable despite the encroachments of market thinking into every sphere of life only because certain institutions, such as the family, the Church and the universities, have to some extent resisted the market, and continued to lay the foundation of values which the market parasitises. Instead of attempting to convert these institutions to the market mould, we should, in my view, be seeking to reverse the creep of instrumentalism and contractarianism, and expanding the sphere of gift relations.

The market is inappropriate as a model not only for social and intellectual life, but even ultimately for transactions in the material sphere. For while the attempt to convert ideas into products is essentially incoherent, the attempt to commodify the natural world is also ultimately fraught with contradictions. The very idea of private property presupposes the existence and availability of a common pool of natural resources, such as air, water, soil, nitrogen and sunlight, just as the idea of research presupposes the existence of a common pool of ideas. Indeed, life itself conforms to the principles of the gift economy, and the current global environmental crisis testifies to the self-defeatingness of attempting to convert gifts into products. Organisms receive life gratuitously, and others give their lives to sustain them. Every organism returns its waste and eventually its body to the cycle: the gift of life must be passed on. The market system attempts to rob the cycle, to arrest the gift and siphon it off as profit or capital that can be kept and accumulated, not given back. But this contempt for the gift — whether it be the gift of knowledge or the gift of life — ultimately backfires, for it results in the collapse of the cycle, the demise of the goose that freely gave the eggs that were initially abundant and available to all.

These arguments against the market model are not meant to imply that the market as a

system of exchange does not serve a legitimate economic function. They are rather meant to challenge the assumption that social life as a whole, and even economics in its wider sense, can be exclusively modelled on the market. The suggestion is that, socially, intellectually and even biologically, gift principles are more fundamental than market principles, and therefore must be respected in our institutions. Indeed, I would see the defence of knowledge-as-an-end-in-itself as but a part of a wider need to reinstate the values of a gift economy at the heart of our collective life.

### Notes

1. I would like to thank Jeff Malpas for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. Huppauf (1989) provides an historical treatment of the emergence of the 'modern university'.
3. I am indebted to Jim Cheney (1987) for first drawing my attention to the rich implications of the notion of a gift economy.
4. This is part of the traditional 'culture-based defence', which originated in the 19th century, and which is described by Ian Hunter (1989) as one of the two standard defences of the humanities. For a particularly eloquent statement of this kind of defence, see Bernard Williams (1987). The second kind of defence that Hunter sees as standard appeals to the role of the humanities in cultivating critical reasoning about society.
5. I am borrowing and adapting David Bohm's usage here; see *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, London, Ark, 1983.
6. This is perhaps the most commonly cited desi-

deratum of those engaged in research in the humanities. Huppauf (1989) includes an insightful discussion of time.

7. This, again, is a traditional line of defence for the humanities. See, for instance, Brett (1988) and Coady (1989).

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## The Academic Freedom Charter Experience

Michael Bartos,

FAUSA Research Officer

In October 1989 Minister for Employment, Education and Training John Dawkins announced his intention to recommend to Cabinet a charter of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

The purpose of the Charter was to legislate to give expression to the principle that:

*institutions should be free from government interference in relation to:*

- course content;
- methods of assessment;
- the conduct of research;
- the appointment of staff; and
- the free expression of views and opinions' (Dawkins, 1989b)

The context in which Dawkins announced his intentions was not a passionate defence of intellectual liberty, nor even a pragmatic account of the preservation of diversity in the nation's universities. Rather, it was an attempt to close off an avenue of criticism of the Government. The outcome Dawkins sought from the charter was that 'no longer will managers be able to claim that directives from Canberra are intruding on their preserve. The "Canberra Alibi" will disappear'.

Dawkins' speech announcing the academic freedom charter followed a major speech in which he roundly criticised university management in an attempt to direct academics' concerns about changes in higher education away from the Government and Minister and towards Vice-Chancellors. Dawkins concluded:

*My belief in the commitment to management as an essential part of institutional autonomy and for the future prospects and progress of the system should not be in doubt. What is in doubt is whether management is yet delivering on behalf of the academic community within your institutions.* (Dawkins, 1989a)

### Origins of the charter proposal

The association between autonomy, management flexibility and academic freedom had been established in the Government's Higher Education policy discussion paper (the 'Green Paper') of December 1987. There are two references to academic freedom in that document, neither of them calculated to engender confidence in a broad intellectual defence of the concept. The first places academic freedom in the context of greater management prerogative:

*Improvements in management will also require a greater focus on strategic planning and evaluation of performance than has*

*previously been the case. The Government has a responsibility to coordinate the national system of higher education effectively so that scarce resources are applied to their best effect at the institutional level. This need not imply a conflict with the maintenance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Indeed, the Government is determined to create a more effective operating environment for institutions and to increase the scope for management prerogatives to be exercised.* (Dawkins, 1987, p.47)

The scope of this exercise of management prerogative was fleshed out in the staffing chapter of the Green Paper which proposed sweeping changes in staffing arrangements, including reversionary tenure<sup>1</sup> staff assessment to ensure that inadequate performance not be protected, more short-term and part-time appointments, redundancy provisions, strengthened dismissal procedures, and 'more flexible salary packages'. Academics could be in no doubt that the Government's intention was to make their employment less secure.

The Green Paper's second reference to academic freedom was embedded in these staffing proposals, giving it the appearance of little more than a token rejoinder to the argument that security of employment is a prerequisite for academic freedom. The Green Paper acknowledged academic freedom as 'central to the effective operation of higher education institutions' and stated that the Government 'would be prepared to consider legislation providing safeguards in this area if appropriate means could be devised' (Dawkins, 1987, p.57). In the very next paragraph, however, there is the cautionary note that 'academic freedom should be no protection for inadequate performance or lack of commitment on the part of staff'.

There was little response to this proposal for legislation floated in the Green Paper. Most of the submissions responding to the Green Paper from institutions, staff associations and other interest groups ignored it entirely. The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee was hostile to the proposal calling it impractical. Not surprisingly, the AVCC embraced the expansion of managerial prerogative and deregulation of staffing, and accepted the Government's linkage of the two issues:

*Academic freedom and freedom of speech in universities have been safeguarded in the past by the ability of universities to manage their own affairs...* (AVCC, 1988, p.15).

Only the academic unions reacted sympa-

thetically to the legislation proposal, although without specific suggestions as to its content. The Federation of Australian University Staff Associations and Federated Council of Academics joint response to the Green Paper recommended that:

*The Commonwealth should establish a working party, including Government, institutional and academic union representatives to examine and propose options for possible legislation to protect scholastic freedom.* (FAUSA/FCA, 1988, p.22)

Given these responses it is hardly surprising that the Government's higher education policy statement (the White Paper) quietly shelved the notion of academic freedom legislation, noting the offer 'has met with little response' and that the matter would not be pursued 'unless either the employer or employee associations want to initiate further discussions' (Dawkins, 1988, p.107). The matter was not actively pursued by the academic unions, and the recommendation for a Commonwealth working party was not followed up.

The staffing changes in which the Green Paper's discussion of academic freedom had been embedded had also changed in character by the time of the White Paper. The Government had toned down many of its proposals, and dropped reversionary tenure altogether. Substantial negotiations had taken place between the academic staff unions and employers, with the occasional intervention of the Federal Government. These had resulted in an agreement under the Arbitration Commission's National Wage Case principles for the award of the 4% 'second-tier' wage increase and included a number of elements which were partial fulfilment of the Green Paper's objectives.

### The interests of staff and of management

While legislation to protect academic freedom may have lacked vocal adherents in the period after the Green Paper came out, there was no lack of comment about the relationship between Government and higher education institutions. There was widespread concern that the Government's higher education policy represented an unwarranted intrusion into the affairs of higher education institutions.

This concern emanated from various sources including individual academics, staff associations (individually and collectively as FAUSA), and Vice-Chancellors individually and collectively. There were many different