

## **Meeting diverse expectations: Department of Tutorial Classes, Sydney University, 1919 to 1963**

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The University of Sydney has offered some form of organised adult education since the late 19th century. In 1914, that provision was formalised through the establishment of a Department of Tutorial Classes, the appointment of a Director, and a partnership with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Right from that time, however, there was ambivalence and sometimes direct opposition to the role and sometimes to the existence of the department. As a result, successive directors of the department had to tread a fine line in balancing the expectations of the university with their passion for extending the academy into the adult community, while also satisfying the demands of the WEA. This paper reviews the period of three directorships of the Department of Tutorial Classes, between 1919 and 1963, and argues that the liberal adult education approach adopted by the university from its earliest days was sustained over those 45 years mainly because ongoing disagreement within the university about the purpose of the department and the status of the director, as well as continuing external pressure from the WEA, ensured that the status quo prevailed, even when there were innovative adult education developments elsewhere, and opportunities for change presented themselves.

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## **Introduction**

University adult education was introduced into Australia more than a century ago as a means of extending the knowledge and expertise of the academy to the general public, through means other than formal tertiary courses. All the sandstone universities and others such as the University of New England for some time offered significant adult education programs. Despite the good and, some would say, patronising, intentions of their proponents, however, these programs often struggled for legitimacy within their institutions. Today, only the University of Sydney maintains a substantial program, through the Centre for Continuing Education, a program that had its origins in the 1890s.

Despite its longevity, however, the adult education program at the University of Sydney has also continually struggled not to be marginalised. Critics have seen its goals as incompatible with the mainstream purposes of the university, diverting scarce resources better spent on academic programs, and unduly influenced by its external partner, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) of New South Wales, to whom it was yoked from 1914 to 1983. As a result of such attitudes, those appointed as directors of this adult education enterprise, which for the first 50 years of its life was known as the Department of Tutorial Classes, trod a fine line between reaching into the community and meeting the expectations of the university's Extension Board and Senate, and of its partner, the WEA.

This paper examines the nature of that balancing act for three consecutive Directors of Tutorial Classes at the University of Sydney, from 1919, just after the inaugural director resigned, until 1963, when the retirement of the director signalled a change in the department's name to Adult Education. It argues that, while there were some variations in the nature of the courses offered over that period, the imperative to meet the expectations of the major stakeholders, apart from the students, ensured a relatively conservative approach, even when there were opportunities for innovation. The paper also proposes that over those years the university never resolved its ambivalence towards the role of the Department of Tutorial Classes and the position of Director.

## **Early years**

The University of Sydney has offered some form of organised adult education since the inauguration of Extension lectures in 1886. Stimulated by a special purpose grant from the New South Wales Government, and against some internal opposition (including from the Vice-Chancellor), in 1914 it introduced ‘tutorial classes’ for adults, following a British model first launched at Oxford University (Dymock, 2001).

The university adopted the British concept of a ‘joint committee’, comprising three of its representatives, and three from the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA), an organisation set up to provide non-accredited educational courses to mainly blue collar workers (Mansbridge, 1920). The liberal education ideal of the WEA’s English founder, Albert Mansbridge, fitted well with the university’s approach to teaching and learning. According to Jarvis (1991, 31):

Mansbridge saw clearly that the aim of education is wisdom, that is, the integration of knowledge, understanding and action. Its process is that of rational inquiry, which depends on the availability of all pertinent information and the evaluation of all contesting perspectives and theories.

In New South Wales, the Secretary of the WEA, David Stewart, maintained close links with the labour movement, a relationship viewed with concern in some quarters of the university because they saw it as threatening its traditional political neutrality (Dymock, 2009). So, even at the inauguration of Department of Tutorial Classes, there were undercurrents within the university that suggested its development would not be smooth.

The first Director (originally called ‘Organiser’) of the department, Meredith Atkinson, an Oxford graduate, did not much help its cause within the institution. Appointed to the university in 1914, Atkinson soon became involved in the World War I anti-conscription movement in Australia, which created heated debate at the university about politicisation of the director’s role. Within the university, Atkinson took on the role expected of directors of such departments, teaching in his field of expertise and organising a program of adult education courses in conjunction with the WEA. It was not therefore a

'traditional' academic department, and some staff believed its purpose was outside the institution's 'core business'. To add to the uncertainty, Atkinson allegedly manipulated affairs within the department to his own advantage.

The sticking point that led to his departure from the university was not, however, his political views or self-interest, but his request that the university should grant the position of Director of Tutorial Classes professorial status. This proposal was opposed even by his fellow anti-conscriptionist, the influential Dean of Arts, Professor Mungo MacCallum, and Atkinson resigned in protest. MacCallum then proposed that the University Extension Board should take control of the department's activities, without any WEA representation at all. After a year-long committee of inquiry, the university Senate decided the WEA should still be included but that its representation on the joint committee should be four, one fewer than the university's five, in contravention of the principle of joint representation established by British universities.

These controversies and machinations in the first five years of its existence set the scene for internal ambivalence towards the Department of Tutorial Classes and the status of the Director which was to affect the department for decades.

### **1919 to 1934: A secular ministry**

The first Director of Tutorial Classes after Atkinson's departure was Garnet Vere (Jerry) Portus, a former priest of the Church of England, who referred to adult education as a 'secular ministry' (Portus, 1953). Although he had only a few years' experience in the education of adults when appointed, he not only taught in his academic discipline of economic history, but enthusiastically promoted classes and lectures, recruited tutors and students, and carried out the necessary administration for the organisation of the department's program.

Portus had a particular commitment to rural extension forms of adult education, and tried to ensure that appropriately qualified teachers were transferred to towns needing tutors. Occasionally the match between available tutors and content was not perfect. In one instance, a group in Dubbo in the central west of New South Wales wanted a series of lectures on what Portus (1953: 183) described as

a 'melange of economic, politics, history, and international affairs'. The University insisted that all tutors be honours graduates, but there were only two teachers at Dubbo High School who met that criterion, and they had qualified with honours in Mathematics and English Literature, respectively. Portus decided the English Literature teacher, Hudson, was the best choice, so he developed a compromise course he called, 'Literature and Social Problems', which continued successfully for the next two years. Later, the University's Extension Board's desire to expand into rural areas led to the appointment of adult education tutors, first at Newcastle, Wollongong and Broken Hill, then at Orange and Wagga Wagga. These positions were funded by the University but the appointments were made in conjunction with the WEA.

In general, the Department's tutorial classes were relatively popular, although not with the workers they were designed to attract. The students were preponderantly middle class, and overall, women outnumbered men two to one. In the ten years to 1923, 176 Tutorial Classes were arranged, of which 43 continued for the full three-year program, and 54 study circles were formed (WEA of New South Wales, 1923). In that year there was a total of almost 1,500 enrolments and the average class size was 26. Among the most popular subjects were those devoted to 'social problems', along with psychology, history, literature and economics.

However, by the 1930s the Sydney University model had moved considerably from the three-year pattern of English tutorial classes. In response to student demand, and against the wishes of the WEA, some classes continued for just one term, whilst others were organised in three terms of five, ten or fifteen lectures (WEA of NSW, 1934). The WEA felt it was the junior partner in the relationship and complained that the University should not be 'regarded as occupying the whole field; on the contrary we are convinced that the value and significance of the university's contribution to adult education would be greatly enhanced if it was part of a greater whole, co-operating with, training teachers for, and helping to maintain the standard of teaching of, other voluntary organisations' (WEA of NSW, 1934). Nevertheless, the WEA continued to have strong input into the nature of the subject areas for the tutorial classes, while the university continued to provide most of the tutors.

In 1934, after fifteen years as director, Portus resigned to take up a professorship in History and Political Science at Adelaide University. Despite his enthusiasm for adult education, he had apparently tired of some colleagues' attitudes to adult education at Sydney University:

Accustomed to distinguish sharply between the educated and the uneducated by their own criteria of certificates, diplomas and degrees, the universities tended to regard the whole business of extra-mural education as a gesture to the under-privileged. These poor chaps, who had never had any education since their primary schooling, were going to have a chance to drink at the fountains of higher learning. Many of the dons added, *sotto voce*: 'And we hope they'll be worthy of it'. (Portus, 1953: 193)

Portus also said later he thought the role of other educational agencies had been overlooked because of the WEA's absorption with the labour movement, and was critical of the dominance of the tutorial class model in New South Wales adult education (Portus, 1953: 195).

It seems that Portus struggled with the adult education model he inherited at Sydney University and felt powerless to change it. Although tutorial classes still dominated, under his directorship the work was extended into rural areas, leading to the appointment of tutors at a number of centres, thus helping cement the department's role in the university, even if he felt that role was not always acknowledged.

### **1935 to 1951: an opportunity for change**

Portus was replaced as Director by W G K Duncan who, like his predecessor, struggled to establish the autonomy of the Department of Tutorial Classes over the demands of its adult education partner, the WEA of NSW, and particularly of the Association's Scottish-born General Secretary, David Stewart (Badger, 1984: 32). However, Duncan did swerve from the WEA line when he set up Discussion Groups in rural areas in 1938, despite Stewart's opposition:

Dave did not like this ... and he thought that all possible funds should be spent on classes, as nothing could be so rewarding educationally as direct tutor-student contact in classes; and he did not like the idea that the Department – whose proper task

he considered was to teach, not to organise – should take the initiative in instituting a new service. It was only grudgingly and with the most serious misgivings that he gave way. (Higgins, 1957: 70)

Towards the end of the 1930s, the Department (in conjunction with the WEA as organiser) was one of the major providers of adult education in New South Wales, although the numbers enrolled were never particularly large. However, the outbreak of war in 1939 had significant implications for adult education at the University of Sydney through the involvement of a number of key staff in an innovative education program for soldiers.

In January 1941, some 15 months after the outbreak of war, Army Minister Spender announced an Army Education scheme and appointed the Secretary of the University's Extension Board, economics lecturer, R B Madgwick, as its Director. The Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, Lascelles Wilson, became Deputy Director. Under Madgwick's leadership, the Australian Army Education Service developed into a significant adult education enterprise, particularly in mainland Australia and the southwest Pacific. The curriculum included lectures, music recitals, documentary films, correspondence courses, discussion groups, hobby classes, and publication of the journal *Salt* (Dymock, 1995). Millions of soldiers in aggregate participated in its activities.

The Department of Tutorial Classes also had a key part in another Army Education initiative, the *Current Affairs Bulletin*, or *CAB* as it became known, a regular publication circulated throughout the army from April 1942 to help soldiers understand the background to the war (Dymock, 1995). Duncan (commonly known as 'Dunc') was appointed the *CAB*'s editor, and continued in that role after the war.

While adult education was heading in new directions through Army Education, moves were afoot at the University of Sydney to give more recognition to the Department of Tutorial Classes. At a Professorial Board meeting in late 1942, Professor F A Bland, a former Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, moved that 'the status of the office of Director of Tutorial Classes in the University of Sydney should be raised to that of professorial rank' (University of Sydney, November 1942, 344). This was the same issue that had led to the resignation

of the first Director in 1918. Twenty four years later, the vote for change was lost 12-9, and the Professor of Economics, R C Mills, another supporter of adult education, then successfully moved that a committee be set up to report to the Board on extra-mural studies at the university.

The Committee met eight times during 1943 and received submissions from within and outside the university. It made six recommendations, including:

The management of tutorial classes and discussion groups should not indefinitely remain the University's business; the role of the University in adult education was the provision of facilities for post-graduate research and professional training in the theory and techniques of adult education; and that in order to achieve the latter, the Board should ask the Senate to establish a Department of Adult Education, under a Professor of Adult Education. (University of Sydney, November 1943: 470-2)

Acceptance of these recommendations implied the end of the liberal adult education classes and discussion groups the university had long favoured, and the severing of the university's connection with the WEA, which had existed since the Department of Tutorial Classes was established almost 30 years earlier. Furthermore, the committee's recommendation for a research and training role in adult education and a professor as head would align its purposes with the perceived 'academic' role of the university. If it were established, such a Department would be the first in any Australian university.

At a Professorial Board meeting in 1943, it was moved that the recommendations in the report on extra-mural studies be adopted. However, the acceptance of these recommendations, and therefore of a likely professorship for Duncan, was deferred until the following year. The extent of the opposition to changing the role of the Department of Tutorial Classes after 30 years became evident at a Professorial Board meeting in June 1944, when the Committee's report was challenged on the grounds that its recommendations were for internal, not extra-mural, matters (University of Sydney, June 1944). This created sufficient confusion for the report's impact, and the opportunity for Duncan's professorship, to be lost. As a result, the work of the Department of Tutorial Classes continued as before.



Meanwhile, the initiatives of the Australian Army Education Service and other educational developments in the early 1940s had aroused considerable enthusiasm nationally for a conception of adult education beyond the tutorial classes model that had dominated the inter-war period. At a conference in 1944 on *'The Future of Adult Education in Australia'*, Madgwick, as Director of Army Education, said that far more needed to be done than provide lectures and discussion groups typical of the WEA or university tutorial classes. He advocated the use of a wide range of methods and educational activities, and said, 'We must never go back to adult education as we know it' (Madgwick, 1944: 102).

Duncan himself had an opportunity to promote this change. In 1943, the Australian government commissioned him to write a report on adult education. Taking a twelve-month secondment from the university, Duncan presented his 200-page report, *Adult education in Australia*, in late 1944. In a chapter on 'Why Australia has lagged behind', he discussed the limited appeal of university tutorial classes to the target audience of working men and women, suggesting that adult education had 'failed to touch the real interests of the people':

Insistence on a strictly non-vocational approach is ... one of the reasons for the remoteness and unreality of so much of our adult education. Another reason is that we suffer from an excessively 'literary' or 'bookish' or 'academic' tradition in this field. (Duncan, 1944a)

He was referring of course to the liberal adult education approach, the one that successive directors had fostered, that the WEA advocated, and which the university supported.

A major recommendation in Duncan's report was for a national scheme of adult education, drawing on the lessons learned through the Army Education scheme. However, the Australian government did not support the proposal. Although it was becoming increasingly interventionist in university education, it decided that adult education was part of the states' responsibility for education and that it was not a sufficiently important issue over which to start a demarcation dispute (Dymock, 1995). As a result, Duncan's report was not only rejected by the Federal government, it was never officially released.

Alongside his national review, Duncan prepared another report, *Adult Education in New South Wales* (1944b). One of its recommendations echoed the earlier proposal from the University of Sydney's extra-mural review: that the university should consider establishing a Department of Adult Education to provide research and training for adult education as well as 'new types' of adult education such as refresher courses.

However, despite such recommendations and the spirit of innovation elsewhere in Australian adult education, when Duncan returned to the University immediately after the war, very little changed. The pre-war model of tutorial classes prevailed, even when Assistant Director Lascelles Wilson returned shortly afterwards from his wide-ranging experience with Army Education. The only significant innovation for the department was the 'Kits' scheme, a more practically oriented group-learning program than the discussion groups scheme, but the new venture did not attract many students (Peers, 1958). In addition, Duncan continued to edit the *Current Affairs Bulletin*, but responsibility for its publication now fell to the newly established Commonwealth Office of Education.

The reluctance of the university to make any change to the existing model was reinforced by the attitude of the NSW WEA, which had much to lose if its relationship with the university was severed. The Association's long-serving General Secretary, David Stewart, regarded the WEA as the 'missionary and organising body' for adult education and the Department of Tutorial Classes as a 'servicing agency' (Stewart, 1948: 65). However, Duncan and his staff continued to strive for greater autonomy, and in 1948 the WEA complained that it was not receiving the support and cooperation it felt entitled to expect from the Department in extending the WEA's work, especially in country areas (Stewart, 1948: 65-7).

One of the grounds for complaint was the action of the Department of Tutorial Classes in appointing an adult education tutor to the New England University College (NEUC) at Armidale, in rural New South Wales, without reference to the WEA (WEA of New South Wales, 1949). Previous appointments of rural 'tutor-organisers' had been made jointly. The NEUC was a new institution, developed under the auspices of the University of Sydney, and its Warden was

Robert Madgwick, the former Secretary of the University of Sydney's Extension Board, and more recently Director of Army Education. Stewart was incensed, not only by the lack of consultation, but also by the new tutor's ventures into 'hobbies courses', such as leatherwork, which Stewart considered inappropriate for a university. Despite such occasional altercations, the WEA claimed in its 1955 *Handbook* that the joint committee for Tutorial Classes had survived since its establishment in 1914 because of the spirit in which the two organisations had worked together, frequently postponing decisions rather than putting contentious issues to a vote that was perceived as likely to lead to divisiveness (WEA of NSW, 1955: 19).

So, post World War II, the Department of Tutorial Classes continued in the liberal adult education tradition, with classes and discussion groups jointly arranged by the Department of Tutorial Classes and the WEA. Outside the university, however, adult education in New South Wales expanded after the war, with the State Government setting up the Advisory Board on Adult Education and establishing a network of Evening Colleges, which prepared adults for public examinations and offered general educational courses. By the early 1950s, the government's annual adult education grant was being divided among the Department of Tutorial Classes, the WEA, the Adult Education Section of the Public Library, the NSW Branch of the Arts Council, and the Parent Education Committee of the NSW Education Department (WEA of NSW, 1956: 23).

In 1951 Duncan resigned as Director of Tutorial Classes to become Professor of History and Politics at the University of Adelaide, the same position his predecessor at the University of Sydney had held. He had cause to be disillusioned by the lack of support for his efforts to change the nature of adult education in Australia, in New South Wales and at the University of Sydney. The Australian Government had rejected his commissioned report, and his recommendation the university undertake teaching and research in adult education and move from liberal adult education into professional development courses lapsed in the midst of controversy that resulted in his not being given professorial status.

On the other hand there was criticism of Duncan's willingness to continue to work with the WEA. In Badger's opinion (1984: 35),

despite the fact that Duncan ‘was so admirably clear headed and incisive on paper, [he] continued to work with institutions and ideas which he had intellectually discarded as inappropriate’. Given the disinclination in some quarters of the university to support change in the adult education model and increase the director’s status, however, Duncan may have felt he had no choice than to maintain the existing arrangements.

### **1951 to 1963: From Tutorial Classes to Adult Education**

Duncan’s successor, Lascelles Wilson, had been seconded from Sydney University for five years as the Assistant Director, and briefly as Director, of the wartime Army Education Service. In early 1947, the WEA journal, *The Australian Highway* reported that Wilson had come back to his job as Assistant Director of the Department of Tutorial Classes ‘bounding with energy and full of ideas gathered from the adventurous field in which he has been working’ (‘Editor’s notebook’, 1947, 1). However, as with Duncan, the ideas Wilson gleaned from that wartime experience made little immediate impact on the work of the Department.

Wilson was still committed to the value of liberal adult education and the university’s relationship with the WEA. In 1950, whilst Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, he told a meeting of the Victorian Adult Education Association that his definition of adult education did not include vocational and technical education (Wilson, 1950: 2). Rather, he considered adult education to be a ‘proper’ function of a university because a university was *the* institution for higher learning in the community:

It represents the most important single force in our modern society that is concerned with the pursuit of knowledge and the fearless search for the truth. The standards and attitudes of mind which these reflect and which the University is so concerned to preserve and further, are standards and attitudes which it is highly desirable should permeate as widely as possible into every part of our society; inform to a much greater degree than they do the beliefs and actions of people in every walk of life. And adult education work offers the greatest opportunity for it to make such contacts (Wilson, 1950: 9).

Stepped-up State Government funding from 1942 had enabled the Department of Tutorial Classes to increase the number of Staff Tutors, from five in 1941, to ten in 1951, the year Wilson took over the department. By 1961 there were fourteen teaching staff. These tutors, whose title came from similar positions in English universities, were appointed on the basis of their discipline knowledge. Although employed full-time, they generally taught in the evenings (when most tutorial classes were held), and relied on the WEA to promote the courses and make the administrative arrangements.

From the inception of Tutorial Classes in 1914, the salary of the tutors had been set by the joint committee. In 1944 Duncan had convinced the Vice-Chancellor that the salaries be brought in line with those of academic staff of the University. Whilst this seemed to be a more equitable arrangement, it brought its own difficulties, as Badger pointed out:

It created an 'illusion' that the work of a staff tutor of the Department was in some way comparable or identical with that of a member of the [university] teaching staff. This was clearly not true and was known not to be true by both the [academic] staff and by the members of the Department (Badger, 1984: 35).

The titles were later amended to be consistent with those used in the rest of the university, but the issue continued. This was not only because of the perception that adult education staff were not 'proper' academics, but also because their areas of academic expertise were in disciplines for which the university had specialist departments, such as in English, history and philosophy, and there were no formal (and sometimes no informal) links with those departments.

In 1952, the Commonwealth Government decided that publication of the *Current Affairs Bulletin* was an inappropriate activity for the Commonwealth Office of Education and negotiated with the Department of Tutorial Classes to assume complete control of it, with the incentive of an annual grant. At the time there were some 50,000 subscribers (Department of Adult Education, 1965: 25), an indication of the hunger for authoritative post-war knowledge of world affairs in a world not yet exposed to the news-dissemination possibilities of television. However, within a few years of the inauguration of public television broadcasts in Australia in 1956, the University of Sydney

and the WEA combined to produce a weekly television program, *Doorway to Knowledge*.

Initiated by George Shipp, Secretary of the WEA (Sydney) Metropolitan Region, the program heavily involved University of Sydney staff, and included such topics as: *Experimenting with Architecture*, *Patterns of Life*, *Great Men of Antiquity* and *Novelists of the 20th Century*. These titles reflect the philosophy of liberal adult education, but at that time there was, of course, no opportunity for the face-to-face debate and discussion that had been the basis for the tutorial classes offered for more than 50 years. In the first year, sixteen one-hour programs were broadcast on Sydney television station TCN9, and it was claimed that 30,000 people on average were watching each episode by the end of the series (Harries, 1960, 77). This figure is an indication that the tutorial classes model was breaking down, and the potential of television as a medium for education was being recognised.

The *Doorway to Knowledge* program was screened until early 1964 when a series on South-East Asia was unilaterally cancelled by the television station and conditions were imposed on any similar future programs (WEA Metropolitan Region, 1964, 6). The reported reason for the cancellation was that Lascelles Wilson, who had just stepped down as Director of Tutorial Classes, apparently made a comment on the program supportive of the North Vietnamese government, at that time engaged in a war with South Vietnam and with the USA, which would shortly be joined by Australian troops (Alan Duncan, pers. comm., July 15, 2004). Soon afterwards, the Department of Tutorial Classes negotiated with Sydney television station, ATN7, to present another educational series, 'Television tutorial', without any WEA involvement in the arrangements. This series was still being broadcast in the mid 1970s, although in a less prominent timeslot than its predecessor.

Within the University, in the early 1960s there were moves to bring the Extension Board and the joint committee for Tutorial Classes together. H J Oliver, Secretary of the Extension Board, had reported positively in 1956 on his observations in England where tutorial and extension departments had been combined into single departments of extra-mural studies (Oliver, 1956). Oliver's report did not bear

fruit until 1963, when Wilson announced he intended to retire, and the university Senate established a committee to examine the 'future relations of the Department of Tutorial Classes and the Extension Board with a view to the long-term development of both' (Shipp, 1963a).

In Wilson's submission to the Committee, he argued for a Department of Adult Education in order to bring the work of the two bodies under a single administrative head, a Director of Adult Education, who would be Secretary to both (Wilson, 1963a). He identified three reasons for such a development: a growth in demand and diversity for university extra-mural teaching, the precedent of similar amalgamations at British universities, and the advantages of utilising Department of Tutorial Classes staff for both extension and tutorial work. 'It would also be desirable', wrote Wilson, 'that the new Director should be *ex officio* a member of the Professorial Board', yet again raising the question of the status of the position.

Wilson was still convinced of the value of the WEA link, despite growing unrest within his Department about the relationship. He told staff in late 1963 that retention of the Joint Committee was vital for the future of the department and that one of the great virtues of the partnership with the WEA was that it took a very heavy share of the administrative and organisational workload which the Staff Tutors would otherwise have to carry (Wilson, 1963b).

The review offered another chance for the University to consider the usefulness of its relationship with the WEA, but the opportunity was not taken. In its formal response to Wilson's proposal, the WEA reminded the Senate Committee that the special relationship between the two bodies was recognised in the University's by-laws and said that the WEA had 'no reason to believe either that the University would take unilateral action to change the relationship, nor that it would do anything else but welcome a frank expression of the WEA's views and would not regard such expression of views as an attempted infringement of its autonomy' (Shipp, 1963a).

Some of the staff of the Department of Tutorial Classes were unimpressed by what they perceived as a lack of consultation on the proposed new department, and complained to the Joint Committee in mid-1963 that:

[T]he opinions of those whose full-time professional concern lies with Adult Education and whose collective experience in this field of work might properly be regarded as of value in the process of formulating proposals concerning change, had been ignored or taken to be of little account (Submission to Joint Committee, July, 1963).

The seven signatories, including three senior Staff Tutors and the Assistant Director, Joss Davies, asked for a stay of proceedings.

It was reported at the subsequent Joint Committee Meeting that one senior member was 'clearly irritated by the tone of the submission and the absence of argument either on the principle or on machinery' (Shipp, 1963b). However, the WEA members on the Joint Committee supported the staff, and the matter was not pressed. A minority of the Extension Board felt that 'Adult Education' was not an appropriate name for the new department, but agreed no acceptable alternative had been advanced (Shipp, 1963b).

The university Senate accepted the recommendation that a Department of Adult Education be established, with a Director, not a Professor. Supervision of work of the new Department would be by two committees, the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes and the Extension Board. The areas of work specified were identical with those already being undertaken, and the Director of Tutorial Classes would continue as editor of the *Current Affairs Bulletin*.

In its 1964 Annual Report, WEA Metropolitan Region explained the new arrangements:

The new Department of Adult Education at the University of Sydney will undertake in addition to work in tutorial classes, discussion and kit groups, *Current Affairs Bulletin* and educational television, a range of activities of an 'external' nature – that is, adult education of a primarily vocational character designed for and attended by selected professional and semi-professional groups. The WEA will continue to be represented on the reconstituted Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes and thus play its traditional part in supervising these activities which are jointly offered by the Department and the Association.



The specific mention of vocational education was a sign that, as Wilson's period of Directorship ended and the new Department was inaugurated, the emphasis on liberal adult education was weakening. Nevertheless, it says something for the force of the WEA in the relationship that the Joint Committee was retained, and it was to be another 20 years before the formal link between the two organisations was severed.

Although Wilson favoured the partnership with the WEA, it was in his 12 years as Director of Tutorial Classes that the transition to a broader range of adult education activities began, including the introduction of an educational television program. Due mainly to a particular-purpose grant for tutorial classes from the NSW Government, Wilson was also able to expand the number of staff significantly, and appears to have managed a successful adult education operation. Within the university, however, the status of the department and its staff continued to be a matter of contention, and like his predecessors, he was unable to garner sufficient support for a professorial appointment.

## **Conclusion**

Thanks to the efforts of its three directors and their staff and the tenacity of influential supporters within the institution, the Department of Tutorial Classes became well established at the University of Sydney between 1919 and 1963, after a rocky start. The commitment to liberal adult education was sustained over this period because the university and its partner, the WEA, regarded this as an appropriate way of reaching into the adult community. Nevertheless, there was ongoing tension between the two organisations about their respective roles, and between the department and other parts of the university about the adult education function itself. When opportunities came to make changes, however, internal wrangling at the university, as well as pressure from the WEA, ensured that the status quo prevailed. There are indications that each of the directors would have liked to have introduced innovations, particularly after World War II, but that those forces were too strong, even when adult education elsewhere was changing.

On the other hand, the directors themselves generally had a strong commitment to the liberal approach, and at least one did not accept that vocational and technical education fell within the gamut of adult education. When change did come, it was gradual, and it was not until 50 years after its introduction that adult education at the University of Sydney began to move away from its liberal heritage to encompass vocational courses. However, opposition to granting professorial status to the director of the department remained constant, helping ensure adult education continued to be seen in some quarters as outside the main purpose of the university.

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